



Recasting The Victorian Age With Special Focus To Major Science Fiction Writers

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ABSTRACT:

The complications and challenges fostered the growth of great literary works. The novel rose rapidly, especially the social novel which captured the social, political and economic upheavals brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation and reflected the changing ideologies of the new educated class. The middle class rose rapidly with prosperous businesses and innovations made possible by new systems of production, aided by improved education, new inventions, discoveries and travel. This class challenged the hegemony of the aristocracy as they seek to gain the power and control that the ruling class had held for so long. There was a desire for the respectability and social position that the aristocracy had by virtue of tradition & birth and they started setting themselves apart in thought and lifestyle to oppugn those long held traditions. Fresh moral values were imposed with focus on individual responsibility, charity, discipline and a strong opposition to social evils. In this article, recasting the Victorian age with special focus to the major science fiction writers has been highlighted.

Keywords: Recasting, Victorian, Age, Science, Fiction, Writers.

INTRODUCTION:

In English literary history, the term "Victorian age" refers to the time period from the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign on June 20, 1837, to her passing on January 22, 1901. The Victorian age was a period of great technological, political and socio-economic changes which inevitably made the age a volatile one. The anti-slavery movement of 1790s was an example of this change in attitude. Utilitarian philosophers like Jeremy Bentham, James Mills and John Stuart Mills gained great popularity. Their movement, referred to as "Philosophic Radicalism", was based on a scientific approach to social changes and beliefs. A rational, methodical approach to identifying and solving social problems was advocated by these thinkers. The spirit of questioning that was synonymous with the age also led to scepticism over the authority and function of the church. Education and the rise of thinkers meant that blind obeisance was no longer possible as criticism over the many corruptions of the church were brought to light. Non-conformists fought bitterly against the established statuses of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church and tried to loosen the stranglehold that they held over individual lives and pursuits. The scientific temper and outlook of the educated fostered

the growth of secularism as doubts over the authority of the Bible swiftly grew. Walter E. Houghton, in his book *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, says of this development that, "Perhaps the most important development in the 19th century intellectual history was the extension of scientific assumptions and methods from the physical world to the whole life of man." (33). Charles Darwin's publication of his research in biology extended further the questioning of the existence of God and the process of Creation. [1] His book, *On the Origin of the Species*, though conceived and begun as far back as 1837, was finally published in 1859. The ensuing debates and confrontations between intellectuals and clergymen brought about by this revolutionary book gradually removed the domination of the clergy from many spheres of life especially from scientific establishments.

Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot and other such giants of English fiction belonged to this period. There was also a renewed interest in Gothic literature and novels such as *Dracula*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Invisible Man* were very popular feeding the imagination of the reading public. The conditions of the era also led to the birth of another genre of literature, science fiction, as a complimentary tool to fully comprehend the complexities of the age. [2]

Recasting the Victorian age with special focus to the major science fiction writers:

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was born on August 1797 to educated, intellectual parents. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was a feminist and philosopher, while her father, William Godwin, was a political philosopher. She herself had a high education, and she eventually married the poet Percy B. Shelley. The story of how her first novel was conceived is now quite famous among science fiction communities. She, along with PB Shelley and Lord Byron, were spending the summer in Geneva, Switzerland, when they decided to have a competition to see who could write the best horror story. Here, Shelley apparently had a dream about a scientist who created life and this she turned into her novel's story. The close proximity of the Frankenstein Castle and the myths surrounding it and also the conversations on galvanism and occult ideas provided her with all the materials she needed to flesh out her story. She was then only eighteen and published *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* in 1818. Though the novel bears many similarities in trait to the Gothic novels then, this book is generally accepted as the first true science fiction novel. Brian Aldiss in *The Detached Retina: Aspects of SF and Fantasy*, notes that the main character's 'deliberate actions' and the use of 'modern experiments and laboratory' makes this novel distinct from the Gothic and Fantasy genres and is the beginning of the science fiction genre (78). Though published before the Victorian Age, it carried the ethos that had started to germinate during her time and bloomed in the Victorian Age. In fact the book became a best-seller only in 1880 as Victorian society found affinity with the themes of the novel. This also is the beginning of what is now a familiar characteristic of science fiction - the prophetic nature of the genre. [3]

Frankenstein, the novel, has a complicated narrative structure. The reader barely get any direct narration from the characters themselves but only through a series of letters that

Walton writes to his sister. The story is narrated to Walton who listens and that is passed on in a series of letters to his sister. Walton represents the reading public in the sense that his incredulity, shock and scepticism to the story being told to him by Victor Frankenstein echo the sentiments of the readers. In the beginning, through a letter addressed to his sister, it is discovered that Walton was on a mission to the North Pole. As was common in Victorian society, he is also an adventurer with dreams of fame through travel and discovery. It is learnt that he endeavours to discover a northern passage to the Pacific, to reveal the source of Earth's magnetism or to discover new lands. We also hear him bemoan the feeling of isolation and loneliness as he struggles to find like-minded companionship and have intelligent conversation with his unsophisticated crew. [4] This part serves as an important parallel between him and the monster as it is discovered later on in the story of the monster, who like him, suffers from loneliness and longing for a companion. In the fourth letter, Walton narrates about finding a man on a sledge that was stranded in the ice. The man is weak, exhausted and emaciated and all but one of his sledge dogs had died. Yet this man refuses to be rescued until he was informed that the ship was heading north. This man is Victor Frankenstein and from this point on, the narration shifts to him as he tells his story to Walton. We learn of Victor's family background and early life and importantly, of the arrival of Elizabeth Lavenza in the family. Here, there is a variation between the original 1818 version and the reprinted 1831 version as to how Elizabeth came into the family. In the original, Elizabeth is Victor's cousin whose mother was the sister of Alphonse, Victor's father. Elizabeth is adopted when her mother died. In the revised version, Victor's mother Carolina finds Elizabeth while visiting a poor Italian family. [5] The little blonde girl amidst the dark haired Italian children piqued the mother's interest and upon inquiry discovered that she is adopted and is an orphaned daughter of a Milanese nobleman and a German woman. Carolina decides to adopt the girl from the poor family. This is the typical representation of women characters in Victorian literature. It is reflective of the society's attitude towards women and what it deems a good woman is. That is weak, incapable of rescuing oneself and whose major role is to be a loving mother and companion to the male. Victor had an idyllic childhood with an obsessive passion for natural philosophy. A book by Cornelius Agrippa encouraged his passion for the unveiling of the many mysteries of the natural world. When he saw a lightning bolt destroy a tree near his house during a storm, he beholds the power of electricity and this stokes his imagination for combining ancient alchemy with modern science. There is a lot of foreboding in the early chapters for the eventual doom that was to befall Victor. His blind obsession and unrelenting need to achieve his goals were leading him along a dangerous self-destructive path. Here again is seen one of the themes that is now quite common to science fiction novels—human vanity and hence obsession to discover and create without any regard to the destructive consequences of this obsession. The novel also serves as a message of doom warning against the reckless advancements made during the era. It forebodes the dangers of the knowledge exploited without any moral responsibility. This was proven true during the First World War which broke out in 1914 and the scale of death and destruction which exceeded any other wars fought before, was because of the modern weapons created by the advancements in

science and technology. [6]

The experience of horror at his own invention leaves Victor quite ill state both physically and mentally. His friend Henry is able to bring him back to a semblance of normality. Henry provides a positive foil to Victor Frankenstein. Though, also a scholar, Henry is never blinded by his ambitions and his humanity prevents him from sinking into the path of doom that people like Victor take. Victor learns of the passing of his youngest brother in a letter he receives from his father after arriving back at the university. Justine, the housekeeper, has been suspected of murdering William. Victor suspects that it was the monster he created who had committed the murder, but having no proof, he could not do anything to help Justine. Justine herself confesses to the murder believing she would gain salvation by doing so but pleads to Elizabeth and Victor that she is innocent. [7] She was later executed for her crime. The character of Justine, though not explored very much, is interesting as a study of class discrimination. She is rejected by her own family and accepted by the Frankenstein family. She is always treated more as a family member than a household help. Here, Shelley briefly shows her sympathetic attitude towards domestic help who are normally treated very poorly in an aristocratic society. In the Victorian age there was an awakening of the rights of the labour class and the Frankenstein family seem to embrace these new ideals of equal and humane treatment towards people from all walks of life. In order to lift his spirits, Victor goes on vacation and being amidst nature and the refreshing surroundings gives him respite. This is indicative of the Romantic movement of the age which emphasises a return to nature and the contrasting effects of what is natural and man-made. His relief is however short-lived as he meets the monster though, at the same time, he is surprised to find him articulate and endowed with human sensitivity. Here a sympathetic and pitiful picture of the monster is portrayed and in his conversation with Victor, the reader learns of his struggles and his discovery of many basic things in life. The reader also finds that he has a conscience from his sense of guilt at stealing food from a poor family and from his realisation of his own grotesque form. His observation of the poor family makes him realise his otherness and his loneliness. He can never belong in the normal world and he can find no other with whom he can share companionship. His solitude and need for acceptance humanises his miserable condition. [8] His temporary relief usually comes again, from nature as the sudden burst of life in spring alleviates his dark spirit though it also reminds him of his own unnaturalness. Nature also seems to have a similar effect upon the monster as it does on Victor Frankenstein. We also see a philosophical side to the monster as he regards knowledge to be a dangerous thing. The more he learns, the more he realises his own miserable condition and the need to change those conditions. There are a lot of similarities between the monster and Victor whom he considers to be his God. Their sense of desolation and their sensibilities are alike and here, Shelley seems to suggest that human beings are themselves the monsters. There is also an advocacy for responsibility and accountability to the things we create. For instance, a constant reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost* is made and a parallel is drawn between Victor and the overreaching Satan. In the monster's silent observation of the poor family the reader is shortly introduced to a woman

character by the name of Safie who is unlike another female character within the novel or in most other Victorian novels. She is not the stereotypical passive, submissive and gentle creature but a strong headed woman who knows what she wants and seeks to attain exactly that without requiring permission or acceptance from society or even her father. Here, it may be noted that Shelley's mother was a pioneer in the struggle for women's rights, and Safie is indicative of the feminist movement that was taking shape in the era. [9]

The War of the Worlds which was released in 1898 reflects much the fears and apprehensions of the author's times. The book is also a critique upon the imperialistic nature of his country and he uses the novel to generate a sense of empathy for the many indigenous people that England and other Western countries had colonized everywhere in the world. During this time the British Empire was at its most powerful. It had colonies in almost all continents and its dominance stretched to such an extent that it was said, "The sun never sets on the British Empire". Having superior technology and a powerful naval force, the British were able to easily conquer the more backward countries outside Europe. The ruthless manner in which they and other imperialistic forces conquered these places with the total lack of humanity in their dealings was alarming and received much criticism from the educated middle class. Stories such as how the British colonists arrived in Tasmania in 1830 to overwhelm a local population of 5,000 aborigines were horrifying. All the men among them were killed by squad firing while the children were forced into slavery. The women were kept to satisfy the sexual desires of the colonists. By 1879, all the aborigines were believed to be killed. The skull of their last leader who was killed and decapitated was preserved for study in a cupboard in Edinburgh University until 1991. That particular incident was alluded to in the first chapter of the book. Also at this time; Germany was becoming a powerful military force rivalling England. The tension between the two made war imminent and eventually led to the outbreak of the First World War. The fear of invasion was a genuine concern for the English public and the advancements in science meant that the weapons used would be of devastating destructive power. It was under these circumstances that the novel was written. [10]

In Book Two of the novel, the narrator describes his plight in trying to escape the onslaught of the aliens and survive along with other humans. Here again there is a lot of reality mixed with fiction. Along with the tale, there are real scientific details documented in order to add realism to the story. Non-fictional characters such as Professor Howes, a zoology professor at the Normal School of Sciences, the University that Wells himself attended is introduced to describe the anatomy of the Martians. The narrator hides with a curate and in the heightened atmosphere with food supplies running short, quarrels between the two arise constantly which again exposes the thin veil of civility and humanity that human civilization boasts of. The curate can be said to represent the church and much of the criticism that Victorian society has of the church are found in his character. When faced with such an apocalyptic challenge, the church, as represented by the curate, can really offer no help. Help actually comes from an educated, logical mind,

like that of the narrator, which constantly attempts to find solutions. The curate, in his panic and helplessness, raves about God and Judgement and the narrator, in fear of being discovered by the Martians, has to knock him down. The Martians hear the scuffle between them and a tentacle from the tripod comes in and drags the curate away while the narrator keeps his calm and quietly hides behind a pile of coal. Further description is given of the advanced and efficient technology of the Martians and how well they are able to manipulate and control their machines for almost all physical functions. The narrators also discover that the Martians do not just kill the humans but also capture them in order to feed on their blood. Since they have no need for digestion and other organs, the Martians are also more evolved biologically. This is also a modernization of the Vampire trope in Gothic stories that were so popular during Victorian times. [11] The narrator has to flee his hiding place as the Martians have taken away all the food supply. He finds the streets and towns deserted and a red weed covering all over the land. The idea of terraforming or changing an alien place to resemble that of your own is a European practise of manipulating nature that Wells does not agree with. The red weed cannot flourish for a long time and perishes as it had no resistance to Earth's bacteria. Natural selection lets only those that have developed resistance to bacteria to survive. Wells's critique of colonizers and the havoc they wreak upon the natural state in colonised countries can be seen here. And this is not surprising since Wells was deeply influenced by his mentor T.H. Huxley, a strong advocate of Darwinism and the Natural Selection theory. The narrator takes refuge in an inn on top of Putney Hill. At night, he recollects his experiences and contemplates on what he and the Human race have become in front of the invaders. [12]

The narrator continues walking through a deserted London filled with black dust, looted shops and many dead bodies. Here he hears a howling and discovers a dying Martian who has crashed his machine straight into a house. He discovers another and terrified, he goes to hide for the night. In the morning he finds a third Martian and plucking up enough courage, he goes to examine the alien and finds that it has died. This is the end of the Martians and their invasion and it all comes about not because of any man made weapon, but they cannot resist Earth's bacteria. Though humans have developed an immunity to it through many, many years of evolution, the Martians have not and proves to be their downfall. The narrator reports that he has no memory of what has happened in the next three days but learns that others have made this discovery before him and aid is on its way. Survivors emerge from their hiding and the effort to rebuilding has already started. The author here makes a commentary about evolution again as he presses home the theory of natural selection. The Martians die as they are not natural inhabitants of earth and therefore have not biologically adapted, through evolution, to handle the smallest organism, bacteria. This can also be extended to colonisers suffering from strange diseases and dying in colonised lands as they have not developed immunity to diseases present there. Natural selection has deemed that they do not belong and are aliens to the place. The narrator concludes that their technology is far too advanced for human understanding and also adds that there is much they still do not know about the Martian physiology or the black dust. This adds to the element of realism as having an explanation

to all this would suggest that human level of knowledge to be at par with that of a superior race. [13]

Wells released *The Island of Doctor Moreau* in 1896, following the success of *The War of the Worlds*. The tale of Edward Prendick, a man who was shipwrecked, saved by a passing boat, and then left on the island where Doctor Moreau lived, tells the tale. Scientist Dr. Moreau left Britain a few years prior when his cruel and unethical vivisection experiments on animals were exposed to the public and denounced by the scientific community. It quickly becomes apparent that he has continued his work on this island, and the outcomes are even more horrifying and gory. Through his experiments, animals are turned into the terrifying, half-human Beast Folk. These beings include, among others, the Leopard Man, Swine Folk, Ape Man, Dog Man, and Monkey Man. Laws regarding what they must and must not do, such as the prohibition on eating flesh and tasting blood, are constantly reinforcing the behaviour of the beasts, and absolute adherence to Moreau is "woven into the texture of [their] minds." The victim is released into the island's wilds to revert to beasthood as each experiment fails. Prendick is left alone on the island with the Beast Folk after Doctor Moreau is slain by a running puma woman. He stays with them for months, but they start to act more and more like animals again. When they stop listening to him, Prendick realises he needs to leave the island. Shortly after, the Hyena Swine attacks him and kills his buddy, the Dog Man. He makes an attempt to construct a raft but fails.

Fortunately, a lifeboat carrying two corpses drifts onto the beach and he uses it to leave the island. He is rescued three days later and when he tells his story, he is thought to be mad. Prendick is never quite comfortable again in human company as he keeps imagining them reverting into animals. So, he retires to the countryside, pursuing his love for science in quiet isolation, away from the humanity he no longer trusts.

The Island of Doctor Moreau remains one of Wells's most popular works. Besides the issues of evolution and the ethics of vivisection that was hotly debated at the time, the novel carries concerns that are pertinent issues in the modern day. As Cathy Lowne and Esther MacCallum Stewart writes, "Today, the story takes on even greater significance given contemporary debates about cloning and genetic experimentation, as well as the contentious issues that still surround Moreau's modus operandi—vivisection." (n.p.) They also opine that, "The doctor also represents a series of fundamental anxieties about the role of science and human responsibility. Here, the archetypal mad scientist who creates without due care or any apparent concern for the consequences of his work is as vile as the beasts he manipulates." (ibid)

The novel can be read as a criticism of social stratification with the Beast Folk representing the working class and Moreau and Montgomery as the upper class. The rebellion of the Beast Folk against their masters and the reversion to their natural animal state is akin to the proletariat revolution that Marx envisions: a universal uprising against authority figures and the unnatural means of control that they have imposed upon the

masses. [14]

The Invisible Man is one of Wells' other well-read books. It was first published in 1897 and tells the tale of Griffin, a scientist who is initially shown as an enigmatic guy who visits the village of Iping. After that, he stays in an inn owned and managed by George and Janny Hall. He experiments with various substances and recipes in his room most of the time. Griffin only ventures outside at night, keeps his entire body entirely wrapped, and also sports a false nose. The residents considered him very strange, especially because there had been a lot of robberies and strange break-ins recently in the area. However, things get worse when Janny Hall, the landlord, tells him to pay the past-due rent or go. After losing all of his clothes and bandages and becoming despondent and furious, he vanishes into the night. He then coerces Thomas Marvel, a tramp, into becoming his helper, but Marvel betrays him by calling the police. After that, Griffin runs into Dr. Kemp, an old classmate from medical school. He reveals to Kemp about his experiments and how he is able to become invisible. He also reveals to Kemp about how he has burned down his former landlord's house and also his plans to unleash a "reign of terror" on the nation using his invisibility. Kemp is disgusted by Griffin and his plans and he reports him to the police. Griffin escapes capture once again but Kemp comes up with a plan where he himself will be the bait. In the end, Griffin is killed by a mob that comes to Kemp's aid and after he dies, his body becomes visible again. This novel is yet another tale of warning about the misuse of science. It also is a critique of human nature and how power easily corrupts human beings. When no longer confined by social laws, Griffin is drunk with power as he feels he can get away with anything. He feels that the concept of good and bad is no longer applicable to him as no one can punish him for whatever he does. The novel has also been interpreted as a criticism of capitalism. However, in his essay, "The Invisible Man and the Invisible Hand: H.G. Wells's Critique of Capitalism", Paul A. Cantor feels that it does more than just critique capitalism but modern society as a whole. He states that Wells thus cleverly employs the figure of the Invisible Man to develop a critique of capitalism, thereby making his novel something subtler and more interesting than the simple mad scientist story critics have typically found it to be. Nevertheless, Wells's critique of capitalism ultimately fails. For one thing it is not narrowly targeted enough. In most of *The Invisible Man*, Wells is not criticizing capitalism in particular but modernity in general. The aspects of life he questions—large-scale organization, urban existence, the masses of people, cosmopolitanism, rationalist and anti-traditional behavior — characterize all modern regimes, socialist as well as capitalist [5,7].

Strong emotions such as love and family bonds are considered detrimental to stability and hence citizens are conditioned against them psychologically so much so that any part of the traditional sexual reproduction practise, even just the mention of the word "mother" is considered pornographic and wrong. Yet promiscuity is sanctioned by the state and physical satisfaction is constantly available through "feelies". Everything in this world, including sex, is subject to the laws of supply and demand. Citizens themselves are no more than commodities and view themselves and each other as such. The reading of books and appreciation of art and other leisure are also discouraged. Historical

knowledge is controlled and manipulated by the World Controllers and the government revises it as necessary to serve its political goals. Citizens are taught to see history as worthless and exist only in the present. Hence, having no reference to an alternate life other than the one provided, the citizens do not protest or seek to change their condition. The characters of Bernard, Lenina and Helmholtz provide an insight to the typically rigid and structured day of a citizen in the World State. A hint of rebellion is presented in Bernard's dislike of the caste system and also in his refusal to have sex with Lenina even though he finds her desirable. Lenina represents a typical citizen who cannot comprehend anything different and reverts back to her conditioning when presented with anything deviating from the social norm. Outside of the World State, there is the Reservation where the Indian natives stay. When Bernard and Lenina went to the Reservation, they meet John, a blonde non-native who is naturally bom of a mother by the name of Linda. During a visit to the Reservation, Linda falls ill and is rescued by some Indians who bring her to their village where she has lived ever since. She has a liaison with Thomas, a Director of the Hatchery who is planning to exile Bernard to Iceland for having heretical thoughts. Something goes wrong with her contraceptives and she cannot get an abortion in the Reservation. So, she gives birth to John and stays there as she was too ashamed to go back with a baby. John, an outcast at the Reservation, dreams of living in the World State and Bernard, a misfit in his own world, sees an opportunity for himself in John's circumstance. [13, 14]

John is not subjected to the intense conditioning that all citizens undergo inside the World State. He is, therefore very different from Bernard and his likes. He constantly quotes Shakespeare as he was given an entire volume of Shakespeare's work to read growing up. When he quotes from *The Tempest*, a parallel can be drawn with *Brave New World* as a symbolic commentary on colonisation. Prospero in Shakespeare's play tries to civilize Caliban by replacing his native culture and language with European ones. This is generally the modus operandi of the European colonisers in Asia and Africa in order to exercise control over the natives. They try to alienate the natives from their own histories and cultures thus reducing the chances of resistance from the conquered. The entire World State also does this by erasing the past and all cultural legacies and in this way, colonises everyone. Bernard manages to convince the authorities to allow Linda and John to return to the World State with him as a matter of scientific interest. They are placed in his care. When Bernard returns to the Hatchery, the Director plans to dismiss him in front of dozens of high-caste workers. As the Director carries out his plan, he accuses Bernard of being a heretic as he does not seek to immediately gratify his desires. In making this accusation, he is referring to Bernard's refusal to have sex with Lenina. Bernard then presents Linda and John to the gathering following which, Linda accuses the Director of making her pregnant and forcing her to keep the baby. There is pin drop silence in the room which is followed by laughter when John falls at the Director's feet and cries, "My father!" Reacting to this, the Director runs away in embarrassment. [5]

Huxley also understood the power of technology to not only enable government to control the populace, but also as a way to control the human mind. The government in

Brave New World repeatedly conditions its citizens to use "soma" and attend the "feelies," to afford them a sense of pleasure. The control mechanisms are designed to render the consumer complacent and intellectually lethargic. Indeed, the government agents in Huxley's satirical Utopian world - especially its benign dictator, Mustapha Mond - understood that you attract more bees with honey than with vinegar.

Brave New World was followed by another dystopian classic, Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell. George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair on 25 June 1903, in Motihari, Bengal, India. He is well known as an English novelist, essayist, and critic but most famous for his novels *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949), the latter, a profound anti-utopian novel that examines the dangers of totalitarian rule. His first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, appeared in 1933 as the work of George Orwell, a surname he derived from the River Orwell in East Anglia. His pseudonym became so popular that very few knew of his real name. His change in name is important as it coincided with his change in lifestyle and political leanings from a British Imperialistic stance to that of a socialist. Born in Bengal during colonial India, his parents would have been known as sahibs, or the ruling white class. His father was a minor British official in the Indian civil service and his mother was the daughter of a teak merchant in Burma (Myanmar). In his posthumously published autobiographical essay, *Such, Such Were the Joys* (1953), he opines that their attitudes were those of the "landless gentry," or what he called later, lower-middle-class people whose pretensions to social status had little relation to their income. When they returned to England, he was sent to boarding school in Sussex. He grew up withdrawn and different from the other boys in his school as he was far poorer than they were, but, to his credit, he also distinguished himself by his brilliance. He won a scholarship to Eton, a prestigious school in England, where Aldous Huxley was one of his masters. Despite getting a scholarship to join university, Orwell, keeping with family tradition, went to Burma instead as assistant district superintendent in the Indian Imperial Police. It was here that Orwell saw the work of imperialism at close quarters and left him with shame and disillusion. His novel, *Burmese Days*, and his autobiographical sketches, "Shooting an Elephant" and "A Hanging," expose these feelings and the evil nature of Imperialism. On 1 January 1928, he resigned from the imperial police and decided to live with the poor and the vagrant across Europe. He spent his time with beggars and labourers, living in slums and taking humble, menial jobs in various establishments. His rejection of imperialism made him rebel against the bourgeoisie and he started adopting a more socialistic political outlook. Later, in 1937, he went to Spain and ended up fighting in the Civil war there where he was seriously wounded at Teruel, damaging his throat and permanently affecting his voice. He tried to get into military service again when World War II began but was rejected. By this time, he has earned a name for himself as a writer and so, he became a journalist for the BBC instead and then the literary editor of *The Tribune*. He wrote many acclaimed articles, reviews and essays on various subjects from Charles Dickens to labour parties. Using all of his experiences, he produced his two most famous novels, *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949). Disillusioned by political developments in the Soviet Union, the first novel is a

political fable that serves as an analogy for communist Russia and the betrayal of the people by Joseph Stalin. The famous line, “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” emphasizes how power can eventually subvert a socialist revolution and establish a dictatorship instead. The novel gained great popularity and acclaim and made the author quite prosperous as well. The subsequent novel, a work of science fiction, *Nineteen Eighty-four*, which was also his last, completely surpassed his earlier book in terms of financial and critical success. *Nineteen Eighty-four* examines the dangers of a totalitarian regime, Orwell’s fear and paranoia expressed in the novel has become even more relevant today as governments interfere more and more with individual lives and try to control the citizens, through psychological manipulation, propaganda and constant surveillance. Orwell’s main objectives in the novel are to depict the horrific measures and techniques a totalitarian regime may use to control its citizens, and show the level of control that a government can have upon individual lives. Winston, the protagonist, is a person who has been subjected to this control and manipulation throughout his life. Later, however, he attempts to resist and rebel against this control. Orwell shows the inhuman lengths that a paranoid, controlling government will go to, to secure itself. The constant surveillance of its subjects by the Party can be seen straightaway at the beginning of the novel as Winston returns home from work he is greeted on each landing of his apartment staircase by a poster depicting an enormous face, underscored by the words “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU.” The “telescreen”, which is always kept on, continually spouts party propaganda and is also used by the Thought Police to spy on its citizens. Besides being a commentary on what was happening in communist countries, recent controversies of government secrets coming to light through the work of whistle-blowers such as Snowden reveal that Orwell’s vision is not farfetched but a reality. Winston works at the Ministry of Truth as a propaganda officer. Winston ponders on the irony of it and also on the irony of all the other Ministries such as the Ministry of Peace, which wages war; the Ministry of Plenty, which plans economic shortages; and the Ministry of Love, the centre of the Inner Party, where they enforce loyalty to Big Brother through fear and systematic brainwashing. The control is so total that any self-expression is considered a crime. Winston manages to procure a diary from the poorest section of the society, the “proles”. The Party does not monitor them as they are considered insignificant. As Winston writes on the diary, he recognises that it is an act of rebellion and that he has committed thoughtcrime by writing “DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER” over and over again in his diary. Winston is sure the Thought Police will come to arrest him at anytime and this reveals the level of fear and the sense of omniscience that the Party has instilled among all its subjects. Even children are not spared from being used as tools for spying on and controlling people. Known as Junior Spies, they are used to monitor adults and report anyone who is guilty of thoughtcrime or any act of disloyalty to the Party. Orwell took inspiration from the Hitler Youth, which flourished in Nazi Germany, when he created the Junior Spies. They forced children to monitor their parents for any indication of dissent from Nazi doctrine in order to instil in them a fanatical patriotism. Every day, citizens are also compelled to participate in the Two Minutes of Hate, a ferocious mass gathering where they can express their anger and hatred for

Oceania's enemy countries while also letting out their own suppressed feelings. The ongoing conflicts and alleged enemies of the state are also tools the party uses to exert control over its people. Another crucial facet of the party's control is sexual repression, and Winston feels certain of his demise since, in addition to writing in his diary and harbouring anti-party views, he has a crush on Julia, a girl with dark hair. [8, 10]

CONCLUSION:

Concepts such as “doublethink” and “Newspeak” remind readers of the power of language and its potential as a tool for controlling thoughts. The psychological manipulations, the falsification of histories and the use of technology for governments to spy upon and control its citizens are real dangers that Orwell implored his readers to oppose.

Even the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was tolerant by modern standards. Part of the reason for this was that in the past no government had the power to keep its citizens under constant surveillance. The invention of print, however, made it easier to manipulate public opinion, and the film and the radio carried the process further. With the development of television, and the technical advance which made it possible to receive and transmit simultaneously on the same instrument, private life came to an end. (206-7. II, 9)

The Victorian Age, as mentioned earlier, is an important age in terms of human history. The great technological, political and socio-economic changes of the period have helped shape the world that we know today. One of the most distinct developments of the period is the exponential growth of science and technology and the development of new thoughts and ideas. This had and continues to have, a profound effect upon the individual and modern society. It is also the age that gave birth to a new genre of literature, science fiction. As reiterated by many modern critics such as Suvin and Franklin, the birth of science fiction during this time is not by accident but a necessity to fully capture the new driving forces of the age especially science and technology. From Shelley to Orwell, the foundations of what is now known as science fiction were laid down during this period and carried forward till present day. Of its many characteristics, social commentary and critique of society was established from its formative period and the tradition continues with modern writers.

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