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REVIEW ARTICLE

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BIG BROTHER IN GEORGE ORWELL'S 1984 AND EGDON IN THOMAS HARDY'S THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE : CRITICISM OF ABUSIVE POWER

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to show the absolute control exercised by the main characters with similar practices in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighteen Four*. Here, Orwell depicts regimes where the state exercises total control over all aspects of citizens' lives, from their thoughts to their actions, through the emblematic figure known as Big Brother, while in *The Return of the Native*, Thomas Hardy depicts Egdon Heath as a powerful force, shaping the characters' personalities and actions. It attracts and repels, creating tensions and social conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

Great Britain has produced talented writers who have depicted the history of their nation through various criticisms. George Orwell and Thomas Hardy are two major British writers whose works and styles differ considerably. Orwell is known for his dystopian works, namely *1984* and *Animal Farm*, as well as for his politically engaged essays, which often focus on politics and society. George Orwell's novels criticize totalitarianism, propaganda, social injustice, and political manipulation. On the other hand, Thomas Hardy is a novelist and poet best known for his realistic 19th-century Victorian novels, with major works called "Character and Environment novels," such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *The Return of the Native*, etc. These novels, which emphasize the interaction between characters and their environment, often Wessex, explore themes of society, social classes, and human nature.

However, despite their different writing styles and commitments, both explore themes of human misery, social injustice, and the impact of fate on individuals' lives. They also depict the dangers of conformity and oppression, albeit in different ways. In social and political criticism, George Orwell, known for his dystopian novels such as *1984* and *Animal Farm*, denounces totalitarian regimes and political oppression. Hardy, although less explicitly political, criticizes Victorian society and its rigidities, particularly through the consequences of social injustice and moral conventions. He show

how social structures can crush individuals, especially those from the lower classes. Thomas Hardy and George Orwell have similar approaches to characterization in their respective works, *The Return of the Native* and *1984*. In Thomas Hardy's work, the influence of fate is prominent. It plays a crucial, often cruel role in the lives of his characters. They often find themselves facing unfortunate circumstances that seem predetermined. Although less explicitly, Orwell also explores how political and social systems can impose a destiny on their citizens. Environment also plays a key role in their works. Both authors attach great importance to the setting in which their stories unfold. Hardy is renowned for his detailed descriptions of rural landscapes, often contrasting with the harshness of his characters' lives. Orwell, although evoking larger and more impersonal urban environments, also uses the environment to highlight oppression and the loss of freedom. In this environment, human misery is explored in depth. Both authors are not afraid to show human suffering, whether it be poverty, social injustice, or the consequences of war (for Orwell). Hardy, in particular, explores the emotional and physical suffering of his characters, who are often faced with difficult relationships and loss. The dominant figure in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* is the environment known as Egdon Heath. It is more than just a setting; it is a character in its own right, with supernatural attributes and powers that leave no one in Wessex indifferent. Egdon Heath is not just the setting for the story or a backdrop; it dominates the plot and shapes the characters. It is endowed with sensitivity: it feels, it speaks, it kills. Egdon Heath stands as an imposing presence as a character in its own right. At the

beginning of the novel, a vivid and evocative description of Egdon Heath sets the scene for the human drama that is about to unfold. Thomas Hardy describes it as ancient, unchanging, and gloomy, a stretch of land where time seems to have stood still. Egdon Heath is a place of striking beauty and oppressive isolation, shaping the lives and destinies of those who live there. The physical atmosphere of Egdon Heath is marked by its wildness and harshness. It is depicted as both magnificent and threatening. This natural setting creates an almost palpable emotional atmosphere, imbued with melancholy, mystery, and a sense of inevitability.

Egdon Heath is a majestic and haunting landscape in which the characters live their complex and intertwined lives. It acts as a catalyst for their hopes, dreams, and downfalls. The moor exerts a powerful influence over them, shaping their destinies in ways both subtle and overt. It is a place where human aspirations collide with the indifferent force of nature, setting the stage for a story of love, ambition, and tragic consequences. On Egdon Heath, a complex web of relationships begins to form. It brings together the lives of several key characters whose stories will be central to the novel. At the heart of this delicate web is Clym Yeobright, a native of the heath who has spent considerable time in Paris, returning with a determined vision for his future. A thoughtful and idealistic man, Clym seeks to bring enlightenment and education to the people of Egdon, hoping to elevate their existence above the banality he perceives around him.

In this moorland setting, tumultuous and secret romantic relationships begin to form. The intertwined lives of certain characters weave a tapestry of conflicting desires and aspirations. Eustacia's infatuation with Wildeve is fueled by his ability to offer her a temporary escape from her monotonous existence. Yet her attraction to Clym Yeobright, who represents a potential path out of Egdon Heath, adds a new dimension to her inner conflict. Clym, for his part, begins to fall in love with Eustacia, captivated by her beauty and the mystery that surrounds her, even though his aspirations remain tied to the moor and its inhabitants. And so the plot began.

Referring to George Orwell's *1984*, we have a totalitarian state power represented by the character of Big Brother, the emblematic figure of the Single Party, of which he is the supposed creator, and to whom the citizens of Oceania devote a cult of personality. In every street, he is depicted on posters by a male face staring at the observer in a manner that is both reassuring and stern. His omnipresence in the world of *1984*, both on posters and on "telesccreens" in private homes or at mass Party meetings where his name is chanted ("B.B., B.B., B.B."), transforms him into a reference point for everyone, an embodiment of the Party. Big Brother is a frightening allegorical figure who constantly watches over the inhabitants of Oceania. He produces speeches and manipulates the population so that they worship only the party of their country and himself. Through Newspeak and the rewriting of history, the Party aims to control the thoughts and ideas of citizens, limiting their capacity for critical thinking and dissent.

The story takes place in an imaginary future where the current year is uncertain, but is believed to be 1984. Great Britain, renamed Airstrip One, has become a province of the superstate Oceania, ruled by Big Brother, a dictatorial leader supported by an intense cult of personality orchestrated by the Thought Police. In this state, nothing is left to chance. The Party engages in omnipresent government surveillance through the Ministry of Truth, using denialism and constant propaganda to persecute individuality and independent thought among the population. In Oceania, freedom of expression no longer exists and all behavior is meticulously monitored through telesccreens and huge posters depicting Big Brother's face plastered across the streets with the inscription "Big Brother is watching you." Big Brother is the subject of a cult of personality, his image being omnipresent and associated with a feeling of protection and security, even though this image is artificial and manipulated. Big Brother is the face of the State and the Party, symbolizing absolute power and the State's ability to control and manipulate its people. In the introduction to *1984*, Winston Smith is the main character, an employee of the Ministry of Truth. He is portrayed as an ordinary,

thoughtful, and intellectual man who feels deep dissatisfaction with the Party and Big Brother. He embodies rebellion and resistance against a totalitarian regime, although he is aware of the danger he faces. Winston Smith, a thirty-nine-year-old man, moves through a cold and oppressive environment, marked by the Party's omnipresent surveillance, symbolized by the "Big Brother" poster. He is the symbol of Oceania's totalitarian regime, where the Party exercises absolute control over every aspect of people's lives, from their actions to their thoughts. Telesccreens, ubiquitous in homes and public places, allow for constant surveillance of the population, creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. The telescreeen in his apartment broadcasts information while watching him, creating an atmosphere of total control over the lives of citizens. Winston, plagued by vague memories of his childhood, feels a vague disgust for the degradation of London, the city where he lives under the totalitarian regime of Oceania.

The purpose here is to highlight the similarities between the oppression of the people by Egdon Heath and Big Brother. These are two characters who use similar methods to defend their hegemony and demonstrate their supremacy in the face of the behavioral excesses of the population under their surveillance. In our argument, we will first present the characters of Big Brother and Egdon Heath and then their influence on society.

Theoretical framework: To better clarify our thoughts, we will draw on literary theories. George Orwell's *1984* can be analyzed from the perspective of totalitarianism, thought control, and dystopia, while Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* can be studied through the prism of naturalism, destiny, and isolation. Indeed, in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), totalitarianism is above all a movement, a dynamic of destruction of reality and social structures, rather than a fixed regime. A totalitarian movement is "international in its organization, universal in its ideological aims, and global in its political aspirations." According to Arendt, a totalitarian regime would come to an end if it were confined to a specific territory or adopted a hierarchy, as in a classic authoritarian regime: it seeks total domination, without limits. According to Arendt, when everyone lies to you all the time, the result is not that you believe those lies, but that no one believes anything anymore. This theory is also analyzed by Luc Ferry and Évelyne Pisier-Kouchner in *Theory of Totalitarianism* (1985). We will then use naturalism to elucidate the work of Thomas Hardy. Naturalism is a literary movement that, in the last decades of the 19th century, sought to introduce the methods of the humanities and social sciences into fiction. This movement was partly created by Émile Zola. A logical continuation of realism, it aimed to describe reality as faithfully as possible, including all its immoral or vulgar aspects. Naturalism continues and perpetuates this idea, but adds a physiological context and emphasizes the fact that the environment in which the protagonist lives is one of the reasons for their behavior. This is what Thomas Hardy sought to highlight in his novels: he created characters who aspired to a better life but, because of their environment, could not and would never be able to achieve it. Hardy is associated with realism because of his meticulous description of rural life and social classes in Wessex. He is considered a naturalist because of his exploration of the forces of nature and society that seem to weigh on the fate of his characters. Hardy uses realism to criticize Victorian social and moral norms, while incorporating naturalistic elements to show the impact of fate and environment.

METHODOLOGICAL

A political system characterized by absolute state control over all aspects of public and private life, totalitarianism is distinguished by the absence of political pluralism, the repression of opposition, and the use of propaganda and terror to maintain power. With its concepts of a single party, propaganda, and ideology, these concepts are often described in works such as Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) which is an essential reference for the study of the totalitarian phenomenon.

Naturalism is a literary movement that seeks to depict reality based on meticulous research and inspired in particular by the experimental method of physiologist Claude Bernard. It claims to draw inspiration directly and exclusively from nature and to represent it accurately, particularly working-class environments, by applying the methods of positive science. Extending realism, naturalism seeks to reproduce reality with perfect objectivity, even in its most vulgar aspects.

Big Brother and Egdon Heath: The Art of Influence

Big Brother: Manipulating History as a Tool of Control: In George Orwell's novel "1984," Big Brother is an allegorical figure of totalitarian power and omnipresent surveillance. He represents the Party, the ruling entity of Oceania, and his influence extends to all aspects of citizens' lives. Big Brother is both a source of comfort and terror, a charismatic leader who is adored and a ruthless oppressor. It is he and his agents who monitor the telescreens in every home. Although we only see his face on screens or posters and hear his voice, he has never appeared in person! He is more of an image than a real person, but the inhabitants believe in his existence. Some find his face comforting, and he comes across as a protective uncle figure.

The Ministry of Truth: The "Ministry of Truth" is responsible for this task. Winston Smith, the novel's main character and protagonist, works at Miniver in the archives department, where he alters historical documents to match the Party's statements. He is responsible for rewriting history and manipulating documents to match the Party's official version. His task is to delete or modify information that contradicts the Party line in order to maintain its control over the thoughts and memories of citizens.

The past is constantly rewritten, books are falsified, statues and monuments are renamed, dates are changed, so that the Party can control the collective memory and ensure that no one can challenge its version of events. An excerpt begins with: "With the unconscious and deep sigh" and ends with: "In truth, there was no Comrade Ogilvy, but a few printed lines and two doctored photographs would bring him into existence" (1984, chapter 1). The Ministry of Truth is a large white pyramid-shaped building with three slogans inscribed on it: "War is peace," "Freedom is slavery," and "Ignorance is strength." Those who dare to question the Party's truth or show any dissent are subjected to torture and "re-education" in places such as Room 101.

Newspeak: The ruling party, through Big Brother, exercises total control over the thoughts and ideas of citizens. To better control its population, the government will establish a language that it will impose. This language, called Newspeak, is an official language of Oceania. It is deliberately impoverished in vocabulary to limit freedom of thought, and "doublethink," the ability to believe two contradictory things simultaneously, is a tool used to manipulate minds. By modifying the language, the state deprives people of the tools that would allow them to take a critical view of its management. This language consists of combinations of words to limit vocabulary. Its purpose is to make any form of criticism of the state and its party impossible. For example, if you remove the word "revolution" from the dictionary and no one knows what it means anymore, who would think of starting a revolution? By removing words and concepts that could challenge the Party's power, the Party ensures that citizens can no longer think critically.

This is not without consequences for the people, because the manipulation of history leads to a loss of reality, where truth becomes malleable and lies can be presented as truth. Citizens are constantly bombarded with contradictory information, making them unable to discern truth from falsehood. By erasing the past, the Party seeks to destroy individual and collective identity. Citizens no longer know who they are, where they come from, or what their connections to the past are. This makes them more vulnerable to manipulation and control. By controlling memory and history, the Party maintains absolute power over the population. Citizens are deprived of their ability to think critically, resist, and oppose the regime.

Telescreen: In George Orwell's novel 1984, a telescreen is a two-way device that functions as both a television and a surveillance camera, broadcasting Party propaganda and watching the citizens who are constantly monitored through it. They are a ubiquitous symbol of the Party's total control, present in homes and public spaces, and can only be dimmed, never completely turned off by most members. The telescreen has largely various functions and purposes decided by the government. First of all, it has a dual-function device. The telescreen simultaneously transmits government-controlled programming, such as news and propaganda, and has a built-in camera and microphone to observe and listen to those in its range. The telescreen has a built-in camera and a highly sensitive microphone that allow the Thought Police to monitor citizens' conversations and movements at all times. Party members, like the protagonist Winston Smith, are never certain if they are being watched, which creates a constant state of fear. Such constant surveillance under the use of telescreens to monitor its citizens' every move, action, and even expression, ensuring no one steps out of line or expresses "thoughtcrime". For the propaganda and manipulation, telescreens are crucial for the Party's manipulation through propaganda. They broadcast mandatory exercises, like the "Physical Jerks," and "Two Minutes Hate," where citizens are forced to express hatred for the Party's enemies. The telescreen broadcasts a single channel of Party-approved news, music, and propaganda nonstop. This barrage of information includes falsified statistics to create the illusion of progress, and events like the mandatory "Two Minutes Hate" to whip citizens into a frenzy of loyalty and rage. Another control is the psychological one. The constant, inescapable surveillance creates a state of fear where citizens police their own behavior, knowing they could be watched at any moment, a concept similar to the Panopticon theory.

Egdon Heath as Thomas Hardy's "Big Brother"

As a force of fate, Egdon Heath is a fictional, but deeply symbolic, landscape that acts as an active agent in the lives of the characters. It is described as a character in itself, influencing their desires, choices, and ultimate fates. For that reason, he is a symbol of tradition and nature. The heath represents a powerful, ancient force of nature and tradition that is slow to change and indifferent to the human dramas that unfold within it. He can be qualified as the constraint of modernity, then the characters, particularly Eustacia Vye, are often at odds with the heath because their desires for excitement and modernity clash with its unchanging, primitive nature. Her dissatisfaction stems from the feeling of being trapped by this environment and its associated social norms. People can consider through out his role that he a "Big Brother" of fate. The heath watches and waits, and its influence is so profound that even characters who conform to its norms are still subject to its power, while those who rebel often fall prey to misfortune. This makes it function like a passive but inescapable "Big Brother" that dictates the terms of existence for its inhabitants.

Egdon Heath: the imposing figure as a tool of control

Nature played a larger part in his books than in those of any other English novelists. It is not just the background of his novel, but a leading character in it. In *The Return of the Native*, Nature becomes a living character. The scene of the novel is black stretch of Egdon.

Egdon Heath is a fictitious area of Thomas Hardy's Wessex inhabited sparsely by the people who cut the furze (gorse) that grows there. Additionally, Egdon Heath in Thomas Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native* is more than just a space or a setting. It is almost an overwhelming presence, a functional character in a way. It has an active influence on the characters. For instance, Egdon Heath with its darkness dominates the lives of the characters in *The Return of the Native*. It also influences and controls the lives and destiny of those who dwell in it. The heath assists in creating the feelings of both central characters and the background heath folk, the first chapter is titled "A Face on which Time makes but little Impression" (RN, chapter 1), meaning that Egdon Heath is timeless and everybody on it has little significance. It is trans-historical in that it has remained unchanged throughout the centuries: « Every night its Titanic form seemed to await something; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during

so many centuries [...]» (RN, 54). So strong is its presence that it defies the laws of nature because, unlike humans and other forms of landscape, it undergoes no alteration: «The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained.» (Ibid., 56). Its singular permanence is stylistically marked by the concessive conjunction and the triple occurrence of “changed,” which contrasts with “remained” in its final position. Egdon combines two contrasting elements: a powerful immanence that imposes itself on its inhabitants and a form of Transcendence. Egdon is also the mythical moorland of Lear, home to the Anglo-Saxon deities Thor and Woden. And the bonfires lit by its inhabitants on November 5 perpetuate ancient traditions, much older than Guy Fawkes.

- Influence on the main characters
- Eustacia Vye

It influences the characters. For instances, Eustacia Vye is guided by hatred of it and so is Wildevve. As in Hardy’s description of family background of Eustacia in Chapter VII, there he describes Eustacia’s hatred toward Heath. Hardy says of Eustacia that she is unable to reconcile herself to her life on the heath, and she feels a deep hatred for it, as it is mentioned in the text, “Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto.” she is an outsider on the heath, not having been born and bred there. The subtle beauties of the heath are entirely lost to her. Much of the discontentment of Eustacia with her life and much of her unhappiness are due the fact that she is forced to live on Egdon Heath. Eustacia is not a nature lover. She longs to live a fashionable life in Paris, and loneliness of Egdon Heath makes her miserable.

Clym Yeobright : Clym Yeobright is, unlike Eustacia, the product of Egdon, and its shaggy hills are friendly and genial to him, exhilarating, strengthening, soothing. In his prosperity, its oppressive horizontality gives him a sense of bare equality with, and no superiority to, any living creature under the sun. In his adversity, the heath swallows him up – absorbs him into its furze and its numerous winged and creeping creatures, so that he becomes an indistinguishable part of heath and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym. He too has some of the heath’s qualities, especially strangeness and remoteness. From beginning he does not belong with other people, he is idealistic and thus, at times, inconsiderate and rigid. He is out of place anywhere except on the heath, and in the end Hardy identifies him with it by making him its iteran. From beginning he does not belong with other people, he is idealistic and thus, at times, inconsiderate and rigid. He is out of place anywhere except on the heath, and in the end Hardy identifies him with it by making him its iterant preacher. As in Slideshare.com it says “Clym’s main consideration of life is his love of the heath.”

Diggory Venn: He is at one with the moor and feels at home there, using his knowledge of nature to help others, notably Clym and Thomaline. The reddleman’s function throughout the novel is much like that of an observer, always watching, like the landscape itself. The narrator asserts ‘the reddleman spreads its lively hues over everything it lights on’, implying his influence and ability to inspire change between the relationships on the Heath. Is Hardy perhaps referring back to the idea of power, even super power here? Once compared to a ‘mephistopholeian visitant’ otherwise known as Satan’s messenger, he continues to be perceived as a negative force. Whatever ‘it’ truly is, the narrator too sees Diggory as otherworldly.

Comparaison and contraste: In 1984, Big Brother represents an organized, centralized human power that seeks to control individuals. This control is exercised through the use of telescreens and spies. He exercises intrusive or oppressive surveillance through entities or organizations, and is the leader of the Party. The inhabitants of Oceania constantly see his face plastered on posters lining the streets, on their telescreens, and on the coins they use. His face is described as handsome, with black eyes, a mustache, and in his forties. The Big Brother effect is often associated with concerns about privacy, confidentiality, or freedom in a world where surveillance and data

collection technologies are increasingly ubiquitous, raising ethical, political, or legal questions about the limits and responsibilities of government, corporate, or social surveillance in a democratic and evolving society where the balance between security, freedom, and privacy is constantly being challenged. Here, in *The Return of the Native*, Egdon Heath represents a natural, indomitable, and silent power that influences destinies. Egdon Heath represents the inexorable forces of nature, often indifferent to human desires and suffering, influencing the course of events and lives. It is a desolate and wild landscape, representing untamed nature, the weight of the past, inexorable fate, and man's struggle against the forces of nature. The heath is described as a dark, vast, and impenetrable place where nature reigns supreme. Its constant presence and influence on the characters creates a sense of inevitability, as if the fate of the inhabitants is inextricably linked to the heath. Egdon Heath is thus another example of Hardy's landscape reflecting the permanent human condition :

The untameable, Ishmaelish thing that Egdon now was it had always been. Civilization was its enemy: and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. . . . The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim. (Hardy, RN, Book I).

Egdon Heath remains unchanged despite time and circumstances. No civilization has been able to transform it. The moor is not sociable and does not cooperate with others. It is what it is.

CONCLUSION

In summary, although different, “Big Brother” and “Egdon Heath” can be linked in their use as metaphors. Big Brother and Egdon Heath are two opposing concepts, one symbolizing human control and the other wild nature. Their juxtaposition can serve to illustrate the tensions between social order and individual freedom, or between civilization and nature. In 1984, humans are victims of Big Brother's control, struggling to resist or adapt to the oppressive system. In *The Return of the Native*, some characters embrace the heath, finding solace and connection to it, while others struggle against it, ultimately facing tragic consequences. Big Brother represents the oppressive power of a totalitarian regime, while Egdon Heath represents the power of nature, which is indifferent to human suffering. “Egdon Heath” could be used to symbolize the isolation and oppression felt by citizens under the control of “Big Brother.” The landscape becomes a symbol of loneliness and loss of freedom. “Egdon Heath” could be used to represent resistance to the tyranny of “Big Brother,” the struggle to preserve one's individuality and freedom in a hostile environment. Both concepts can be used to explore the themes of human nature, freedom, submission, and resistance in different contexts. Although their styles and eras differ, Orwell and Hardy share a pessimistic view of the human condition and a desire to denounce injustice, whether political, social, or environmental. Big Brother is much more than just a character; he is the personification of totalitarian power, constant surveillance, and thought control in the novel 1984. George Orwell's "Big Brother" from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Thomas Hardy's "Egdon Heath" from *The Return of the Native* are both powerful controlling forces, but they differ in their nature and function. Big Brother is a deliberate, manufactured tool of social control, while Egdon Heath is a primal, indifferent force of nature that shapes human destiny

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