

Psychological Repression and Surveillance in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Ghalib Islam's *Fire in the Unnameable Country*



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Date of Submission: Summer 2025

**Psychological Repression and Surveillance in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and
Ghalib Islam's *Fire in the Unnameable Country***

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of English and Humanities
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
MA in English

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

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Acknowledgements

I want to convey my utmost gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Kaiser Md. Hamidul Haq. Without the direction and constant assistance of my supervisor, I would not have been able to complete my dissertation. It was a great privilege to work under Sir's guidance.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Nadia Rahman, Assistant Professor, DEH, for her academic guidelines throughout the master's journey. A heartfelt thank you to every incredible professor from whom I had the opportunity to learn. Every class session, every thought-provoking discussion, and your passion for teaching have shaped not just my education, but the way I see the world. It was an invaluable learning experience.

Additionally, I owe a sincere debt of appreciation to my family and friends for staying by my side.

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the texts, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fire in the Unnameable Country*, with a particular focus on psychological repression and the control mechanisms of surveillance that facilitate it. The analysis is grounded in Michel Foucault's theoretical framework of the panopticon established in the chapter, "Panopticon", of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. The primary objective is to showcase how Foucault's concept can be applied to examine the phenomenon of mental crimes in the context of the selected novels. The paper investigates the notions of thoughtcrime, doublethink, and the surveillance apparatus, telescreen, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a means of totalitarian coercion. Drawing attention to how a totalitarian regime in *Fire in the Unnameable Country* criminalizes the thinking process itself, the thesis hopes to offer fresh insight into political discourse regarding the novel's portrayal of the intricate relationship between psychological suppression and the disciplinary mechanisms concerning the criminalization of thoughts.

Keywords: Panopticism, Control Mechanism, Surveillance, Psychological Repression.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Dystopian fictions share recurring themes of formidable or totalitarian oppression and espionage, blended with rampant political violence, and a staggering condition of human lives. A considerable number of scholarly studies have critiqued and exposed the characteristics of totalitarian regimes in literature. They examine how authors use language, themes, and narrative structures to reveal the dangers of such systems, often through the lens of totalitarianism. Key aspects include how truth is distorted, facts are fabricated, and history is rewritten to serve the regime's agenda. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* stands as one of the most unsettling works of such dystopian literature and analysis. A relatively recent addition to this genre is Ghalib Islam's *Fire in the Unnameable Country*. Set in a dystopian setting, it showcases the horrifying consequences of unchecked power and control. The totalitarian regimes in the texts exert control over characters, positing that such regimes rely not only on overt coercion but also on the internalized psychological constraints that are imposed on characters to self-regulate themselves.

I. Background of the Research

Published in 1949, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reflects Orwell's disillusionment with 20th-century politics and his fears of a future dominated by authoritarian regimes and omniscient surveillance. At the heart of the text is the portrayal of a society dominated by the Party (Ingsoc), represented by Big Brother's image, a regime that exercises absolute control over its citizens in a country named Oceania. The Party's slogan, "War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength" (Orwell 7), encapsulates the inversion of truth and logic that defines Oceania. The

novel follows Winston Smith, a low-ranking member of the ruling (Outer) Party, as he secretly rebels against the tyrannical regime. Winston, disillusioned with the Party's oppressive rule, begins a forbidden diary and an affair with Julia, defying the regime's bans on free thought and love. However, his rebellion is crushed when Winston is captured and brainwashed by the Thought Police, forcing Winston to submit entirely to Big Brother. The novel ends with Winston's spirit broken, loving the Party he once despised. The Party's use of telescreens, thoughtcrime, and doublethink illustrates how technology and intrapsychic dynamics can be modulated to suppress dissent and enforce conformity.

Existing literature on Orwell's text has examined many issues. Orwell's depiction of totalitarianism, George M. Enteen notes, draws from the political climates of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Soviet Union, where propaganda and fear were tools of governance. Additionally, the Party's use of Newspeak illustrates how language can be weaponized for political propaganda. A central argument of James Connors' paper, "'Do It to Julia': Thoughts on Orwell's '1984'", is that Winston Smith is neither Orwell's surrogate nor a symbol of universal humanity. Winston embodies the struggle of the individual against this oppressive system, but his ultimate defeat underscores the Party's terrifying efficiency in crushing rebellion. Many articles focus on the interpretation of "The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism" (Orwell 169), a book within the book, which provides a theoretical understanding of the Party's ideology. While *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is widely acclaimed, there remains an insufficient investigation into how the institutionalization of internalized surveillance has led to the criminalization of thoughts and thinking processes. The surveillance field of view occupies both the external sphere and the sphere inside the mind. Little is known about the effects on the protagonist's and citizens' lives owing to the maneuvers of management of telescreens, and the successful implementation of

psychological control. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, thus, remains alarmingly relevant in contemporary discussions regarding totalitarianism and its control mechanisms.

Ghalib Islam's *Fire in the Unnameable Country* (2014) blends dystopian science fiction with postmodern narrative experimentation. It explores the invasive force of ideology, surveillance, and propaganda in the reproduction of totalitarian authority in a fictionalized state, situated in the Global South, backed by British imperialism and later by the U.S.-led forces. Islam, in an interview with Mark Medley, revealed "the setting" of the novel is "a mélange of the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and North Africa". In his review of Islam's interview and of the novel, Medley posits that from a geographical viewpoint, the unnamed country is adjacent to Somalia. But even that can be labelled as a red herring. Medley concludes that "the country seems to exist beyond both time and the physical world". The unique and complex storytelling revolves around Hedayat, a young man born after an extraordinarily long gestation. The narrative interweaves the tales of Hedayat and his family members with the absurdities of political hegemony and psychological suppression with keen insight. Hedayat recalls his parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents to re-examine the history of the troubled nation. Characters navigate a reality where their thoughts are recorded and manipulated by a totalitarian government, echoing legitimate concerns about privacy, psychic manipulation, and state control. The Black Organs, a massive government security system, also assumes a disciplinary role, serving the totalitarian government that maintains an environment filled with terror in the country. The organization jeopardises psychological privacy by collecting the innermost thoughts of the populace via the technology of thoughtreels. A significant amount of the novel takes place within, or deals with characters who work in the Black Organs. Hedayat's grandfather, Zachariah Ben Jaloun, his grandmother, Gita Nothingatall, his father, Mamun Ben Jaloun, and lastly, he

himself are all criminalized for their thoughts that are yet to be transformed into acts of retaliation. They are either arrested, confined, abused, or tormented, both physically and mentally, by the Black Organs agents. While Mamun and Hedayat retain their sanity, despite the elimination of intellectual and physical liberties (Mamun) and tormented confinement (Hedayat), the Black Organs' spies continue to keep tabs on them. On the other hand, Zachariah and Gita were forced to relive traumatic memories, tormented and re-educated until they ultimately acquiesced to the regime's wishes. As a result, their psychic abilities lose their functions, transforming them into devoted citizens of the state. The novel's distinct portrayal of governmental monitoring and psychological coercion invites a compelling case study of a totalitarian regime that seeks to homogenize its society by criminalizing its intrapsychic processes and dynamics, reducing the characters to mere cogs in a machine. Islam's novel has attracted an impressive readership. However, it is yet to receive the critical attention it deserves.

There is a striking need to address the control mechanisms concerning the psychological suppression and the internalized surveillance adopted by the specific characters in the selected novels that do away with their human desire to act completely and govern the operation of terror within them. In Islam's novel, the concept of thoughtreels is analogous to Foucault's conceptual framework of the panopticon. However, thoughtreels function like film reels, capturing and playing back the mental activity of a person. It serves as a central mechanism through which the authoritarian state in Islam's novel exercises surveillance and control over its citizens, like Zacharia, Gita, Mamun, and Hedayat. In contrast, the Orwellian novel presents a complicated schema of psychic manipulation, which compels the protagonist, Winston, to internalize self-imposed surveillance onto himself. Therefore, considering that prior research has used limited scopes analyzing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the absence of critical academic research on

Fire in the Unnameable Country, this thesis aims to examine the two texts by inquiring into psychological methods of control, the phenomenon of mental crimes, and internalized surveillance that ensnare the characters in a web of constraints and dictate their dissent and retaliation.

II. Research Objectives

The thesis attempts to examine and present a critique of psychological repression and control mechanisms of surveillance, pervasive in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fire in the Unnameable Country*. Furthermore, Foucault's concept of the panopticon is used to explore the phenomenon of criminalizing thoughts and intrapsychic processes, and the interiorization of surveillance that reinforces totalitarian control in the novels.

III. Research Questions

1. What are the apparatuses, strategies, or mechanisms that enable psychological repression in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fire in the Unnameable Country*?
2. In what ways do the disciplinary mechanisms of surveillance evident in the novels embody the characteristics of Foucault's concept of the panopticon?

IV. Research Methodology

This thesis followed a qualitative method of research to analyze the texts, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fire in the Unnameable Country*. Adopting a comparative approach, the thesis draws on divergent yet complementary discussions of the two novels. Primarily, the thesis employs Michel Foucault's theoretical concept of the panopticon discussed in the chapter, "Panopticon", of his book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. The thesis investigates the phenomenon of mental crimes and the internalization of state-induced surveillance. It further reveals the effects of surveillance and psychological repression. Hence, using a qualitative and comparative analysis along with Foucault's theoretical framework, the thesis intends to provide a comprehensive study for investigating totalitarian politics with regard to psychological repression and the apparatuses of surveillance that operate within the selected novels.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Ghalib Islam's *Fire in the Unnameable Country* share recurring themes of formidable societal oppression blended with external and internal surveillance. The selected papers in this review section tend to look at Orwell's dystopia through various theoretical perspectives. Key critiques include analysis of terror, emphasizing manipulation and historical erasure as tools of control. Malcolm R. Thorp's essay delves into Orwell's critique of totalitarianism, framing the novel as a commentary on the Communist betrayal. George M. Enteen explores it as a historical allegory, noting its parallels with Stalinist Russia and observing Newspeak's role in constructing social and political relations. Another article examines language as a tool of ideological control, arguing that Newspeak's reduction of vocabulary constrains thought and reality. Julia's vulgar language is framed as rebellion, though the analysis is critiqued for lacking linguistic theory. While *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has extensive scholarly analysis, *Fire in the Unnameable Country* invites readers to thought-provoking discussions that linger well beyond the last page.

Malcolm R. Thorp's essay, "The Dynamics of Terror in Orwell's *1984*", examines Orwell's dystopian vision of politics as a critique of totalitarianism. Thorp situates *Nineteen Eighty-Four* within Orwell's body of works and historical context, arguing that the novel presents the ultimate outcome of the Communist betrayal of socialist allies and the revolution devolving into tyranny. Furthermore, Thorp breaks down how Orwell's use of historical erasure as a tool of control and links it to Trygve Tholfsen's theories on memory and identity. The torturous rehabilitation of Winston Smith's beliefs and suspicions regarding Big Brother showcases to what extent a totalitarian government exercises torture to subjugate its citizens. The

psychological and technological mechanisms of manipulation, Thorp argues, are more subtle but more meticulous and dangerous than any other form of physical pain (10). Hence, the party members and masses of Oceania are isolated from perceiving any kind of reality, especially one that contrasts with the party propaganda. However, Thorp's reliance on Orwell's essays (e.g., *Collected Essays*) occasionally leads to a biographical determinism, overshadowing textual analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. His dismissal of discussions on the internalized psychological control of the characters, as well as the varying surveillance-induced violent measures to elevate the Party or Big Brother's grasp, creates a lack of nuanced critique of Orwell's novel. This thesis thus aims to decipher and investigate the elements of mental repression in depth.

George M. Enteen's essay, "George Orwell and the Theory of Totalitarianism: A 1984 Retrospective", interrogates the novel's accuracy as a historical allegory while acknowledging its relevance to debates about power, language, and human resilience. He revisits Orwell's novel through the lens of a historian and through Soviet Communism and historiography. Enteen blends his personal anecdotes from his time in the USSR with literary analysis to assess Orwell's accuracy about totalitarianism. The author thus problematizes the novel's accuracy as a historical allegory. And further explores Orwell's accuracy in depicting control systems like informant networks and the erasure of history. Similar to Thorp's article, Enteen also highlights language manipulation as the core mechanism of ideological control. He particularly critiques Orwell's focus on Ingsoc's invention of a new language, "Newspeak", as the "ultimate instrument of domination" (211). Enteen further notes that real totalitarian regimes inflate language with euphemisms rather than reducing vocabulary. Moreover, Enteen observes that many critics' comparison of Julia's biological or sensual rebellion vs. Winston's intellectualism reduces Julia's strategic role as a hedonistic rebel and overlooks her struggle for survival. Julia's agency

and resilient role as a foil to Winston warrant deeper analysis of how totalitarianism exploits gendered stereotypes. The essay bridges Soviet historiography with the novel, offering a critique of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s predictive power. The author's emphasis on language and human agency enriches debates about totalitarianism's psychological dimensions. However, Enteen limits his study by interpreting Orwell's text as satirical hyperbole, glossing over the elements of mental repression prevalent in the text. Orwell's novel provides an assortment of political and psychological mechanisms of control that this thesis seeks to analyze how those play an instrumental role in imposing compliance.

The interplay between language, power, and ideology is encapsulated in George Orwell's dystopian novel. The paper, "Language and Ideology in Orwell's *1984*", by Steven Blakemore, argues that the Party's (Ingsoc) manipulation of language in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not merely a tool for control but a fundamental assault on human nature, as language is intrinsic to how individuals perceive and construct reality. The Party's anti-linguistic ideology seeks to narrow human perception of reality and thought processes by systematically reducing the semantic range of language through Newspeak's rudimentary vocabulary. Destruction of historical texts and knowledge, and the continual revision of dictionaries, reflect a deeper goal, i.e., to obliterate the past and constrain future thought. Hence, Blakemore identifies "Newspeak" as a "thematic fall of language" (352), a degradation of linguistic freedom. Julia's vulgar language, by contrast, becomes an act of rebellion, reclaiming the bodily and the real against the Party's erasure, and warns about the political language's capacity to distort truth. The paper is often critiqued for its limited engagement with linguistic theories, which might have deepened its exploration of "Newspeak". Nevertheless, the paper's analysis is focused on the Party propaganda, perception manipulation via language, and the existential threat posed by them. My thesis seeks to critique

thought manipulation from Foucault's theoretical viewpoint. It intends to go beyond conventional readings of Orwell's work in regard to thought manipulation or suppression and inquire about the unexplored modes of psychological control mechanisms that complemented the state-sponsored totalitarian hostility.

Aparna Sanyal's book review of *Fire in the Unnameable Country* emphasizes the novel as a daring, allegorical critique of identity in an oppressive system. The novel defies conventional storytelling, blending surrealism with political commentary to create a fragmented yet vivid narrative. The reviewer praises Islam's lyrical prose and inventive language, which mixes cultural references, creole dialects, and poetic imagery, such as rebels in ballet slippers smashing mirrors or a room filled with grey clotted plumage after a bombing. These elements, Sanyal notes, reflect the absurdity and violence of a world obsessed with surveillance and self-image, where citizens turn mad from looking at themselves. However, the review also highlights the novel's challenges. The nonlinear style of the novel, which Sanyal describes as "owlishly," comprises complex narratives and metaphors, like cobwebs that resemble erased memories. This can overwhelm readers and make it difficult to connect deeply with the characters or plot. Critically, Sanyal situates the book as a bold departure from traditional literature, one that "hurls us beyond identity" into a realm where reality and fiction blur. The unnameable country, transformed into a surreal movie set, becomes a metaphor for globalized oppression and the erosion of personal and collective memory. The reviewer underscores the gravity beneath the novel's exuberance, particularly in its portrayal of generational trauma and state violence, as when Hedayat's grandmother is tortured or his grandfather is split between being a poet or a state agent. Nonetheless, Sanyal acknowledges the novel's exploration of

hidden organs of life and resistance, which makes a significant contribution to contemporary literature.

Ghalib Islam's novel, *Fire in the Unnameable Country*, is a speculative fictional work blending magical realism, political satire, and postmodern literary techniques. Rachel Carlson's review emphasizes how the manipulation to fabricate narratives of terrorism reflects contemporary anxieties about intergenerational trauma and bureaucratic absurdity, mirroring real-world issues such as NSA surveillance. Literary parallels are a standout feature of this work. Islam employs magical realism with confidence, drawing connections to authors like Salman Rushdie and Nega Mezlekia. Comparisons to the works of Franz Kafka highlight the unfeeling bureaucracy depicted in Islam's narrative, emphasizing the absurdity of an incomprehensible system. While the text frequently employs intertextuality, demanding a level of literary knowledge from its audience, this approach amplifies the richness of the reading experience. Carlson, however, critiques the overreliance on intertextuality, which can overwhelm the reader. Despite its inventiveness, the novel's dense references and fragmented plot may alienate readers seeking cohesion. Carlson suggests this may be intentional, a commentary on the impossibility of narrative coherence in a fractured world. Ultimately, *Fire in the Unnameable Country* is a bold, imaginative critique of power, globalization, and storytelling itself, challenging readers to find meaning in its dizzying blend of fantasy and satire.

In a nutshell, the book reviews concerning Islam's novel tend to emphasize the absurdity of violence and violence-induced trauma without shedding light on the intrapsychic dynamics present in the text. The peculiarity of the Black Organs that record and transcribe the frequency of brain activity in order to criminalize thinking and impose self-policing behaviour onto the

characters gets overlooked by the reviewers. There is a pressing need to address the surveillance apparatus of psychological suppression in Islam's novel.

The literature review highlights various scholarly critiques focused primarily on Orwell's work, revealing how different theoretical perspectives interpret his dystopian vision. Most researches are focused on commenting on the ideology and torture applied by the totalitarian government in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Historical erasure, altering memory and identity, and language censorship occupy the key discussions. Hence, in my thesis, I try to delve deeper into the strategic tactics applied for mental repression and adopt Foucault's theoretical concept to analyze disciplinary mechanisms of surveillance, their apparatuses, and how they enable control. While *Nineteen Eighty-Four* attracts significant scholarly attention, there remains a notable lack of academic analysis surrounding *Fire in the Unnameable Country*. Sanyal's book review of Islam's novel highlights its daring blend of surrealism and political commentary as an allegorical critique of identity within oppressive systems. Carlson's book review further explores the novel's themes of intergenerational trauma and bureaucratic absurdity, likening it to contemporary concerns of totalitarianism. The thesis seeks to bridge the knowledge disparity between the two novels as well as analyze the schemes of centralized government in regard to ubiquitous surveillance in the face of relentless oppression and how they suppress the psychic activities of the specific characters.

Chapter 3: The Psychological Parameters of Control

Surveillance is deeply intertwined with regulating psychological liberty. Under the Party, or Big Brother's leadership in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Party seeks to repress free thought, endangering intellectual privacy and the formation of personal opinions. Firstly, telescreens work as a round-the-clock surveillance apparatus that not only helps in regulating characters' thoughts and collective behaviour but also as a tool for propaganda indoctrination. The second, more insidious form, is the conceptual panopticon of thoughtcrime and doublethink that imposes self-policing, making Winston and other characters complicit in their own repression. The psychological parameters of control in the novel embody the characteristics of the Foucauldian notion of disciplinary panopticon.

The political structure of the governing state of Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is exposed through the misfortunes of the protagonist, Winston Smith. Big Brother represents the authority in Oceania, even though no one is certain that he even exists. The ubiquitous Party, regardless of its acting leaders, controls the totalitarian environment of the state, with the help of Inner and Outer Party members. O'Brien, an Inner Party official who pretends to be a Brotherhood member but actually personifies the Party's ruthlessness, participates in re-educating and tormenting suspected insurgents, including Winston, Julia, and Mr. Parsons. The Thought Police in the novel closely monitor Winston's naive attempts at treason, for instance, writing subversive thoughts in a diary, visiting the black market for purchasing quality goods and food, as well as his extramarital affair with Julia, a deviant from the Anti-Sex League. Initially, Winston modified historical accounts to support Party ideology and narratives at the Ministry of Truth. However, Winston is ultimately subjected to reeducation at the Ministry of

Love, on the grounds that he will become quiet and behave according to the Party ideology once his deviant thoughts are crushed, but O'Brien or the Ministry of Love finds Winston beyond the scope of mental control and puts him to his death. With the technology of secret microphones and extensive telescreens, the location of Mr. Charrington's junk shop, where Winston and Julia secretly spent time, is forfeited. The Thought Police again, with the help of telescreen monitoring, meticulously remove a piece of dust from Winston's diary, implying that no detail gets overlooked owing to the omnipresent surveillance. The Thought Police is aware of Winston's defiant writings in his diary. Winston's secret dread of rats is found out by the elaborate surveillance network operating in Orwell's novel, which is capable of monitoring both outer behaviour and the vulnerabilities that are internal to the psyche.

In his book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault addresses the idea of the panopticon. Foucault employs Jeremy Bentham's jail architecture, the panopticon, as a metaphor to explain how surveillance functions, where constant observation ensures discipline. According to Foucault, the design of the panopticon, with its central tower guard and encircling cells, ensures that "surveillance is permanent in its effects" (201). Even though the guards are not always on watch, the layout of the panopticon gives the impression of constantly being watched. The capacity to observe individuals, as demonstrated by "the ability to penetrate into men's behaviour" (Foucault 204) within the panopticon, generates knowledge that sustains and reinforces power hierarchies. Moreover, Foucault notes, "the prison," while functioning as an administrative apparatus, also serves as "a machine for altering minds" (125). Psychological and intellectual liberties are threatened by the surveillance and mind-altering apparatus of telescreen in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The telescreen is the main technological surveillance apparatus in Orwell's novel. It transmits every whisper, the slightest expression changes, and abnormality, "so long as he (one) remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard" (Orwell 6). The telescreens are placed in every residence and public area, continuously disseminating Party propaganda and keeping tabs on the conduct of the populace.

"There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized." (Orwell 6)

In this sense, the environment of Orwell's novel mirrors the "faceless gaze" of the panopticon that "transforms the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attention ever on the alert, a long, hierarchized network" (Foucault 214). Telescreens create an environment filled with paranoia of consistently being watched. Engaging in any meaningful, emotional, or passionate relationship is prohibited under Big Brother's regime. Thereby, Winston is arrested and confined to the Ministry of Love because his affair with Julia is exposed when a telescreen finally tracks down their rendezvous location, the attic of Mr. Charrington's junk shop, situated on the outskirts of the city, in chapter nine. As a result, Winston and Julia are arrested owing to the telescreen's far-reaching surveillance with its "iron voice" (Orwell 203), jeopardizing their privacy. On top of that, Mr. Charrington is revealed to be a Thought Police, ensuring that where the surveillance of telescreens fails to do its job, the Thought Police act as surveying agents. The Thought Police's role functions, in a similar fashion,

to the centralized tower guard of the panopticon's jail architecture, which constantly penetrates regulation into "even the smallest details of everyday life" (Foucault 198). Thus, the surveillance system in Orwell's novel employs both technological means and physical means for the espionage of its citizens. So that the totalitarian "power is mobilized" and surveillance "makes itself everywhere present and visible" (Foucault 205), constructing a panopticon environment.

Winston, who lives in constant fear of being discovered, reflected, "Your worst enemy...was your own nervous system. At any moment the tension inside you was liable to translate itself into some visible symptom" (Orwell 60). And a single symptom of defiance would lead the telescreens and Thought Police to them. What initially gave away Winston's defiance against the Party was his moment of hesitation to drop a photograph in the memory hole. The photograph contained evidence of Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford, criminalized as anti-Ingsoc and betrayers of the Party. However, Winston figured out that they were actually not guilty of the atrocities they were charged with. Winston made sure to manage his facial expressions and bodily gestures. Yet, he "could not control the beating of your (his) heart, and the telescreen was quite delicate enough to pick it up" (Orwell 74). In addition to identifying defiance, the telescreens also serve as a panopticon-like omnipresent indoctrination apparatus. As demonstrated by Orwell's depiction of the Two Minutes Hate, a weekly ritual broadcast through all telescreens in which citizens are compelled to vent their wrath on the Party's adversary, "the face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People" (Orwell 14), displayed on the screens. "The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in" (Orwell 16). In other words, it was difficult for Winston to refrain from not putting on an act and comply with imitating the emotions that the telescreens and the Party demand of him. The Hate Act, being compulsory and

not living up to the expectations of the Party, is subject to cruel punishment in Room 101 at the Ministry of Love. Both Winston and Julia fake their rage for the Two Minutes Hate session. Hence, it is necessitated by the Party to repress one's contradictory opinions against its propaganda and participate in the hate campaigns. "Terror involves mind control" (Thorp 10), and telescreens thoroughly implant terror while mentally subjugating Winston and the citizens' political opinions. Under the surveillance of telescreens, one is required to be brainwashed by constant propaganda sessions and self-regulate their emotions and expressions. As a result, even rebellious characters like Winston and Julia are guaranteed to comply, even if it is against their will, and at some point, they will be internalizing the authoritative institution's ideology and regulations. Because the paranoia of torture chambers and vaporization in the Ministry of Love is as conspicuous as the telescreens themselves. The Thought Police thus uses a variety of techniques to enforce conformity, including surveillance and torture, both physical and mental. Orwell illustrates that the effectiveness of surveillance depends on the coercive, violent measures that are carried out in Room 101. The Thought Police's ability to instill fear and paranoia ensures that dissent is almost impossible, and even if Winston thinks of deviant thoughts or impulses, he would be unable to act upon them, hiding those impulses for the rest of his life.

Besides, by the dint of telescreens and hidden microphones, the Thought Police uncovers and compiles information on the most private thoughts, history, fears, and vulnerabilities of its citizens. The recorded information related to one person or field can be connected to data from other aspects and examined to conjure or distort conclusions and reveal all vulnerabilities concerning the specific person. Winston's dreadful childhood history (his mother and sister vaporized) and "the ultimate weapon, which in the case of Winston is his fear of rats" (Connors 471) were leveraged against him to make him submit to Big Brother's ideology in Room 101

(torture chamber). The true terror lies not in Winston's yielding to the party propaganda but in the exposition of the "worst thing in the world" (Orwell 258) by the telescreens. It is the creepy certitude that every individual has a breaking point, an excessive fear, and that information is readily available to the observer or abuser, in this case, the totalitarian state and the Thought Police, for abuse. A few citizens, who have not been fully brainwashed, inevitably choose to keep their lives intact and compromise their convictions. Otherwise, they will be inflicted with the same torture Winston is made subject to. Telescreens, resembling the panopticon, therefore, keep people in a state of permanent fear of surveillance while reinforcing the Party's doctrine, encapsulating private details, and restricting the freedom to experience and express the full range of feelings.

A recurring threat to stifle intellectual liberty and ideological choices of the citizens in Oceania is further policed by the strategy of thoughtcrime, so that people do not invent or realize counter-dominant ideologies. The act of having and voicing politically opposing views, any perception that goes against the Party's philosophy and propaganda, is known as thoughtcrime in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Writing in a diary (like Winston does), having illegal relationships, or even just harboring negative thoughts about Big Brother are all examples of thoughtcrime. In the event that someone has or is assumed to have unlawful thoughts and displays them on their face or in any other way, the Thought Police arrests them. It is a potent instrument for authoritarian control since it criminalizes one's thoughts. Winston confirms, "thoughtcrime does not entail death: thoughtcrime IS death" (Orwell 28). The punishment for thoughtcrime is harsh and frequently consists of psychological manipulation, torture, and death in the Ministry of Love, the way Winston is subjected to. There is no way, however, the surveillance system can prove the contents of one's thoughtcrime, as evident in the brain data collection intercepted by thoughttreels

in *Fire in the Unnamable Country*. Thoughtcrime is simply a psychological control mechanism conceptualized as a totalitarian strategy in Orwell's novel to "alter behavior, to train or correct individuals" (Foucault 203), mirroring an omnipresent panopticon-like surveillance but self-regulating. The ultimate aim is to limit the processes of thinking and make the controlling gaze internalized, not external. It also works as a gaslighting strategy as Winston and the citizens are made to question their sanity, memory, and perception of reality (Thorp 3-17). By proceeding in this fashion, it not only results in mental dishonesty but also the actual drying up of the inventive faculties.

Parsons, Winston's neighbour, is taken into custody by the Thought Police on suspicion of thoughtcrime. According to Parsons' confessions, his own seven year old daughter turned him in as she overheard him voicing, "Down with Big Brother!" (Orwell 214) while he was asleep. Much of the attachment between parents and children, as well as between husbands and spouses, has been eliminated by the Party. The fact that even one's own family members, dogmatized by Ingsoc's doctrine to the point of absurdity, do not hesitate to denounce them. In panopticon schools, Foucault gives an account of the Christian School in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, which prepares "docile children; it must also make it possible to supervise the parents, to gain information as to their way of life, their resources, their piety, their morals. The school tends to constitute minute social observatories that penetrate even to the adults and exercise regular supervision over them" (211). Similarly, Parsons' children in Orwell's novel are being mentally manipulated from an early age and raised as docile but functionary agents of the state surveillance system. Parsons' son and daughter are sent to the Spies, an educational institution for the children of Party members that indoctrinates the children with Party propaganda and trains them as Thought Police or agents of espionage. As a result, any potential

tendency to retaliate against the Party's ideology is shut off in childhood. On top of that, the children of the Spies also jeopardize the privacy and intellectual liberty of their parents, contributing to the complicated network of espionage. Even Mrs. Parsons was afraid of her children, given that her children were way too brainwashed by the institution of the Spies, and Winston suspected that eventually the children would denounce her to the Thought Police. The children kept tabs on Mr. and Mrs. Parsons' activities. For instance, questioning Mrs. Parsons for not taking them to the hanging. Mrs. Parsons confesses to Winston, when he visits her home to fix the sink pipe, that the children are misbehaving as they are "disappointed because they couldn't go to see the hanging, that's what it is. I'm too busy to take them. and Tom won't be back from work in time." (Orwell 24). To Winston's utmost shock, Parsons' daughter denounces him to the Thought Police, rather than her mother, in Part Three, Chapter One. Parsons, however, "would never be vaporized" (Orwell 58), given his absolute fidelity towards Ingsoc, concluded Winston, in Part One, Chapter Five. Parsons' perilous effort in preparation for Hate Week, from assembling volunteers to sewing, painting, and hammering, "he was everywhere at once" (Orwell 137) when it came to participating in the Party's propaganda campaigns. So, the question remains whether the young daughter actually exposed her father, or the Thought Police made up the whole scenario to simply examine Parsons' capacity for intellect and his loyalty towards the Party. It is possible that it is one of the Thought Police's agendas to psychologically repress Parsons. Nonetheless, it is impossible to determine how much of what the Ministry of Love, Thought Police, or O'Brien is implying or accusing is the truth. Because except the testimony by Parsons' daughter, there is no evidence recorded by the surveillance of telescreens. On the other hand, if Parsons really did conceive deviant thoughts at sleep, he is not safe even if there are no surveillance cameras, or telescreens or the Police. He is subject to repression and espionage in

his own home by his own children. The fact that Parsons is susceptible to panopticon-like surveillance in which the central tower guard is his so-called family members, his youngest child of seven years old, is terrible. The institution of the Spies raises future generations of state functionaries and surveillance agents. Nonetheless, criminalizing on the basis of thoughts entails that citizens are forced to admit to crimes they didn't commit, breaking their sense of self and casting doubt on their memories. And it is achieved by the repression mechanism of thoughtcrime. Eventually, it provides the police, observers, and tormentors an excuse to tear a mind however they wish and unassailable power to detain people for indoctrination purposes, as it had been in Parsons' case. The people of Oceania are deprived of all their means of psychological independence. Consequently, instead of helping to curtail the Party's influence, the masses are transformed into inconsequential and compliant bystanders. Hence, the strategy or goal of criminalizing novel or unconventional thoughts is to facilitate totalitarian control via an internalized panopticon-like made-up concept of thoughtcrime or mental crime. It is to prohibit underlying or future intellectual opposition against the state.

Doublethink is another psychological self-regulating made-up concept used to guarantee Party allegiance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Foucault argues that panopticon monitoring offers "a sort of general recipe for the exercise of power over men: the 'mind' as a surface of inscription for power...the submission of bodies through the control of ideas" (102). The indoctrination of doublethink mirrors the panopticon, as the indoctrination of the Party takes over the mind's ability to think. Internalized self-imposed doublethinking in the novel allows the Party to monopolize the characters' thoughts. Doublethink is imposed to instill mind control by making the citizenry believe and accept something false consciously, without deeming it wrongful or a ploy of propaganda. Early in the novel, an announcement claims the chocolate ration has been

increased to twenty grams, and demonstrations are held to applaud Big Brother for raising the ration. “The Ministry of Plenty had issued a promise (a ‘categorical pledge’ was the official words) that there would be no reduction of the chocolate ration” (Orwell 38). When, in fact, it was reduced from thirty to twenty. The Party blatantly lies, conditioning people to distrust their own memories and accepting to stay malnourished. Winston, employed at the Ministry of Truth, knows the truth but must outwardly accept the lie. It can be observed that even when the Party claims improvements in living standards, conditions remain miserable. The manipulation of food rations is part of the broader theme of doublethink, forcing people to accept contradictions: “people today had more food” (Orwell 70) while starving. Doublethink thus involves an extensive “mental cheating” (Orwell 198) mechanism that ensures “reality control” (Orwell 34). The inevitable consequence of engaging in doublethink is distancing oneself from reality and thereby deliberately inducing a sense of unconsciousness concerning reality or true knowledge. In simpler terms, if one is aware of Ingsoc’s fabrication, they are mentally forced to accept that they are the ones who are thinking wrong. Winston trained himself to doublethink by trying not to comprehend the contradictory arguments concerning Big Brother, or which country Oceania was at war with. It required Winston to override, or ignore his truth, or knowledge, and consciously instill or internalize a sense of unconsciousness towards the process of doublethinking, and propaganda. For instance, he knew that it was only four years ago that Oceania was in conflict with Eastasia and maintained an alliance with Eurasia. But at present, Eurasia and Oceania are at war (Orwell 33). There is a clear disparity between the past and present knowledge concerning Oceania’s international relations. However, whoever is the enemy, it is eternal. Winston could not dare to bring himself to not engage in doublethinking. He is forced to accept the fact that he is being intellectually subdued, his true knowledge criminalized.

Winston, who spent the majority of the book trying to resist Ingsoc's dogmatism, capitulates and is psychologically manipulated to completely submit to doublethink via torture at the end of the novel owing to his re-education in Room 101. As a result, he ends up becoming a loyal devotee of Big Brother before getting shot. Doublethink thus serves as a mechanism of psychological repression and how the totalitarian government in the novel imposes internalized surveillance to skew reality in order to preserve power. The psychological control tool ensures that citizens like Winston are "caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (Foucault 201). As a consequence, Winston at last "assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself... he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault 202-203). Hence, brainwashing citizens via the tactic of doublethink works like the panopticon in the sense that it is all-pervasive, and also internalized and enabled by the shackles of their own mind, inevitably, preventing characters from even comprehending the tyrannical force and the psychological suppression at play.

Constant surveillance and repression of mental sensibilities create apathetic individuals by constructing a world where no one is dependable, except the authority, stipulating unquestioned loyalty towards the Party and hostility towards others. When Winston unexpectedly gets involved in a bombing while crossing a neighbourhood in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, despite his disloyalty towards Ingsoc, his apathy manifests itself because he has already been conditioned to as an apathetic person. He notices "a human hand severed at the wrist" blasted by the rocket bomb strike (Orwell 79). Not only does he show no signs of sympathy, but he also kicks the severed hand into the gutter. A totalitarian society never leaves an individual alone with all the surveillance and violence around, but it alienates its populace by eradicating human space, emotions, and pitting people against each other. During his

confinement in Room 101, Winston is starved, isolated from all human spaces, and “his body was being wrenched out of shape, his joints were being slowly torn apart” (Orwell 224). At last, he broke down and betrayed Julia, begging to torment her in his stead; thus, he was bereft of emotional inclination towards Julia. Winston is made conscious of his betrayal. He finds out Julia betrayed him as well, suspending his trust in human relationships entirely. Only the Party was available to him as the last sanctuary to belong somewhere, his loyalty towards the Party kept him safe until it was decided to relieve him of his alienated life with the help of the Party. So, the Party has psychologically, intellectually, and emotionally drained Winston’s faculties, and made Winston apathetic, as he deems it justifiable as long as he remains unaffected while others suffer. Coercion via brute force functions as one of several components contributing to the totalitarian surveillance in the novel. Involving a very cunning practice of criminalizing thoughts and thinking processes, the Party continues to subjugate Winston permanently by seizing his emotional agency. The disciplinary mechanism of panopticon surveillance serves as a destructive element that does not stop violating and regulating the psychological space and thought perception until there is nothing left to violate. Not even emotional agency is spared, as it is observed in Winston’s case.

Repression of mental freedom by criminalizing thoughts and psychological processes of thinking is one of the chief control mechanisms in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The novel presents a regime that merges totalitarianism, surveillance, and psychological repression to enforce submission. The ultimate objective of the Party is to dominate people’s thoughts and behaviour to the point that one’s “own nervous system was one’s worst enemy” (Orwell 60), as Winston concludes. In fear of experiencing internal strain at any time, which could manifest as “bodily symptoms” (Orwell 60) as if thinking itself were a disease, people like Winston are compelled to

doublethink, further caving in to the Party's control. The novel showcases the horrifying parameters and consequences of internalized panopticon-like surveillance and its contributing role in enforcing political obligation. The technology of telescreens that registers private moments of life, the information of phobias, mirrors the "penitentiary Panopticon", which Foucault contends works as an apparatus of "individualizing and permanent documentation" (*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 250). Analogous to panopticon surveillance, telescreens are employed to control emotions and preserve social cohesiveness aligned with authoritarian ideology. Transformed by technologies, surveillance is used to produce massive archives of data with the intention of intercepting and storing a large portion of private details, psychological vulnerabilities, and daily communications of ordinary citizens for decryption and to invoke terror at the hands of the power-mongering regime in Orwell's text. Winston and other characters are forced into controlling their political or subversive opinions because they are severely punished for merely conceiving thoughts. The novel also underlines that the power dynamic between the watcher and the watched is impacted by surveillance as the Party watches over the characters from a superior position. This discrepancy raises the possibility of several negative outcomes, including exploitation, coercion, and persecution for falsely accused misconduct, exemplified by Winston and Parsons, allowing the Party to consolidate more power and control.

Chapter 4: The Creeping Surveillance: Entrapment of the Mind

In Ghalib Islam's *Fire in the Unnameable Country*, the concept of thoughttreel is the central mechanism through which the authoritarian state exercises surveillance and control over its citizens' minds and actions. In this chapter, I attempt to describe the scope sustained by the technology of thoughttreels and the psychological effects of governmental espionage inherent in the novel through Foucault's concept of the panopticon. The chapter also looks at how surveillance significantly alters the power dynamics between the observer and the observed, i.e., the state and the characters, Zachariah, Gita, Mamun, and Hedayat, respectively. Therefore, it is also important to consider the potential for misuse, as this dynamic also creates vast opportunities for discrimination, coercion, or blackmail against the observed/targets by their observers/state.

Fire in the Unnameable Country is as much about a perplexing family or generational history of suffering at the hands of the state-authorized agents as it is about Hedayat, the protagonist. The fictional country in Islam's novel is ruled by a totalitarian regime in collaboration with the Black Organs, an intelligence and paramilitary organization, often assuming the role of a federal law enforcement agency if necessary. The totalitarian regime in the novel frequently changes its rulers or acting head of the state, referred to as the Governor or the President (Islam 30). Starting from Anwar the Great, Samir Gallili, Samater Adel-Yaqub, Xamid Sultan, and Maxwell (addressed as the Director), lastly to the Madam, who ruled for ten years, until a new search for a propaganda representative or puppet begins towards the end of the plot in the guise of the "first national elections in ten years (Islam 291). However, the Black Organs retain their position as the "National Security Service" (Islam 16), and Black Organs

telecommunications occupy the “Ministries of Radio and Telecommunications and of Records and Sources” (Islam 22), upholding terror and ensuring mental repression. It is the Black Organs’ agents and spies that turn Hedayat’s family members’ lives into a pandemonium of agony and wretchedness, stripping them of intellectual and psychological privacy and freedom. Hedayat’s grandparents, Zachariah Ben Jaloun, and Gita Nothingatall used to work for Department 6119 when they were young. The department captures the brain activity of the citizen’s mind through shortwave radio. The thoughts are recorded, transcribed, and stored in thoughtreels by officers like Zachariah and Gita. These reels can be edited, spliced, and recontextualized, similar to how Orwell’s novel’s regime manipulates historical records. However, these reels are not liable to change with any addition of new or contradictory information, or other external factors that historical records are vulnerable to. Mamun M or Mamun Ben Jaloun, the son of Zachariah and Gita, and Hedayat’s father, as luck would have it, found himself working at the “Archives Department of the Ministry of Records and Sources” (Islam 29). He worked as a clerk whose role was to listen to the reels and classify them chronologically in the shelves of the Archives.

In *Fire in the Unnameable Country*, thoughtreels are instrumental for panopticon monitoring and used as a psychological repression tool. A thoughtreel is “a human mind on a magnetic reel” (Islam 11) occupying “real minds, actual souls” (Islam 29), which captures the frequency of brain waves by the thoughtspies of Black Organs. Essentially, they function like audio reels that capture and playback the mental activity of a person, including their internal monologues, emotions, fears, dreams, and potentially subversive thoughts and daily conversations as well. They are not only personal records of past and present citizens but also political artifacts stored in archives. The government uses these to understand and police the psychological and ideological state of its citizens. The unnameable country’s apparatus of

thoughttreels surveillance is more concerned with “the knowledge of the criminal, one’s estimation of him, what is known about the relations between him, his past and his crime, and what might be expected of him in the future” (Foucault 18). The minute details of interpsychic processes, such as everyday life interactions, and the intrapsychic activities that occur within the psyche, such as conceiving thoughts, impulses, and fears, are susceptible to manipulation and abuse of Black Organs’ agents because of thoughttreels’ capacity to spy on every character’s thoughts twenty-four/seven.

The Black Organs abuse the legal system with the help of the all-pervasive surveillance apparatus, thoughttreels management, in order to alter the thoughts and sensibilities of Gita and Zachariah. Hedayat’s grandparents’ thoughttreel profiles were used to oppress them based on their assumed disloyalty. In the chapter “Fable of Yeshua”, thoughttreels involving Gita and Zachariah were found conversing with a refugee named Yeshua, who was later falsely criminalized as a terrorist for making aliyah (immigration to Israel) and returning back to the unnamable country. Both Gita and Zachariah worked at Department 6119 and spied on citizens’ thoughts. However, their sympathy for refugees culminated in their arrests by the Black Organs. The struggles of refugees, or asylum seekers, in the Brotherhood places (refugee camps) like Yeshua, Yoni, and other “disfigured living corpses” (Islam 192) deeply engrossed Gita and Zachariah’s sympathies. The main issue is that the totalitarian state in the novel recognizes Zachariah and Gita’s perception of sympathy as rebellion, not their actions. In panopticon societies, as illustrated by Islam, one becomes “the object of information, never a subject in communication.” (Foucault 200). Communication with the refugees may lead to discussion on how Yeshua and others are actual residents of the state, but are merely criminalized because the state no longer wishes to provide any living space for the immigrants, who were supposed to

seek accommodation abroad. The state and Black Organs will lose their totalitarian grasp if agents, like Gita and Zachariah, who maintain the inner workings of the surveillance system, continue to sympathize with the state's adversaries, leading to the investigation of the truth of refugees with the help of the interpretation of thoughtreels. Identification with subordinate groups, such as refugees, sentiments of injustice and sympathy towards them, and opposition to ideologies that legitimize hierarchy are psychological seeds of resistance (Pratto et al. 132–160). Such resistance can pose a threat to prevailing notions of power dynamics of the state of the unnamable country, creating alternative viewpoints, dissent, or potential for revolution against the Black Organs and the regime. Hence, vicenarian Gita and Zachariah were persecuted and tormented because of their interactions with refugees, who were declared illegitimate residents and confined in concentration camps of Brotherhood places. Thus, the Black Organs ensure that even human sensibility and sympathy are aligned with the regime's propaganda through constant surveillance. If thoughtreels with non-aligned sensibilities, as exemplified by Gita and Zachariah's reels, are captured, they are instantly altered by psychological or physical torture.

The thoughtreels also revealed that Zachariah wrote political poems alluding to the independence movement from the British colonial policy, radicalism, "effects of war" (Islam 230), and secularism. Zachariah's thoughts and poems are criminalized as dissent, despite not having acted upon his thoughts, simply for conceiving those thoughts and writing descriptive verses on banned topics. Though Zachariah admits that his collections of poems, "blank verses of *Facsimile*" (Islam 162), and "*Orange Blossoms*" (Islam 230), are not political, a Marxist professor, an interested reader of Zachariah's poems, finds "the political, self-evident and buried just beneath" (Islam 230). The country's regime has outlawed all sorts of Marxist or Socialist thinking. As a result, Zachariah was also found guilty of associating with the nameless

“grey-haired professor” (Islam 230), as the professor engaged himself in Marxist reading groups. Foucault argues that “an omnipresent and omniscient” surveillance system regularly circumnavigates and decides on “the ultimate determination of the individual, of what characterizes him, of what belongs to him, of what happens to him.” (197). The omnipresent and omniscient surveillance apparatus of Islam’s novel also seeks to regulate interpsychic and intrapsychic activities of Zachariah by criminalizing his thoughts, poems, and even acquaintances (interaction with Yeshua and the professor). Zachariah’s poetic ambitions reflect what characterizes him and what sort of intellectual capacity he holds, along with his sensibilities towards illegitimate refugees. Since the totalitarian regime and the Black Organs could not afford to lose one of their employees to Marxist thinking or liberal writing, they forcefully eliminated Zachariah’s poetic aspirations, brainwashing him with torture to the point that he could no longer “commit to the page owing to a mysterious ailment that eventually rendered him illiterate.” (Islam 163). The surveillance apparatus of reading thoughttreels portrays that surveillance is not merely external (shortwave registers, spies, etc.) but it gets internalized. Zachariah becomes self-censoring in thinking, writing, and interacting. Therefore, round-the-clock or panopticon-like espionage facilitated by the Black Organs has erased Zachariah’s interiority, psychological liberty, and intellectual capacity, forcing him to censor even his private mind and private life.

Foucault notes that “the Panopticon is a privileged place for experiments on men, and for analysing with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them.” (204). Zachariah and Gita are transformed into callous characters owing to the unnamable country’s panopticon-like surveillance apparatus. Once a victim of discriminated Black Organs’ violence over harbouring literary ambitions, Zachariah handles “the arrests of eight hundred youths in

connection to a treason case” (Islam 99) with no evidence. As the director of internal communications in the Ministry of Radio and Communications, his task lies in “control of the populace by brutal precision” (Islam 102). His job necessitates him to “cast blame and to localize the problem” (Islam 100) so that the Governor, ministry, or Department 6119 is not held accountable, and ensure citizens are now and then struck with morbid fear of being arrested and tormented. The eight hundred prisoners Zachariah dealt with were tortured to the point of “some cluthing their lost teeth” (Islam 100) and came to appear “a shapeless mass that heaves and sighs and groans together as if its suffering is collective” (Islam 100). Zachariah thus exemplifies the phenomenon of victim turned victimiser. The torturous body positionings, beatings, and sensory disorientation that young Zachariah went through are inflicted likewise on the youths to suppress dissent, as well as to eliminate emotional intelligence and sympathy. The trauma of exposure to painful confinement had rendered Zachariah frightened and utterly helpless. “He was drugged so often that the mere thought of food made him vomit” (Islam 195). Zachariah and his wife, Gita, were subjected to the coercive whims of the government, in utter solitude, receiving no support from anybody. The sense of injustice, powerlessness, isolation, and the suppression of emotions in fear that he might find himself at the mercy of truncheons again has rendered him apathetic towards the repetition of violence, which once scarred him. His apathy and hostility towards innocents keep him safe from the brutality that he inflicts on others. Zachariah is no longer forced by the surveillance apparatus to act in a certain way, he has internalized self-policing to the very core of his mind.

Gita was persecuted because her thoughtreels revealed that she considered the collection and transcription of thoughtreels as “violating a deeper privacy” (Islam 186). Early on in the novel, Hedayat’s grandmother, Gita, is mentioned that she was a “perpetual contemplator of

suicide” (Islam 12). Later, in the chapter “Fable of Yeshua”, Islam gives a graphic account of how she was tortured as a young woman for hanging around with suspected terrorists or illegitimate refugees with her husband, Zachariah. Gita is also punished for associating with Zachariah, owing to his literary ambitions and academic acquaintances. She is psychologically tormented “with the intention that she should forget the order of the past” (Islam 193). She was arrested by the Black Organs’ agents for re-education. It was necessitated by the Black Organs’ officers that she accept that Yeshua and Yoni were terrorists, not “poor men who happened to be black and who merely wanted” (Islam 192) as she earlier blurted out in frustration at the beginning of her interrogation. Being confined and violated for two years, Gita was released on the condition that she accept that she is physically and psychiatrically impaired, including the false confessions that Black Organs had accumulated from her. As a result, when Zachariah arrived as “thin meat slices in a duffle bag” (Islam 13), hexagenarian Gita felt little to no emotions for her mutilated husband. She feels “a lightness on her feet” as if some “furtive mass” (Islam 13) was finally off her. It shows how both Gita and Zachariah have been experimented on by the panopticon-like surveillance system regulated by the Black Organs. They had been so brutally abused that they were no longer capable of feeling emotions. Hence, totalitarian surveillance mixed with psychological repression creates individuals who are stripped down to their most fundamental existence, existing in a state devoid of political protection and human sensibilities. Individuals, like Zachariah, are forced to find themselves in a vulnerable position, lacking the safeguards that society typically offers. He is rendered essentially vulnerable, marginalized, and accessible as coercive agents, as functionaries of the regime. He is compelled to commit violence against others, intentionally or unintentionally, and subsequently makes him one of the many coercive agents, or functionaries of the Black Organs, who help the totalitarian

government abuse its power without having to directly engage in the process. And characters like Gita, who are rendered psychologically traumatized, because she was forced to relive traumatic memories until she gave up during her torturous confinement. She feels rather unburdened when matters are solved by the regime's legitimized violence, since she is conditioned to perceive her loyalty towards the regime as the last resort of safety. Therefore, constant surveillance, suppression of mental, emotional, and intellectual faculties, and torture reduced Zachariah and Gita to apathetic humans, with no agency for conceiving private thoughts, contradictory thoughts against the state, or Black Organs, and the impulses to act upon.

The primary impact of the panopticon, according to Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, is to create in the prisoner a state of permanent and conscious visibility that ensures the automatic operation of authority (201). Even though surveillance acts in an omniscient manner, power operates while one is aware of its gaze, not just when it captures one in it. Islam's novel's espionage takes the panopticon surveillance to a more all-pervasive entrapment, where mere perception of thoughts is criminalized, rendering thinking or intrapsychic activities non-viable or preposterous altogether. Even using the intellectual facilities for critical thinking is entrapped and regulated via the paranoia of being heard through thoughtreels. The shortwave frequencies employed by the Black Organs' thoughtspies do not ensure surveillance and internalized self-policing with its visibility like the architectural structure of the panopticon, but rather with its far-reaching effectiveness and inevitability. The surveillance apparatus of Black Organs and thoughtreels embodies the characteristics of the panopticon in the sense that "inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere." (Foucault 195). The gaze in Islam's novel being the radiowaves of thoughtreels. Thoughtreels procure all sorts of brain waves of thoughts that are yet to translate into actions, and can access any part of the

country, making it impossible for the characters to escape; no choice but to yield to totalitarian power. Its omnipresence goes beyond the architecture of panopticon-like surveillance and monopolizes the characters' psyche, the brain itself. Constructing a crippling affliction on the nervous system so that divergent opinions are not only never voiced but also never perceived in the first place. And if perceived, they are altered either by further mental repression or torture. Subsequently, to avoid further punishment, Zachariah and Gita simply self-regulate their thoughts that don't resemble dissent. Hence, they are forced to criminalize their own thoughts and learn to override their feelings and knowledge, similar to Orwell's doublethink process. Inevitably, self-regulating surveillance takes the shape of an omnipresent panopticon in one's own mind, policing their daily interactions, writing, impulses, and thoughts that may bring about the regime's or Black Organ's suspicions and wrath. Internalized surveillance and criminalizing thoughts in Islam's novel thus enable the protracted prosecution of people and are used to suppress dissent in the unnameable country.

In Orwell's dystopia, "the few cubic centimetres inside your skull" (27) still remained a mental sanctuary where at least one's inner thoughts remain safe unless a telescreen detects someone's expressions or actions. In Islam's dystopia, however, this sanctuary is removed. Thoughttreels turn internal or unrealized thoughts into something external and monitorable. It allows for preemptive repression; individuals are punished not for what they do, but for what they might think, something that the individual has not even thought about yet. Hedayat's father, Mamun Ben Jaloun, accidentally ended up being an Archive clerk for the Black Organs' Ministry of Records and Sources. During his tenure, Mamun observed that all thoughttreels, from all eras, are records of misery. Mamun once ended up in the labyrinth of the Archives and "stole a thoughtreel" (Islam 161) that had the tag attached as "Zachariah Ben Jaloun" (Islam 161).

While examining his father's thoughtreel in an attempt to understand how Zachariah could have changed from a poet to a butcher-functionary, and "the madness and disintegration" (Islam 162) of Zachariah's mind, he discovered the horrors of his father's confinement. As a result, Mamun was kept under house arrest for many years for the "discovery of his father's recorded thoughts" (Islam 29), suspecting he might raise questions against the authority for unlawfully torturing his father. Although discovering the horrors of Black Organs' torture from Zachariah's thoughtreels, along with other thoughtreels, Mamun's thoughts never dared to engage in any kind of dissent. However, the questions of "how much did Mamun Ben Jaloun know about the Department's overhaul and translation of the whole enterprise of surveilling and storing human minds by newer machines." (Islam 34) and how much of it he would not question it or accept it as a search for suspects, fueled the suspicions of the Black Organs, adding extra layers of surveillance to Mamun. "Sometimes the closed apparatuses" of disciplinary establishments "add to their internal and specific function a role of external surveillance, developing around themselves a whole margin of lateral controls." (Foucault 211). Mamun's "shoulderspy was one example of such Black Organ agenda" (Islam 299), a surveillance agenda. This "man-sized parasite" (Islam 37) sat on Mamun's shoulders, dictating his every movement. His life and home became infiltrated by the field of shoulderspy's vision and interference, resulting in a lack of physical privacy and even an inability to spend time with Shukriah, Hedayat's mother. Mamun is denied both his external and internal (intellectual and mental) spaces owing to the state-authorized espionage, a complete loss of his sense of privacy, along with psychological repression that eliminated his dissent long ago. Foucault argues that the enclosed and organized environment of the panopticon is designed to provide oversight at all levels, where individuals are "inserted in a fixed place" (197). Within this space, even minor movements are monitored. In Mamun's case, all his major

and minor movements, like eating and interacting with his family, are hampered, and the perception of thoughts is rendered impossible owing to the paranoia of the Black Organs' torture, which the shouldspy repetitively keeps reminding him. All his movements and thoughts have been fixed in a place from where he is bereft of all physical and psychological liberties. Thus, the panopticon surveillance in the novel not only exterminates the psychological interior of one's mind but also the privacy concerning the external or physical spaces as well.

Possession of thoughtreels also enables the totalitarian government to unlawfully criminalize, blackmail, and coerce into accepting propaganda beforehand, and provides a leeway for unauthorized torture. It allows the state and the Black Organs to procure a superior position from where they could observe and wrongfully accuse the observed of unspecified misconduct. Hedayat is arrested and tortured on account of his involvement with his childhood friend, Niramish (later killed), and the Vulgarists, both of whom were considered rebels by the state. Hedayat's affiliation with Niramish's uncle, who lent him magical bootlaces to escape dangerous situations, including all his personal details, was caught on thoughtreels and readily accessible for the Black Organs to manipulate and shape Hedayat's reels as they deemed suitable to criminalize his thoughts. In Hedayat's case, his thoughtreels are not intended to punish any offense, as his thoughts did not convey any hint of dissent. But the mind control is "to supervise the individual, to neutralize his dangerous state of mind, to alter his criminal tendencies" (Foucault 18) in advance. As the Vulgarists help Hedayat discern the state propaganda regarding the La Maga movie sets and the Governor, Hedayat retorts, "tarrying to decide or to think had become dangerous, impossible, and contemplation criminal" (Islam 285). As a result, the Black Organs make sure that Hedayat's acquaintances with the insurgents, Niramish and the Vulgarists, do not give rise to any potential dissent in Hedayat. So, in the unnamable country, it is not

necessary to have committed a heinous felony to be punished. The regime of the country dares not to compromise its totalitarian indoctrination with the rising influence of the youth population. The youth “were either institutionalized or vanquished ” (Islam 248), or indoctrinated with the regime’s ideology beforehand by educating or tormenting them in the jail cells of the Black Organs. The coercive force of surveillance helps to mobilize power and homogenize thought perception in prior lest thought inception even starts to occur, lest with the birth of each new human being, a new revolution arises and revolts against the regime. Thus, the espionage operating within Islam’s novel mirrors the characteristics of the panopticon, where disciplinary measures of consistent surveillance “acts even before the offences, mistakes or crimes have been committed” (Foucault 206). The regime and the Black Organs are arresting youths like Hedayat to preserve their power by eradicating thought perception itself, making their totalitarian power unassailable. Such is the nature of the unnamable state that actively strives to control the characters applying the disciplinary mechanism of the panopticon. Imposing psychological repression and panopticon surveillance, the state gets to exercise its control to the maximum extent, with “its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses” (Foucault 218).

The regime in *Fire in the Unnameable Country*, under the pretext of law and order management, incorporates internalized espionage and compels people to self-activate thought control. Regulation of the characters’ ongoing thoughts and actions, creating a system of constant observation, and, thereby establishing a comprehensive body of knowledge extracted from the thoughtreels that is centralized and manipulated by the whims of the Black Organs, serves to show the all-pervasive mechanisms of the panopticon surveillance in Islam’s novel. Thoughtreels are employed as a tool of psychological and resistance control that invades one’s

mind, past, and daily life exchanges. It allows the state to establish a panopticon setting where citizens are continuously watched, heard, and punished for thoughts rather than actions, akin to Orwell's technology of telescreen. Thoughttreels can be compared to modern data collection practices, only that these reels are real thoughts, which can be analyzed, monetized, and used to manipulate the workings of the mind, instead of depending on external means like social media histories or search algorithms. By conceptualizing the thoughttreel, Islam explores the terrifying parameters of a state that knows you better than you know yourself, a regime where even one's most fleeting ideas can be held against himself or herself. Thoughttreels mirrors the "penitentiary Panopticon", which Foucault claims that it works like an apparatus of "individualizing and permanent documentation" (*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 250), as exemplified by Zachariah and Gita's thoughttreel documentation. Inevitably, Zachariah and Gita become self-censoring, altering their very thoughts due to the awareness that they are being recorded and analyzed, and punished if the Black Organs deem it justifiable for suppressing potential terrorism. As a result, they are rendered emotionally detached, psychologically unstable, and remain callous and isolated individuals, loyal to the regime's propaganda. The criminalization of thoughts has developed into being coextensive with state control and surveillance. In doing so, the authoritative system in Islam's novel sustains ideological, intellectual, and psychological repression. The panopticon is not a tower in a prison yard in *Fire in the Unnameable Country*. It is installed directly into the nervous system, criminalizing interpsychic and intrapsychic activities of merely thinking and interacting with others. The goal of the panopticon, nonetheless, remains the same, to make dissent not just punishable, but unthinkable in the first place. Thus, employing thoughttreels as omnipotent self-regulatory surveillance, the unnameable country's regime and Black Organs have transformed the whole nation into a panopticon-like prison where privacy is

nonexistent, and thinking is prohibited. And, disciplining the psyche of the citizens plays a major role in upholding power.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The thesis concentrates on two dystopian novels, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Ghalib Islam's *Fire in the Unnameable Country*. Most of the previous research on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was related to propaganda, language censorship, sense of memory and identity, and historical erasure. For that reason, I have chosen to look at Orwell's novel through alternative theoretical lenses, i.e., through Foucault's notion of panopticism. As for Islam's novel, it is yet to establish its mark on the academic sphere. Nonetheless, this thesis analyzes how *Fire in the Unnameable Country* portrays totalitarian coercion through the phenomena of mind-reading, criminalizing thoughts and thinking processes, and imposing internalized surveillance or self-policing behaviour to expose the mechanisms of control. The surveillance system prevalent in Islam's novel also operates like a panopticon apparatus of surveillance. In order to bridge the disparity of research between these two novels, the thesis also explores the interwoven themes of surveillance and the psychological interiorization of control that keep the totalitarian climate in the novels intact. Though fictional, the thesis was driven by the horrifying conditions of the totalitarian states operating within the novels that go to the extent of criminalizing psychological liberty. So, this thesis critically examines the scope and mechanisms of surveillance in the selected novels employed to facilitate mental control or psychological repression.

The regime's control, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, extends beyond the external world into the psychological and affective interiors of its subjects. Surveillance is omnipresent, not only through technological means, like telescreens, but also through the regulation of thought process via imposing to internalize the concepts of thoughtcrime and doublethink. Islam extends this to a more totalitarian extreme, a state not satisfied with merely engineering consent and perception,

but interested in criminalizing the very content of the characters' thoughts. In *Fire in the Unnameable Country*, the characters are constantly monitored and recorded, creating a society where paranoia and fear are normalized. The regime in the country installs a mind-reading apparatus, namely, thoughttreels, and every citizen's unspoken utterance is recorded onto tapes, echoing Foucault's panoptic society. Citizens live under constant, internalized surveillance, much like inmates in a self-monitoring prison. Hedayat, his father, Mamun, and his grandparents, Gita and Zachariah, all fall victim to targeted violence, which was intended not to punish them for actual acts of crime but to disable their thinking and intellectual capacity. As a result, the characters inevitably start self-regulating their own thoughts, lest their thoughts be labelled as dissident and they be tortured again. Subsequently, complying with every demand of the state became the norm for them, and retaliation being unthinkable. This is totalitarian control via internalized gaze, extended beyond the external sphere to thoughts and the interior of the mind, situating the panopticon within the consciousness of the mind. The manipulation of subjective experience aligns with the totalitarian goal of eliminating dissent not just in action, but in thought, paralleling the Orwellian novel, but with a postmodern and scientific twist. The regimes in the selected novels do not merely survey and manipulate; they erase the very possibility of truth along with the faculties of judgement, eventually repressing the characters psychologically, along with external surveillance and physical measures of disciplinary punishment. Furthermore, the emotional and psychological repression and constant surveillance render Winston, Gita, and Zachariah apathetic and incapable of perceiving any political opinions of their own, and transform them into loyal agents or subjects of their respective totalitarian regimes.

In my analysis, I could not examine the elements of loneliness and lack of solidarity, and how these are also surveyed, manipulated, and politicized in both novels. A key implication is

that these elements are also available to the omnipresent totalitarian surveillance and are manoeuvred to benefit the state hegemony. There is also a connection between the panopticon espionage incorporated nationwide by the state and the collaboration of geopolitical authorities in *Fire in the Unnameable Country* that provides material for further research.

In conclusion, applying the theoretical framework of the panopticon by Foucault, the thesis delves deeper into critical discussions of psychological repression and totalitarian control in the context of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fire in the Unnameable Country*. The totalitarian settings in the texts serve to deliberately oppress dissent and prevent potential retaliation by employing varying apparatuses of mental control mechanisms. In the end, specific characters' survival under panopticon-like surveillance becomes complicity, resulting in internalized self-regulation, a hallmark of totalitarian systems as showcased in the novels.

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