
Deception And Propaganda

“True Knowledge exists in knowing that you know nothing” (Socrates). This famous quote rings true in both novels, 1984, by George Orwell and, Girl with Seven Names, by Hyeonseo Lee. Growing up a citizen in the societies illustrated in these books, everything one comes to learn is a lie, demonstrated through the lives of Winston and Hyeonseo. As the years go by, their minds are filled with fake truths told by the government. It isn't until Winston and Hyeonseo come to realize what has really been going on, that they can understand. It is when they accept that all their lives, they have known nothing but lies, that they are truly enlightened with the realities of their societies. Citizens have been manipulated into following government propaganda to the point where they have grown blind to the deceptions. Deception and Propaganda leave a negative impact on both societies as their respected governments use these means to subjugate and control their population as if they were slaves, therefore failing in their moral duties as leaders.

The government fails in their moral duties first by invading every citizen's natural born right to privacy, which is a horrifying action directed towards the citizens. For instance, in 1984, every citizen is required to have a telescreen built in their homes and in Girl with Seven Names, every household is required to have the “portraits” hung on the highest wall of their house. However, the only difference between the 2 mechanisms is that telescreens are physically watching you, whereas the portraits aren't. The portraits are an implied invasion of privacy, as citizens aren't allowed to have any freedom from the constant reminder of a monitoring force. For instance, when Hyeonseo explains her childhood, she describes the portraits and their meaning to her when she says, 'our entire family life, eating, socializing and sleeping took place underneath the portraits. I grew up under their gaze”(Hyeonseo 49). These portraits aren't the average, buy-at-Micheal's frame, stick a picture in it and then forget about it portrait. The portraits had specific rules and guidelines provided by the government that must be followed. “About once a month, officials wearing white gloves entered every house in the block to inspect the portraits. If they reported a household for failing to clean them-we once saw them shine a flashlight at an angle to see if they could discern a single mote of dust on the glass- the family would be punished” (Hyeonseo 50). On top of all that protocol, the portraits can never be taken down, which is the government's way of always staying in the heads of their citizens, constantly reminding them of their civic duties as a citizen to the government. The telescreens, however, are an obvious obstruction to privacy, as they can never be turned off. They “could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely” (Orwell 7). Not only are the telescreens without an off switch, they are so technologically sensitive that they leave absolutely no room for any individual freedom of speech, action or even thought. For instance, after Winston's second encounter with the girl with dark hair in the bar, in which Winston was in deep thought in public, Winston warned us of Facecrime. Winston explained that “it was terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when you were in any public place or within range of a telescreen. The smallest thing could give you away. A nervous tic, an unconscious look of anxiety, a habit of muttering to yourself – anything that carried with it the suggestion of abnormality, of having something to hide. In any case, to wear an improper expression on your face itself a punishable offense” (Orwell 107). These circumstances made Winston's and Hyeonseo's lives miserable as they always had to look over their shoulders and they never felt at ease. They lived with intense stress and were constantly in fear of discovery of having doubts about the 'perfect

world' they live in.

In addition to invasion of privacy, another major dilemma the 2 despots present is the draconian propaganda they impose on their citizens, and the harsh tactics they use to enforce such laws. Specifically, how the government will re-write the past to keep people believing in the power of the government and how the government lies about the present to maintain obedience. In 1984, they re-write the books based on current events that might interfere with the past or the future, and in *Girl with Seven Names*, the government lied about simple facts such as the background of their military and who they are at war with. Winston experiences the remaking of history first-hand, as he works in the records section of the Ministry of truth. His job is "to rectify the original [messages from articles or newspapers that the Party thought was necessary to alter], by making them agree with the later ones" (Orwell 69). His job is to change anything that could lead to suspicion of Big Brother's leadership; anything that might contradict Big Brother (Orwell 69). However, it didn't stop there, according to Winston, "this process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, soundtracks, cartoons, photographs-to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance"(Orwell 70). This kind of mendacity is similar to the mendacity in *Girl with Seven Names*. For instance, when Hyeonseo travels to her Uncle's house in Shenyang, her Uncle and Hyeonseo talk about her father's arrest. Hyeonseo's uncle, upset with the circumstances of her father's arrest, explains to Hyeonseo all the fallacies that occur within her current society. He starts off by asking her, "You know all the history they teach you at school is a lie? ...At the end of the Second World War the Japanese had not been defeated by Kim Il-Sung's military genius. They'd been driven out by the Soviet Red Army, which installed Kim Il-Sung in power. There had been no 'Revolution'"(Hyeonseo 201-202). Hyeonseo was shocked to hear her Uncle say this and she believed that he had gone crazy. Hearing her uncle criticize her country like that was troublesome to her. She has never heard any criticism about North Korea before- which is because in North Korea, the government shielded such opinion from their citizens. Not being able to distinguish what's real and what isn't has made Winston and Hyeonseo's lives much more complicated and irritating. It puts them in a hard spot, because a part of them doesn't want to believe all the nepotism within their civilization, but at the same time, they do.

Deception can be seen in everyday lives today. Whether, it is about believing in those fake, fancy travel brochures to believing in a politician's speech on election day. People can promise the world but can't always give it. Propaganda can still be seen in the world today, in more than just political signs and commercials. As history goes on, societies can recognize their mistakes, but aren't always able to fix them completely. The first step to fixing these mistakes, is to acknowledge they exist. Winston and Hyeonseo were only freed from the totalitarian governments, when they were able to open their eyes and see the corruption around them for what it really is. Hence, they gained knowledge when they realized they knew nothing. (create a bridge between these two sentences). Deception and propaganda has been a problem since 1984, is an issue today and will be an issue tomorrow.