# Hawlyat Al-Montada

A Refereed Quarterly Peer - Revewed Jurnal for Academic Promotion

World Building Strategies in Nineteen Eight Four: A Text–World Theoretical Approach

"استراتيجيات بناء العالم النصي في رواية (١٩٨٤) : نهج نظري لعالم النصوص"

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الباحث الثاني: أ.م. د/ سامر طالب داوود. جامعة البصرة / كلية الاداب
الباحث الثالث: أ.م د/ محمد قاسم زبون. جامعة البصرة/ كلية الاداب |

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Abstract

The research explores the linguistic strategies employed in world-building for George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four," analyzing how language shapes readers' cognitive representations of the dystopian text world. By applying Text-World Theory (TWT), the study investigates the construction of the discourse world, text world, and sub-world, elucidating the immersive

techniques Orwell utilizes to depict the oppressive society of Oceania. The research uses discourse analysis to show how well Orwell used language to create a dark and controlled world. These language elements include references to place, time, character, actions, and modal expressions. Furthermore, the study delves into the cognitive processes involved in readers' construction of mental representations of the text world, providing insights into the intricate interplay between language, perception, and fictional reality. Ultimately, the analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of Orwell's world-building strategies and their impact on reader engagement with the dystopian narrative of "Nineteen Eighty-Four."

Keywords: Dystopian fiction, Text-World Theory (TWT), George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, World-building strategies, Discourse world, Text world, Sub-worlds

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الخلاصة

يستكشف البحث الاستراتيجيات اللغوية المستخدمة في بناء العالم لرواية جورج أورويل «١٩٨٤»، الذي يحلل كيف تشكل اللغة التمثيلات المعرفية للقراء لعالم النص الديستوبي. من خلال تطبيق نظرية عالم النص (TWT)، تبحث الدراسة في بناء عالم الخطاب وعالم النص والعالم الفرعي، وتوضيح التقنيات الغامرة التي يستخدمها أورويل لتصوير المجتمع القمعي في أوقيانوسيا. يستخدم البحث تحليل الخطاب لإظهار مدى استخدام أورويل للغة لخلق عالم مظلم ومسيطر عليه. تتضمن عناصر اللغة هذه إشارات إلى المكان والوقت والشخصية والإجراءات والتعبيرات الشكلية. علاوة على ذلك، تتعمق الدراسة في العمليات المعرفية التي ينطوي عليها بناء القراء للتمثيلات العقلية لعالم النص، مما يوفر رؤى حول التفاعل المعقد بين اللغة والإدراك والواقع الخيالي. في النهاية، يقدم التحليل فهمًا شاملاً لاستراتيجيات أورويل لبناء العالم وتأثيرها على تفاعل القارئ مع السرد الديستوبي لـ «1984.»

كلمات مفتاحية: الخيال الديستوبي، نظرية عالم النص (TWT)، جورج أورويل، ألف وتسعمائة وثمانية وأربعون، استراتيجيات بناء العالم، عالم الخطاب، عالم النص، العوالم الفرعية.

World Building Strategies in Nineteen Eight Four: A Text-World Theoretical Approach

1. Introduction

The various issues that affect contemporary societies make dystopian fiction more realistic and relevant to most people (Cavacanti, 2000, p. 152). The dystopian fiction introduces a new world to the readers they are not used to. Similarly, linguistic world-building is essential to constructing a text world in dystopian fiction (Stockwell, 2000, pp. 195-196). World-building creates an imaginary world, resulting in a textured setting (von Stackelberg & McDowell, 2015, pp.25-26; Gebauer, 2021, p. 277). In this context, the word "world" refers to more than just a physical location; instead, it also refers to everything that the characters in the narrative experience, including all of the elements that make up their lives, such as culture, nature, philosophical worldviews, places, customs, events, and languages (Wolf, 2012, p. 25). This research analyzes the linguistic strategies used in world-building for George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949). It pursues this objective by applying the Text-World Theory (henceforth TWT). TWT is a linguistic framework initially introduced by Werth in 1999 and then developed by Gavins in 2007. Another objective of this study is to analyze how language shapes the cognitive representations of imaginary worlds for readers. It focuses on the creation of 'text worlds' that readers produce when engaging with a text. Through TWT, this research will explore the linguistic world-building strategies of discourse world, text world, and sub-world (switch world/ modal world), employed as the foundation for dystopia's fiction world-building.

1.1 Research Questions

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1- How does George Orwell employ world-building strategies in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" to build a dystopian text world?

2- What textual elements and narrative techniques does George Orwell utilize in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" to immerse readers into the dystopian world of Oceania?

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Text World Theory

TWT is a theoretical framework that examines how readers or listeners build mental representations of the fictional worlds described in texts. Initially created by Werth in the late 1980s, TWT incorporates the experiential

concepts of cognitive linguistics. The culmination of his research on the topic was the posthumous release of Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse in 1999 (Werth, 1999). Since 1999, the theory has been further developed by scholars such as Gavins, Stockwell, and Laura Hidalgo-Downing (Downing, 2000). The TWT framework is a discourse model that aims to analyze and investigate the cognitive processes in building spoken and written language (Norledge, 2012, p. 53). Ernestine Lahey describes it as one of several discourse processing theories that have emerged in the field of stylistics in recent decades (Lahey, 2003, p. 75).

TWT focuses on how the language used in fiction, along with readers' existing knowledge about the natural world and the novel's fictional world, influences their mental understanding of the described situations and the development of these fictional worlds as more information is revealed. The idea primarily emphasizes the information required for the building and progressing text worlds (Gavins, 2007). According to Werth (1999), there is a widespread consensus that mental representations can take several forms, such as visual, aural, physical, and other symbolic forms. The theory is based on the notion that every discourse may be analyzed at different conceptual levels. The first level is the discourse world, further divided into text- and sub-worlds (Gavins, 2007, pp. 9-10).

2.1.1 The Discourse World

According to Werth (1999, p. 83), the discourse world refers to the context of the speech event. It encompasses more than just the discourse's location, time, and participants. It also involves the relationships, knowledge, and experience the participants rely on to comprehend and analyze the language used. Discourse worlds can encompass face-to-face contact and situations when communication is divided, such as in a telephone call or between the author and reader(s) of a novel (Gavins, 2007, p. 26).

In fiction, an additional element is introduced to the discourse world by the presence of a narrator who either exists outside of the narrative's world (heterodiegetic) or is a character within it (homodiegetic). The heterodiegetic narrative is commonly presented through a third-person, omniscient narrator, leading the reader to associate this narrator with the author of the work of fiction (Short, 1996, p. 258). This is evident in TWT since the heterodiegetic narrator is perceived as a participant in the discourse world at the same ontological level as the reader, even if it is a textual entity. Gavins (2010,

p. 404) states that readers compensate for the lack of a co-participant in their immediate surroundings by placing the narrator of the fiction in a role where they actively participate. Nevertheless, when a heterodiegetic narrator conveys the inner perspective of a specific character - their thoughts or emotions - a separate world is created, which can only be experienced through the character's viewpoint. As a result, this world becomes more distant from the reader's world of discourse and is often perceived as less trustworthy.

2.1.2 Text worlds

According to Werth (1999, p. 180), a text world can be characterized as a deictic space first determined by the discourse itself, particularly by its deictic and referential aspects. The parts of language that define the boundaries and details of a fictional world are called "world-building elements." In contrast, those that drive the development of the fictional world, such as events, characters, and time, are called "function-advancing propositions." Stockwell provides a concise summary of these characteristics:

World-building aspects serve as a foundation for the main events of the narrative. They encompass a sense of time and location and generate people and other entities that populate the textual world for reference purposes.

Propositions that advance the function of the narrative or dynamic inside the text world move it forward. They encompass the states, actions, events, processes, and any arguments or predictions made regarding the objects and characters in the textual world (Stockwell, 2002, p. 137).

Moreover, TWT borrows descriptive words from the transitivity study to define several function-advancer forms. Gavins (2007) relies on Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1994) to broaden her explanation of function-advancing propositions. She explains the language forms acquired from Systemic Functional Linguistics that may be utilized as function-advancers. Among the six categories of processes provided by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), Gavins (2007) chose just four categories, namely the four that may be employed to progress discourse: material, mental, relational, and existential.

2.1.3 Sub-worlds

Participants can access sub-worlds and be categorized based on the type of sub-world. Werth (1999, p. 216) distinguishes between deictic, attitudinal, and epistemic worlds, while Gavins (2007) groups the latter two as modal worlds. Deictic sub-worlds arise when there is a departure from the temporal or spatial boundaries of the primary text world.

This can happen when a participant in the conversation deliberately shifts attention to a different time or place within the narrative's world or when a character's consciousness takes us back in time, as in a flashback.

2.1.4 Modal sub-worlds

According to Werth (1999, p. 216), attitudinal sub-worlds refer to the ideas held by the characters in a discourse rather than the actions they conduct. These sub-worlds encompass concepts like "want worlds," "belief worlds," and "intend worlds" (Werth, 1999, p. 227). Epistemic sub-worlds pertain to the level of assurance a protagonist conveys regarding a particular statement. They can be employed to explain hypothetical scenarios or assumptions made by protagonists. Gavins (2005, pp. 84-85) challenges Werth's differentiation between these two categories, specifically regarding the designation of 'belief worlds' as attitudinal rather than epistemic. This is because belief worlds are activated by epistemic modality. Instead, she utilizes Simpson's (1993) modal grammar of point of view in fiction. She employs his categories of deontic, boulomaic, and epistemic modality as sub-categories of modal worlds. By doing so, she avoids the contradiction of Werth's taxonomy and considers the viewpoint effects associated with each type of modality

more.

3. Data Analysis and discussion

This section analyzes two extracts from the "Nineteen Eighty-Four" novel to show the foundation of linguistic world-building. The opening extracts from the novel explore the establishment of the changed reality in Oceania.

Extract 1:

"It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him" *(*Orwell, 1949, p. 1).

The "Nineteen Eighty-Four" narrator uses a third-person, limited omniscient perspective. This indicates that the narrator is not one of the characters in the narrative but has access to one character's thoughts and emotions, especially those of Winston Smith (Fowler, 2007, p.105). Winston's perspective tells a narrative, giving the reader an understanding of his innermost feelings and experiences. This narration style allows readers to experience the novel from Winston's perspective and gain insight into his struggles and difficulties as he negotiates the dystopian society of Oceania.

TWT analysis begins by dividing

discourse into three conceptual interconnected layers: the discourse world, text worlds, and sub-worlds (Werth, 1999).

Discourse World: Gavins (2007, p. 9) defines it as the immediate situation in which human beings interact and communicate. For a discourse world to exist, a speaker/writer and a listener/reader must be fully aware of each other's presence. In other words, the discourse world is the shared reality of the people involved in a linguistic action. Participants and their environments are only part of this world; they also bring their perceptions, experiences, language, and culture to the linguistic interaction (Werth, 1999**).**

In extract (1), The protagonist, Winston Smith, the location *(Victory Mansions)*, the time *(clocks striking thirteen)*, the circumstances *(a cold April day)*, and the action of Winston entering through glass doors and coming into contact with gritty dust are all discourse world elements. These elements help the reader imagine the situation in their minds by giving essential details about the text's location, people, and events. The readers are introduced to the character Winston Smith. "*his chin nuzzled into his breast*" like he is protecting himself from the outdoors. A character who may be oppressed or struggling in the world described. Words like "*vile wind*"

and "*gritty dust*" create a depressing environment. This sets a hostile and oppressive mood within the discourse world.

Additionally, the narrative is primarily characterized by the centrality of its surroundings and atmosphere. The clock striking thirteen suggests a need for more awareness of typical timekeeping. This is more about setting than character knowledge. This extract represents a static point in time, not a gradual change or development process. In sum, the extract immerses the reader in a depressing reality.

Text World: Text worlds are mental representations that readers construct while they read. A text world of narrative fiction is a "conceptual space, or mental construct, created specifically from developed textual information, and built up from knowledge that the reader perceives the author holds in common" (Gavins, 2007). The process begins when discourse participants create a text world using shared knowledge (Werth, 1999). The language cues in the narrative, along with inferences drawn from the reader's background and personal experiences, constitute the structure and content of such mental representations (Gavins, 2003). Gavins (2007) also identifies two categories of textual information that make up a text world: world-builder elements and

function-advancing propositions. In extract (1), the text world functions as the foundation or fictional world within which the narrative events unfold. Extract (1) establishes the various elements, such as people, entities, place, time, and weather conditions, forming a realistic mental representation for the reader. The text world enhances the immersive experience for readers and facilitates their visualization of the circumstances surrounding Winston Smith. Moreover, according to TWT, the text world analysis involves two distinct layers: the world builders and the functional advancers.

World Builders: In this extract, there are several text world builder elements:

Spatial: The illustration of the *"glass doors of Victory Mansions"* establishes the contextual background in which the events unfold. This aids readers in forming a cognitive representation of the scene.

Temporal: The reference to the *"clocks striking thirteen"* is a temporal reference point, signifying that the current time deviates from the norm. Also, *"bright cold day in April"* refers to a specific time. These particular features play a significant role in forming an alternate reality within the text world.

Characters: Winston Smith is the protagonist, a central figure who captures the reader's attention and encourages their involvement with the fictional world. His position, described as *"his chin nuzzled into his breast to escape the vile wind,"* indicates his defensive, protective stance (Ibraheem et al., 2014, p. 10594).

Entities: Several entities contribute to the building of the text world. The clocks, Victory Mansions, and the glass doors serve as a specific location.

These elements collaborate to build a cohesive and captivating text world that encourages reader engagement and exploration.

On the other hand, **functional advancers** contribute to the advancement of discourse and offer knowledge of the text world. This list includes temporal Advancers like *"It was a bright cold day in April."* At that moment, *"the clocks were striking thirteen."* Another example of a spatial advancer is *"Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions..."*

The functional advancers elements mentioned collectively contribute to developing the reader's cognitive representation of a text world by conveying details regarding the context, actions, and situations that shape the narrative (Gavins, 2007). Additionally, in the provided extract, the verbs serve various functions and fall into different categories outlined by Halliday and

Matthiessen (2004):

"was" These instances of the verb "was" link the subject (the description of the day and the clocks) with the subject complement (the description of the day and the time indicated by the clocks). They contribute to the description of the setting and time.

"were striking" Is a process verb in the progressive aspect. It describes the ongoing action of the clocks striking thirteen, contributing to the depiction of the scene's temporal distortion.

"slipped" is a material process verb in the past tense. It describes Winston's physical action of moving quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, contributing to the narrative of movement and action.

"nuzzled" is a past tense material process verb. It describes Winston pressing his chin into his breast, indicating a physical movement aimed at seeking shelter from the wind.

"preventing" functions as a mental process verb in the present participle form, describing the mental action of attempting to stop or hinder something (*the swirl of gritty dust*) from occurring. Overall, these verbs serve different functions within the text, contributing to the description of the setting, the depiction of characters' actions, and the advancement of the narrative.

Sub World: The third layer of TWT is called Sub World, where different new worlds are produced as departures from the conditions that established the original text world (Werth, 1999). Such departures constitute the text-world model's last level and are referred to as sub-worlds in Werth's (1999) original text on TWT. Gavins' addition to the framework divides sub-worlds into world switches and modal-worlds. Gavins' terminology is employed in this analysis. The first category, world switches, is produced when the original text world's temporal or spatial bounds are shifted. Flashbacks and flashforwards are two examples of these types of worlds (Gavins, 2007).

Additionally, as they shift the text's time frame when present-tense propositions are incorporated into past-tense fiction, examples of direct speech and direct thought are also included in this category (Gavins, 2007). The second categorization, modal worlds, is formed by modal phrases inside discourse. According to Gavin (2007), this category can be further subdivided into three distinct types of worlds: deontic, boulomaic, and epistemic modal worlds.

In extract (1), no indicators are present for **Switch World**, as it describes the scene's surroundings and the protagonist's condition. Moreover, the extract does not contain any explicit

modal world or indicators (such as can, may, or must); the usage of verbs like *"slipped"* and *"prevent"* infers potential and action. Winston was able to act when he *"slipped"* through the glass doors, and the word *"prevent"* implies that there is a chance that he could have stopped the passage of dust. However, neither modal nor switch world indicators are included in the extract (1).

Extract 2:

"Behind Winston's back the voice from the telescreen was still babbling away about pig-iron and the over fulfillment of the Ninth Three-Year Plan. The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it, moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard (Orwell, 1949, p. 5)."

Discourse world: Multiple discourse-world aspects illustrate Winston's location and monitoring apparatus in this extract. Winston, the protagonist, navigates a world ruled by the telescreen, which can receive and deliver information. The telescreen voice talks about complicated issues like *"pig-iron"* and the *"Ninth Three-Year Plan's"* overachievement, adding to the depressing atmosphere. Using the telescreen's metal plaque, Winston can see and hear within its *"field of vision."* To keep the telescreen from hearing anything, Winston must whisper. These themes subtly depict a dystopian society where surveillance and control are the norm. The telescreen, *"babbling voice,"* sound monitoring, and visual surveillance create a dystopian and oppressive discourse environment where Winston is constantly monitored and controlled. The second discourse highlights Winston's lack of privacy and personal freedom. The telescreen picks up Winston's every voice over a whisper, confirming that citizens are continuously monitored and watched.

Text World: World Builders: The extract (2) from "Nineteen Eight Four" illustrates the significant presence of TWT's text world builder elements, which are crucial in developing the text's worlds.

Spatial: The primary setting of the narrative is a totalitarian dictatorship-run dystopian society, and most of the action takes place on a telescreen. Although the extract does not explicitly specify the physical places, it effectively communicates a feeling of confinement and surveillance within the regulated surroundings.

Temporal: The *"Ninth Three-Year Plan"* reference alludes to a future era in the dystopian society described, providing

the temporal context.

Characters: The extract introduces Winston, a telescreen-bound protagonist under government observation. This paragraph does not name other characters, but the government's surveillance systems indicate them.

Entities: The telescreen and government dominate these textual worlds. The telescreen controls citizens' lives via spying and spreading propaganda, while the government controls society in the text through monitoring and propaganda.

The various elements of the text world builder work together to build a vibrant and engaging narrative environment in the extract, enabling readers to actively explore the themes of surveillance, control, and oppression found in the novel.

Functional Advancers: In the extract (2), the verbs and their functions, categorized according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), are as follows:

"babbling" This verb describes the continuous action of the voice from the telescreen, which is incessantly transmitting information. It belongs to the material verb category as it denotes a physical action.

"was" The verb "was" denotes a state of being or existence. It establishes the ongoing state of the voice from the telescreen, indicating that it was continuously babbling in the background. It belongs to the relational verb category as it describes a state or condition.

"received and transmitted" These verbs describe the simultaneous actions performed by the telescreen. The telescreen receives information from external sources while transmitting its messages. These verbs belong to the material verb category as they denote physical actions.

"whisper" The verb describes an action performed by Winston. It refers to the act of speaking in a shallow voice. It belongs to the material verb category as it denotes a physical action.

"picked up" The verb describes the action performed by the telescreen in capturing any sound made by Winston above a shallow whisper. It belongs to the material verb category as it represents a physical action.

"remained" The verb denotes a state of being or existence. It indicates that as long as Winston stayed within the field of vision commanded by the metal plaque, he could be seen and heard. It belongs to the relational verb category as it describes a state or condition.

"commanded" The verb describes the action performed by the metal plaque in determining the field of vision. It signifies the control exerted by the
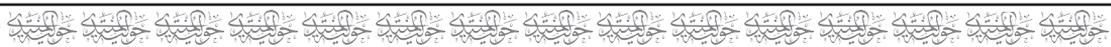
metal plaque. It belongs to the material verb category as it denotes a physical action.

The utilization of functional advanced verbs in the dystopian context emphasizes the capabilities and impacts of advanced technologies. They add to the notion of a repressive surveillance state characterized by continuous information transmission, monitoring of persons, and restriction of personal freedoms.

Switch world: The extract (2) has two indications for switching worlds. According to Gavins (2007), switch worlds commonly include a shift from one narrative or discourse to another when distinct events or perspectives are introduced. Deixis's expressions establish the reader's comprehension of the various realities as they signal the transition between multiple worlds. These worlds are as follows:

Deixis expressions, for instance, indicate Winston's physical environment; for example, *"Behind Winston's back"* *"So long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded."* These expressions emphasize Winston's immediate surroundings and actions by directly referencing his location and actions within his world.

The virtual world is shown on a telescreen, as indicated by deixis expressions, for example, *"The voice from the telescreen,"* *"The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously,"* and *"He could be seen as well as heard."* These expressions emphasize the existence and power of the artificial reality that the Party broadcasts by referring to the telescreen and its operations.

The text utilizes deixis expressions to distinguish between the primary world, which refers to Winston's physical surroundings, and the telescreen world, which represents a virtual world displayed on the telescreen. These expressions serve as clues for the reader to distinguish between these two worlds.

Modal world: Extract (2) contains various pieces of evidence that imply the existence of modal worlds within TWT. These indicators serve as cues regarding distinct modalities or sets of possibilities within the text. The following are the indications found in the extract for modal worlds:

Epistemic modality: *"Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a shallow whisper, would be picked up by it."* This expression indicates a substantial degree of certainty regarding Winston's capability to detect sounds made by the telescreen. *"would"* suggests a predictive or hypothetical statement about the telescreen's function.

Deontic modality: *"So long as he*

remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen and heard." This expression implies a conditional relationship between Winston's visibility and his compliance with the field of vision the metal plaque commands. "*could*" suggests a possibility or potential outcome based on certain conditions being met.

By studying these clues, it becomes clear that extract (2) shows modal worlds connected to the ongoing discourse on the telescreen and the spatial limitations of the visual field. Different markers aid in identifying the limits and possibilities within different modal worlds, enhancing the reader's comprehension of the context and functions of the text.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, to answer the first research question, George Orwell masterfully employs various world-building strategies throughout "Nineteen Eighty-Four" to immerse readers into the bleak and oppressive dystopian society of Oceania. The limited omniscient perspective vividly depicts the discourse world, providing insight into protagonist Winston Smith's inner thoughts and emotions amidst a hostile environment characterized by elements such as "*Victory Mansions, clocks striking thirteen,* and *gritty dust.*"

These elements, alongside functional advancers like verbs describing setting and character actions, construct a compelling text world, further enhanced by spatial references to the telescreen and temporal markers like the Ninth Three-Year Plan. Deixis expressions delineate switch worlds, highlighting the contrast between Winston's physical reality and the virtual world on the telescreen. Meanwhile, epistemic and deontic modalities reveal the text's limitations and possibilities, enhancing the reader's comprehension of the ubiquitous surveillance and control mechanisms in Oceania's society.

Up to the second research question, George Orwell adeptly immerses readers into the dystopian world of Oceania in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" through a limited third-person omniscient perspective, providing insight into Winston Smith's inner struggles. Orwell creates a vivid and oppressive mood through discourse world elements like setting, time, and character actions. Spatial and temporal references, character introductions, and functional advancers like verbs enrich the text world, contributing to a coherent fictional environment. While the first extract lays the foundation, the second delves deeper into dystopian themes like surveillance and control, employing deixis and modal expressions
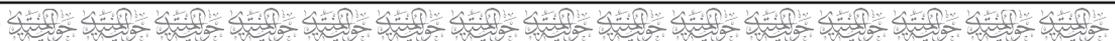
to distinguish between physical reality and artificial constructs like the telescreen, ultimately offering readers a hauntingly immersive experience of Oceania's grim reality.

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