From the Ministry of Truth to the Filter Bubble: Manipulation of Discourse in *1984* and *The Loudest Voice*

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Abstract   In our current socio-political scenario, our perception of the world is influenced by the narratives of facts we consume, mainly from mass media. These narratives constitute a powerful tool in order to manipulate the public's vision of reality. Drawing upon mass communication theories, more specifically, Walter Lippmann's theory of stereotypes and the phenomenon of the "filter bubble," I will provide insight on how this manipulation of existing stereotypes is conducted by an authoritarian political system in George Orwell's masterpiece *1984* (1949), and by mass media in a democratic state in the American TV miniseries *The Loudest Voice in the Room* (2019)*,* in an attempt to control the public's views on diverse political and social issues that are crucial to maintain the *status quo*. With this analysis, I will conclude that both works aim to raise awareness among citizens of the importance of developing critical thinking skills and questioning our existing stereotypes, as well as of maintaining our independence of thought.

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Introduction

We live in the age of narrative. In our current society, the public sphere is defined by a massive amount of information, mainly in the form of narrative, which in

many cases overwhelms citizens. Furthermore, the public's perception of the world is not built anymore on events, but on what the people dominating the discourse[1] want us to believe is happening. Politicians control the narrative, they reinforce the narrative, they seize the narrative, they reshape the narrative. In May 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, President of the Community of Madrid (Spain), declared: "Hemos sorprendido al mundo. No nos van a robar el relato de la salud ni de la sanidad. Lo que ustedes están pretendiendo es deshacer mi relato." ["We have surprised the world. Our account of health and our health service is not going to be stolen; what you are trying to do is to ruin my narrative" (My translation).] (Caballero par. 1).

Another example of politicians dominating narratives is former President Donald Trump's discourse on COVID-19, a disease he claimed did not exist when the first cases started to appear. What is more, with over 8 million Americans infected, President Trump continued rejecting the advice of his own medical experts, holding mass gatherings (some of them indoors) and avoiding mask use while claiming that there was no reason to worry, as cases were diminishing and there was a cure "right around the corner" (A&S Communications par. 4). In early October 2020, President Trump was diagnosed with COVID-19, along with his wife and several members of his cabinet. He had fallen victim to his own false narrative around the risks of the disease and the way to avoid getting infected.

As we can see in both cases the discourse directed to the public from the establishment domain no longer has the objective of conveying a coherent account of a concrete situation citizens are going through. What is fundamental nowadays in the public sphere is to create a narrative of the events that aligns with the interests of the correspondent political party. What is of utmost importance is that this narrative is first, inspirational, and convincing, and second, as far-reaching as possible, no matter how poorly coherent it is in relation to facts. To sum it up, we are living in a time in which the narrative prevails over facts.

In this vein, the widespread phenomenon of disinformation or fake news,[2] defined as "information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social

1   Discourse is used in this paper following the definition of Jünger Link: "an institutionally consolidated concept of speech inasmuch as it determines and consolidates action and thus already exercises power" (Link 60, qtd. in Jäger 32)

2   Fake news is not a recent phenomenon. As Martin Moore observes, "[t]he political, economic, and social motivations for creating fake or highly distorted news have existed since the invention of the printing press" (Moore 5). However, the difference between former instances of disinformation and the current phenomenon is mainly related to its wide and rapid dissemination (Moore 5), taking advantage of the modern means of communication.

group, organisation or country" (Carmi, Yates, Lockley & Pawluczuk par. 3*)*, has become a global concern (Bharali and Goswami 118). Furthermore, the fact that the public is either oblivious to this situation or in other cases incapable of checking to what extent the information they consume is real, is leading us to a society in which citizens tend to look for narratives with which they agree, or at least that espouse a worldview that resonates with our own, leaving little or no possible room for self-criticism and discrepancy and a subsequent loss of independent thought.[1]

Analysts and scholars researching on this issue have recently made George Orwell's *1984* (1949) their leitmotif, insisting on the timelessness and predictive power of the novel. Ironically, Harold Bloom wrote that *1984* threatened to become a period piece, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (3). Quite the opposite, in this article I will argue that Orwell's novel sheds light on our current socio-political situation. In *1984,* as well as in his essay "Politics and the English Language," Orwell exposed that the control over discourse and language were key for totalitarian states to dominate the society they governed.

Among the topics that have been extensively studied in regard to Orwell's dystopian masterpiece, the analysis of language use and discourse as tools of power have become relevant in our time. In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell (1946) underlined that an accurate use of language was a fundamental factor in the process of political regeneration and critical thinking development. The relevance of the use of language in dominating citizens' worldview becomes explicit in *1984* with the creation of Newspeak, a simplified version of English that would impede citizens from expressing complex thought, becoming, therefore, much more easily controlled.

For the purpose of this article, however, I will focus on the significance of building a single coherent narrative that fits a concrete political agenda for states to manipulate their citizens' way of thinking. I will concentrate on Winston's function within the Ministry of Truth: rewrite history so that it is coherent with the new interests of the Party. It is in this context where the novel is extremely topical, due to the relevance of political narratives in our current socio-political scenario. I will

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1   Peter Ellerton explains in this sense that

[i]t is partly for this reason that the lies of politicians we don't agree with seem like howl-ing inconsistencies—which we post on social media with wicked delight—while the lies of more agreeable politicians are just trifling matters, best overlooked or forgiven. [...] What's more, we actively fight to maintain our narratives in the face of information that could corrupt them. It is often easier to ignore facts, or look for reasons to discount them, than it is to remake our narrative. (Ellerton, *theConversation.com* par. 6, 10)

use Orwell's masterpiece as a basis to examine the same phenomenon in today's society, concretely the control of the narrative in the media as seen in *The Loudest Voice* (2019), an American TV miniseries—based on *The Loudest Voice in the Room*, by Gabriel Sherman—that depicts Roger Ailes as he creates and guides the rise of Fox News. Concretely, I will argue that seventy-six years later, the control of the narrative plays a similar role in our society as in the socio-political scenario described in *1984*, with global authoritarianism on the rise and the prevalence of manipulated narratives tearing at the fabric of democracy.

The proposed analysis of *1984* and *The Loudest Voice* will draw upon public opinion theories, specifically Walter Lippmann's theory of stereotypes, which sheds light upon narrative manipulation and its impact on the public. In addition, the concept of the "filter bubble", defined by tech entrepreneur and internet activist Eli Pariser as a state of intellectual isolation, will also be useful to understand the way in which internet users are being affected in their perception of reality by their use of search engines on the web and feeds on social media.

Narrative Manipulation through the Creation of Stereotypes

The docudrama film *The Social Dilemma* (2020) argues that our conception of the world is deeply influenced by the information we obtain from different sources from the Internet. Interestingly,

> Even two friends who are so close to each other, who have almost the exact same set of friends, they think, "you know," "I'm going to see the news feed on facebook. I'll see the exact same set of updates." But it is not like that at all. They see completely different worlds because they are based on these computers calculating what's perfect for each other. (55:55-56:11)

Therefore, no matter how similar these two imaginary people's profiles are, in the end they will acquire a different narrative of the same events and their idea of reality may differ as a consequence. In this line of thought, the journalist, and media critic Walter Lippmann states: "For almost no two experiences are exactly alike, not even of two children in the same household" (93). Lippmann observes that the media (nowadays we would say mass media) is the main source of information about events for the general public; its role in shaping people's opinion about what happens around them, therefore, becomes highly relevant. Lippmann develops the concept of 'stereotypes', defined as "shifting imitations, replicas, counterfeits, analogies, and distortions in individual minds" (105). It is important to note,

however, that in Lippmann's view stereotypes are not lies, but a "representation of the environment which is in lesser or greater degree made by man himself" (8). As a result, each person models their own reality, with their own conception of events, a vision which turns out to be easily manipulated.

Lippmann divides stereotypes into two categories: social and political. Social stereotypes are formed by what we are taught at educational institutions. Our stereotypes, therefore, will differ depending on the kind of institution we attend or on the teachers we encounter throughout our formal education. Equally important in this sense are the beliefs instilled in us in our family environment, or our social status. All of it together will constitute the foundations of our understanding of the world when we become adults (Lippmann 52).

Regarding political stereotypes, Lippmann argues that our political views are not ideas that pass from generation to generation, as if they were part of our genotype. Simply put, they are not "biological facts" (23). Accordingly, in the process of transmission of these specific stereotypes from parents to their progeny, our education at home becomes of utmost importance in order to adopt a particular political tendency rather than another. It is within the family environment where we learn how to behave, what to believe, being either more inclined to the left or the right politically speaking, being religious or not, etc. (93). At the end of the day, all these stereotypes will make us expect some sort of behaviour from our fellow citizens, as well as making us prone to reading some pieces of information rather than others. As a consequence, citizens always search for ideas that agree with their previously formed stereotypes. In Lippmann's words, "[o]ur stereotyped world is not necessarily the world we should like it to be. It is simply the kind of world we expect it to be. If events correspond there is a sense of familiarity, and we feel we are moving with the movement of events" (104).

In this line of thought, in its role of conveying the news to the public, mass media disseminates concrete stereotypes and in doing so, it influences people's perception of reality. Therefore, "the public perceptions are the "human response" to a picture—a stereotype—that individuals have acquired through mass media" (Valverde and Pérez-Escolar 103). In this sense, Lippmann affirms that "[t]he systems of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defenses of our position in society" (95). This argument is directly related to the concept of the "filter bubble," introduced in 2011 by tech entrepreneur and internet activist Eli Pariser. As Bruns (2019) observes, the "filter bubble" is a persistent concept for which Pariser has failed to give a clear definition yet. Whereas Pariser's original conception was primarily applied to search results, nowadays "filter bubbles are more frequently

envisaged as disruptions to information flows in online and especially social media" (Bruns 2). What is more, this theory suggests that

> search engines and social media, together with their recommendation and personalisation algorithms, are centrally culpable for the societal and ideological polarisation experienced in many countries: we no longer encounter a balanced and healthy information diet, but only see information that targets our established interests and reinforces our existing worldviews (Bruns 1).

Following this concept, individuals tend to read those newspapers, join those social media groups, or listen to those radio stations which give them a vision of the events nearest to their worldview, to the stereotypes they have previously built. Tellingly, if the information conveyed differs from what we have previously envisaged (from our stereotypes), we will tend to think this has nothing to do with reality and we will feel deceived. In this sense, Lippmann observes "[n]o wonder, then, that any disturbance of the stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundations of the universe" (95).

In addition to the public's tendency to accept as true facts those ideas that are closer to their stereotypes, we should also highlight how the public these days does not have the time or does not feel eager to make the effort to think critically, to question their own certainties. In other words, to reconsider that, maybe, the version of the facts that they are more inclined to assume as true might not be what really happened at all, as it may imply re-evaluating their stereotypes. Lippmann calls it "[t]he intolerable burden of thought" (73). He explains that this strain is considered as such "[...] when the conditions make it burdensome. It is no burden when the conditions are favorable" (73). That is to say, applying critical thinking becomes burdensome whenever the narration of the facts we face clashes with our conception of the world.

In this context, it is always easier for the man of today to listen to repetitive mantras, to pay attention just to the words in bold (as we can see today in online newspapers); words highlighted by journalists, reporters, or editors with their political agenda in mind. Hardly ever does the public read the entire piece of news, and therefore, they do not collect all the data necessary to be well informed (Lippmann 73).

In our current society, as Pariser argues, when we receive information through our social networks, it seems highly unlikely to find information that differs from our previously set understanding of the world. The fact is that each and every corner

of cyberspace is programmed by means of algorithms so that we are primarily fed the information we are more inclined to accept (Orlowski 59:41-1:00:02). In this vein, the concept of media and information or digital literacy has become significantly more important in our present socio-political scenario. In order to be responsible and critical in our everyday civic engagement, citizens need to question the information they consume. This includes the ability to understand and use information in different formats from a wide variety of sources, getting narratives which may entail discrepancy regarding our standpoint. It also means approaching news and feeds with an open mind in order to accept ideas that challenge our assumptions and realise that to some extent such information may help us get a perception of facts as accurate as possible. As a result, in this age of information distortions, it is fundamental to examine what kind of skills citizens need to develop their critical thinking and what actions need to be taken. Undoubtedly, as a society, we will not be able to acquire this critical view until we improve our information, media, and digital education. In this line, Lippmann argues:

> For while men are willing to admit that there are two sides to a "question," they do not believe that there are two sides to what they regard as a "fact." And they never do believe it until after long critical education, they are fully conscious of how second-hand and subjective is their apprehension of their social data. (126)

Therefore, it is not only a matter of being literate, in the sense of knowing how to read and write. Actually, as Carmi et al. observe, "there is a need to understand literacy as the skills and competencies in using multiple media via communication technologies and not just the 'written' word" (4). Nowadays, it is fundamental to discern whether or not we are being manipulated through the sometimes overwhelming flow of information we get from mass media. The number of illiterate individuals, digitally speaking, is massive and, as Lippmann argues, "numbers constitute power" (75). In order to face the challenges, the current age poses, it is crucial to see further than what we are liable to believe, "to see first and then define" (Lippmann 81); to discriminate real facts from fake news,[1] and to be able to verify

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1   Following the Council of Europe, the term fake news includes two main types of information distortions: on the one hand, dis-information, defined as "information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country" *(Wardle and Derakhshan* par. 3*, qtd. in Carmi et al.)*; on the other hand, it also includes the concept of mis-information, defined as "information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing any harm." *(Wardle and Derakhshan* par. 3*, qtd. in Carmi et al.)*

the information we receive, so the public is not so easily manipulated.

Stereotype Creation and Information Manipulation in *1984* and *The Loudest Voice*

Having covered Walter Lippmann's theory of stereotypes together with the concept of the filter bubble as defined by Parisier, in this section, the process of creation and manipulation of stereotypes will be analysed, both in *1984* and *The Loudest Voice*. In these works, those in power—political in the first case and in the field of American cable news television channels in the latter—manipulate existing stereotypes in their respective societies in an attempt to control the public's views on diverse political and social issues that are crucial to reformulate or maintain the *status quo*.

Creation of stereotypes in *1984*

As individuals living in a concrete society and historical time, we allocate meaning to reality in the present, in the past and in the future for which we plan. Therefore, we create social and political stereotypes of reality which are the basis of individual and collective action. As Lippmann states, all these stereotypes are part of the citizens' shared social framework, due to the education received at home and at some other pillars of the educational system, such as schools or religious organizations. Therefore, stereotypes are not inherent to human beings, but apprehended throughout people's lives.

In both *1984* and *The Loudest Voice*, the social and political stereotypes built by the structures in power are key to maintaining the *status quo*. In Orwell's novel, the existent stereotypes revolve around the three main backbones of the totalitarian state: Doublethink, Newspeak and the mutability of the past, the sacred principles of Ingsoc. Ingsoc, that is to say, the Party in power in the authoritarian state depicted in *1984*, aims to modify people's stereotypes through the control of their minds. It simultaneously implies what in the beginning seems to be the formation of a new language, but in the end results in nothing else but a process of simplification and reduction in the lexis of the so-called Oldspeak, the language spoken until the appearance of the Party.

In this way, the population is expected to adhere to the Party's process of building new stereotypes, securing their citizens' support to every new political or social measure the Party wishes to implement, avoiding at the same time any objection. Ultimately, this will be achieved by altering every piece of written information related either to historical or geographical facts, or to literature itself:

Books, also, were recalled and rewritten again and again, and were invariably reissued without any admission that any alteration had been made. Even the written instructions which Winston received [...] never stated or implied that an act of forgery was to be committed: always the reference was to slips, errors, misprints, or misquotations which it was necessary to put right in the interest of accuracy. (Orwell 47)

Hence, each and every document which could contradict the Party's current stereotypes is modified, in a fluctuating manner and with no apparent reason whatsoever.

All this master plan is carried out within one of the pillars of the Party, the Ministry of Truth and, specifically, the Records Department, in which Winston works. As someone who has known a different life, Winston questions the reason for all this inconsistency within the narrative of the past. He wonders on what grounds he recalls facts from a previous life that do not seem to have taken place, a life which seems not to resemble the present: "Everything had been different then. Even the names of the countries, and their shapes on the map, had been different" (Orwell 37).

In the view of the Party, the fact that Winston has these memories of contrasting stereotypes appears to be a failure, since a total control of every citizen's view of reality is expected. In this vein, Winston states:

At this moment, for example, in 1984 (if it was 1984), Oceania was at war with Eurasia and in alliance with Eastasia. In no public or private utterance was it ever admitted that the three powers had at any time been grouped along different lines. [...] But that was merely a piece of furtive knowledge which he happened to possess because his memory was not satisfactorily under control. Officially the change of partners had never happened. The enemy of the moment represented absolute evil, and it followed that any past or future arrangement with him was impossible. (Orwell 39)

What is more, Winston illustrates how this control of reality, this doublethinking works. He is impressed by the way the total control over facts alters people's remembrances of the past. He appears to be the only one recalling the existence of previous stereotypes, even after scrutinising the place inquiring the eldest about precedent incidents and circumstances which could coincide with his memory of a past life. Winston becomes aware of how powerful the Party is, how dangerous it is for a few to hold control over the past, and as a consequence the present and the future:

But where did that knowledge exist? Only in his own consciousness, which in any case must soon be annihilated. And if all others accepted the lie which the party imposed - if all records told the same tale - then the lie passed into history and became truth.'Who controls the past', ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'. And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your memory. 'Reality control', they called it: in Newspeak, 'Doublethink'. (Orwell 40)

In this vein, Winston describes common social stereotypes in the times previous to the Party, stereotypes that are non-existent in the current society dominated by an authoritarian state:

Tragedy, he perceived, belonged to the ancient time, to a time when there was still privacy, love and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason." [...] Such things, he saw, could not happen today. Today there were fear, hatred, and pain, but no dignity of emotion, no deep or complex sorrows. (Orwell 35)

Winston claims that back in the old times family members used to support each other, a reality no longer seems to be possible as children are educated by the Party in order to inform against all of those who act contrary to the Party's dictates, no matter whether these offenders are total strangers or belong to their very same family. In Winston's words:

Nearly all children nowadays were horrible. What was worst of all was that by means of such organizations as the Spies they were systematically turned into ungovernable little savages, and yet this produced in them no tendency to rebel against the discipline of the Party. On the contrary, they adored the Party and everything connected with it. [...] All their ferocity was turned outwards, against the enemies of the State, against foreigners, traitors, saboteurs, thought-criminals. It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children. (Orwell 29)

Therefore, through the annotations of his diary, Winston is denouncing that the

Party's brainwashing is exerting a decisive effect: their manipulation of society through children's reeducation. As a matter of fact, in a relatively short period of time, the Party has accomplished its goal, modifying the stereotypes new generations form so they are more favourable to the Party's interests, and hence condemning to oblivion every single piece of information related with the past, familiar relationships or ancient customs. They have managed to impose a unique way of thinking for the whole population. In this sense, Maleuvre states:

> A single thought-system is a thought-system nonetheless. In truth, Orwell describes a society entirely devoured by ideology: everything in it is political, every thought, every emotion, every action, every twitch is either ideologically conformant or recusant, orthodox or heretical. *1984* depicts ideology triumphant: all life abides by the Party's dictum that reality is an idea, that it has no substance of its own apart from the Party's mind. [...] What the state says exists, is what exists: that is the natural drift, perhaps the political aim, of ideology. (39-40)

All this systematic manipulation is carried out through an extremely complicated process, in which understanding and using "doblethinking" is not easy, as it requires the usage of contradictory, binary opposites[1] as "true" and "lies," "democracy" and "totalitarianism," "remembering" and "forgetting." Yet, the Party performs it acutely and cleverly, with such astuteness that few citizens are aware of what is being generated with this "doublethinking":

> To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back to memory again at the moment it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word 'doublethinking' involved the use of

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1   According to Yoon, in the authoritarian system dramatised by Orwell in *1984,* any idea that is contradictory in itself is acceptable (129).

doublethinking. (Orwell 40-41)

Be that as it may, the Party realises that "doublethinking" by itself is not enough. As important as the creation of new stereotypes is, the Party has concluded that not only does the vision of reality need to be changed, but also the way to name it. Winston witnesses the creation of a new language, Newspeak, in which "doublethink" is not the only new word created; there are many more, such as "thoughtcrime" or "minitrue." Actually, Newspeak represents a process of semantic and lexical simplification of English in order to control the train of thought of the inhabitants of Oceania by degrading speech and making it impossible to express complex thought (Xhinaku & Pema 29). Tellingly, Syme, one of Winston's colleagues in the Department of Records, states:

> You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words - scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050! (Orwell 59)

By means of this mutilation of language the Party establishes just a limited number of words with which the population can express a predetermined set of stereotypes that have already been predicted by the *status quo* with the purpose to restrict the thinking process. In this vein, Syme clarifies to Winston:

> Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meaning rubbed out and forgotten. (Orwell 60)

For if there are no words to utter displeasure, to complain about unfair rules and regulations, to fight against laws which are discriminatory, to commit "thoughtcrime," as they existed in Oldspeak, then citizens will remain obedient at home and at their place of work, not even considering any kind of abuse against them is being perpetrated. In connection with this, Wien notes that

> Mainly, we could argue that by disassociating alternate discourse and alternate versions of society from the citizens, the system in *1984* has created what

Foucault would call "docile" bodies. These 'bodies' would do anything the system demands, precisely in the way the system desires it. In this way, they are no longer individuals with free will, but rather subjects of the system that work to ensure its continued hegemony and social control. (42)

With that control, Symes proclaims: "The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact, there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness" (Orwell 61). As a result, a deliberate manipulation of the individual's mind is obtained: "It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak" (Orwell 61).

Finally, once "doublethink" and Newspeak are totally instilled into people's minds, the "mutability of the past" materialises with no effort. This is Winston's biggest preoccupation, the power of the Party to manipulate the past and how to provide proof of that mutable past, how to find another citizen with these same memories.[1] In Winston's words to Julia:

> Do you realize that the past, starting from yesterday, has been actually abolished? If it survives anywhere, it's in a few solid objects with no words attached to them, like that lump of glass there. Already we know almost literally nothing about the Revolution and the years before the Revolution. Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right. I know, of course, that the past is falsified, but it would never be possible for me to prove it, even when I did the falsification myself. After the thing is done, no evidence ever remains. The only evidence is inside my own mind, and I don't know with any certainty that any other human being shares my memories. (Orwell 178)

In this respect, following Foucault, Tyner states that:

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1   In connection with lost memories, Xhinaku and Pema state that "[s]uch attempts to erase the personal and the collective memory of the people in order to implant in them instead the Party's phoney version of a fabricated past, constitute yet another building block of the total, absolutely controlled society in Oceania" (29).

> For Foucault, power is intimately associated with the production of knowledge. As clearly articulated in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979: 27) asserts that power produces knowledge; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. [...] Power, thus, is best conceptualized as a force, or a flow." (139)

With former stereotypes consigned to oblivion, no more alteration of historical facts is needed, no more adaptation of literary works, novels, or poetry, in order to contain the new language, the new events, as both, citizens and the Party, concur regarding the existing stereotypes. Following Xhinaku and Pema, "[s]ocial reality has become one homogenous indivisible whole that is fully controlled by the state" (32). The Party's goal is therefore completed.

Manipulation of Stereotypes in *The Loudest Voice*

As analysed in *1984*, the party in control of the political power creates stereotypes that align with its interests so that Oceania's population becomes a homogenous society with a unique worldview. These narrative manipulation tactics are similarly employed by mass media in the TV mini-series *The Loudest Voice* to undermine the US democratic political system and convey to the public views of reality that lead citizens to become a homogeneous whole as well whose opinions align with the agenda of those in power. In this case, the manipulation of the narrative is carried out by the media, concretely by TV programmes broadcast on Fox News. The mini-series depicts Roger Ailes as he creates and guides the rise of Fox News, a cable TV channel that belongs to News Corp, property of Rupert Murdoch. Ailes is an experienced and extremely sharp market analyst who perfectly reads the disconnection between part of the American society and the media in a concrete historical time, the decade of the 1990s, as well as the business opportunity that represents:

> For the last 50 years, the left side of politics in this country has attempted to control the narrative of news. They force fed America with a big government nanny state agenda. And you know what that creates? That creates opportunity. If we're gonna beat CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, we have to have a bond of loyalty. Loyalty to each other, and loyalty to the mission. The mission is to sell to the

forgotten American that their voice can and will be heard in our Democracy. ("1995" 44:45-45:34)

In the process of creating the new cable channel, Ailes insists on the importance of that bond of loyalty, which will be developed if their audience, those conservative forgotten Americans, can see themselves in a mirror that reflects their opinions and values, that is, their previously formed social and political stereotypes: "We'll get them a vision of the world the way it really is, and the way they want it to be. You know what happens? We reclaim the real America. We challenge the existing agenda and we become the loudest voice" ("1995" 45:37-46:00).

Ironically, whereas he defines himself as "a newsman, first and foremost" ("1995" 11:08) and states that Fox News' first aim is to be objective ("1995" 11:20) (on the screen when first on air we can see the motto: "Fox News. Fair and balanced"), all his decisions are made with a single premise in mind: manipulating his audience's stereotypes. With this purpose in mind, he chooses hosts for the different programs not based on their career as journalists, but on two main features: first, women who are attractive and willing to show their legs: "I like legs. Anybody else like legs?" ("1995" 37:14-37:17). His second option is men with whom the average conservative American citizen can relate. So, contrary to his publicly declared objectiveness, internally his message to his employees is that the key for success is "[g]iving the people what they want, even if they don't know they want it" ("1995" 1:10-1:16). Actually, in a clear attempt to manipulate the public, reinforcing their previous stereotypes without caring whether or not the information conveyed is true, Ailes categorically states: "People don't wanna be informed. They want to believe they are informed" ("1995" 30:50-30:53). This is his main mantra throughout the seven episodes of the mini-series.

Interestingly, in *1984* together with training the citizens' memory, the repetition of the three main slogans of the Party-"War is Peace; Freedom is Slavery; Ignorance is Strength" (Orwell 6)-is the principal technique to control the public's view of reality. This is the main communicative tactic used by Ailes in *The Loudest Voice*. In Ailes' experienced view, repeating messages is the perfect way for the audience to make them part of their ideological schemata, of their social and political stereotypes.

Concerning social stereotypes, in *The Loudest Voice* Roger and Beth Ailes' main aim is to reinforce previously formed ideas of the sector of the American society they address: white, religious and conservative citizens; that is to say, what, in their view, a good American should be, and as an extension, what the USA should

be. Those are the people who are considered to be the real Americans, and those citizens are the ones to whom Fox News' message is directed. No other people, no one who does not consider the flag, family, and God the pillars of their existence should be reckoned as American citizens.

This is made clear in episode 4, "2009," in which Roger and his wife buy *Putnam County News and Recorder*, the local newspaper in Garrison, NY, the town where they live. In this episode, Garrison acts as a synecdoche of the whole country, since, as Roger Ailes states, "Garrison is a microcosm of America" ("2009" 6:56). What is more, Garrison represents a "microcosm" that Ailes intends to use in order "to rebuild America from the ground up" ("2009" 7:05-7:07) in the wake of Obama's first term as President of the USA. The Ailes's hire Joe Lindsley to be the editor-in-chief of *Putnam* due to his strong conservative and religious leanings. Ailes makes him live in his house, makes him dress as he does and feel like part of the family. Most importantly, Ailes gives him his book, *You are the Message*, in order to indoctrinate him, reinforcing his previous stereotypes -the same Ailes intends to do with the rest of conservative Americans through his cable TV channel, Fox News. His objective in doing so is that Lindsley becomes even more conservative than he already is, more religious, unquestionably more American. The editorial line of *Putnam* pursues the defence of those same values, and its main aim is to instil them in the citizens of Garrison. In this sense, Ailes explains to Lindsley that "the people living there [Garrison], [are] liberal, balding hippies. Let's just say, you know, they need to be educated" ("2009" 6:27-6:34). Hence, if they achieve their goal of re-education and imposition of determined stereotypes in a small town, it could also be done in the whole country, gaining, as a result, control over it.

Regarding political stereotypes, numerous are the examples that could be analysed. I will focus on two significant cases. First, in episode three, "2008," with the presidential election looming, Ailes becomes obsessed with Obama and views him as an enemy of American people. In this context, Ailes uses Fox News, already the number one TV cable channel in the country, to smudge Obama's election campaign. Following his strategy of continuously repeating slogans, Ailes decides to use Obama's second name, Hussein, every time the candidate is mentioned on air, in his aim to portray him as someone suspicious, foreign, fearsome ("2008" 16:36). David Axlerod, Obama's campaign manager, meets with Ailes and warns him: "You are stirring up racial hysteria. Fanning conspiracy theories. Calling Obama some kind of Muslim Manchurian candidate" ("2008" 24:09-24:14). Ailes simply answers: "We are reporting the news. Both sides of the story. [...] Don't be so dramatic. If your candidate doesn't like his coverage, tell him he can come on Fox"

("2008" 24:15:24:20).

The second example takes place in episode 2, "2001," which covers the terrorist attacks on September 11 and their immediate socio-political repercussions. Ailes' principal intention is to carry out a double process of manipulation: handling the narrative of the events and guiding American public opinion concerning the country's foreign policy at that historical moment:[1] "I tell you, those dirt bugs, they've got no damn idea what they started. They are gonna get obliterated, crushed. We are gonna turn their fucking cave houses into sand. And Fox News, we've got a big job ahead of us" ("2001" 13:45-14:03).[2] In addition, Ailes sees the attacks as a business opportunity to exploit, turning Fox News into the most viewed cable channel. Even though Murdoch observes this is no time for politics, Ailes insists: "this is way past politics, it's war. [...] This is our time" ("2001" 14:06-14:09).

Ailes' aim is that American citizens align with his views on the events: "This is a war between good and evil, and we...we are not gonna be afraid to call it exactly that. And we should never be afraid of patriotism" ("2001" 25:47-25:58). And as a symbol of such a feeling of patriotism, the American flag needs to achieve growing prominence: "Now, I want all of you to start wearing one of these [pins of the American flag]. You step into a building; you wear a flag. You go on air; you wear a flag" ("2001" 26:00-26:12). In this transformed stereotype of what to be an American is, patriotism equals showing the flag publicly. As analysed before in Orwell's masterpiece, the strategy of repeating messages becomes once again

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1   Following its political agenda, Fox News ignored some fundamental facts concerning previous American foreign policy, as Herman points out:

> Following 9/11, the Taliban government was declared to be monstrous and intolerable, even apart from its sheltering bin Laden, and this was the general view in the mainstream media. But here again, it would be hard to find mainstream news reports or commentary recounting these facts: that the Taliban and al Qaeda had been organized and supported by the United States and its allies Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in the 1980s to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan, and that the United States had backed the Taliban's assumption of power in 1996 because that faction brought "stability" and might make possible the construction of an oil pipeline through Afghanistan. (120)

2   In connection with these same historical facts, Ricks argues what would have been Orwell's standpoint, one quite distant from Ailes':

> Of course, the American government acted in those lethal and intrusive ways in response to the 9/11 attacks. Orwell probably would have roundly denounced those assaults as well as the panicky response of the U.S. government. His guiding light was freedom of conscience—both from government control and from extremists, whether religious or ideological. As he put it, "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear" (81).

central in the recent USA socio-political context. Ailes orders that their main slogan, "America at war," be continuously on the screen: "Let's do it like we do sports scores. Keep it moving like it is a Wall Street ticker tape. Update after update" ("2001" 05:04-05:28).

Conclusion

Discourse manipulation and its consequences has become increasingly prominent in today's society due to the constant interaction individuals have with each other through social media. As explained in this paper, the main companies in mass media exert a fundamental influence over the information their users get, leading people to follow just those groups who share their point of view, and fostering, therefore, what Pariser calls "filter bubbles." This is a phenomenon that directly connects with what Lippmann defines as the "burden of thought," that is, the difficulty for human beings to apply critical thinking whenever the narration of the facts clashes with our conception of the world. Much on the contrary, being in contact with all the scopes of reality, being able to dissent from the given narration of events, makes the individual a well-informed, responsible citizen. For that, being digitally and media literacy is key in order to decide what is real and what is false. In addition, in Orwell's view, the analysis of audiovisual and literary works is fundamental, as we can live as free human beings as long as we keep literature alive:

> When Oldspeak had been once and for all superseded, the last link with the past would have been severed. History had already been rewritten, but fragments of the literature of the past survived here and there, imperfectly censored, and so long as one retained one's knowledge of Oldspeak it was possible to read them. (391)

The analysis of the manipulation of stereotypes and discourse in *1984* and *The Loudest Voice* informs on the necessity of fostering societal resilience of manipulated narratives of events and encouraging independence of thought. In this vein, Wien (2012) notes the power of both journalistic and literary texts in helping citizens become actors of change in societies:

> To use Richardson's words regarding journalists, he or she needs to be both "a subject who is produced by society" and "a subject who acts to support or change that society" (29). Journalistic discourse, argues Richardson, is one active element in bringing about such change through shaping understandings,

influencing audience attitudes and beliefs (particularly through their reinforcement), and transforming the consciousness of those who read and consume it (ibid.). Arguably, we could say this holds true for any discursive practice, including the discourse found in literary texts (28).

It is undoubtful, then, that citizens must overcome that burden of thought in order to fight the manipulation of the narratives that we consume as information. We must become critical, unorthodox individuals, concerned with the information we receive and eager to question our existing stereotypes and abandon our comfort zone, our information bubble. The following years would therefore seem crucial in order to accomplish this objective, which seems essential so as to be human beings able to make informed decisions. Eventually, if we manage to do so, the public will not be taken for granted on the subject of the veracity of facts.

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