﻿“Faded into Mist”

“Everything faded into mist. The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten,

the lie became truth”, (Orwell, 95).

Regarding Pierre Nora's contribution on memory studies and Hanna Arendt on totalitarianism, Arendt believes that memory is dangerous for the totalitarian powers, that is why they deliberately tackle memory for the sake of their present interests. Nora states that some subjects are very crucial and they have energetic power because those subjects are capable of retrieving the past memories. In Orwell 's *1984* past memories are whether updated or erased and (ink, book, diary, and pen) are prohibited. I argue that the past memory of Oceania is dangerous for the party that is why the party in *1984* in a minute by minute manner distort and falsify past memories of Oceania. The reason is that the past memories link with the identity and unity of the Oceanian community and it is the source of social staibility. The past memory is not what the party desires for that is why it is melted into mist by the party. Instead, the original past; the BigBrother's party invents a new type of memory that fulfills the party's ideological aims. For exposing and implementation the new memory, media has a powerful effect.

Over the past decades, there has been a concern about memory in the fields of social science and humanities. Studies of memory have resulted in an incredible extent of remarkable works, which pave the way to establish new areas of study (Vinson 2010), (Grainge, 2003),  (Hoffman, 2000), (Huyssen, 2000), (Möckel-Rieke1998). Memory is a broad field of study; it concerns widespread sorts of writing such as autobiography and individual memoirs that most writers of fiction have tried. Pierri Nora, a French historian, in his seminal work, Lieux de mémoire, claims that in a particular period of history, memory shapes the social and cultural climate and then hides. Nora calls this as a turning point that the awareness of a cut-out with past involves the realization that memory and the past have been ruptured, ruptured in a way to form the issue of memory. For Nora, in the modern period the real atmosphere of memory is absent, instead, there are memory sites because the real atmosphere of memory no longer exists, his intention is to show that the only forms of the past that exist as the memory sites are historic buildings, archives, monuments and museums that have supplanted the real memories, which he calls the living memory of the societies of pre-modernity. Nora suspects that the reason behind modern memory sites is to compensate a deficiency of consensus and unity among the modern societies Nora also believes that memory as identity and as the way of self-discovering fades away. As a result of the massive influence of new memories, people do not see memory as identity and neglect or forget their past. Nora gives the disappearance of the peasant culture as an example of the memory-collapse during the wake of modernity, (Nora, 1989).

The importance of memory continues to be crucial in the postmodern period. Eva Hoffman, scholar, and writer, calls our period as the era of memory, this does not mean that memory becomes influential only in this period; in fact, memory has been with humanity for a long time. What makes this age as the era of memory or in which way this era different from previous ones? The answer may be that memory has both a cultural and a natural life. Memory arises as a problem with the period of modernity and there is a relationship between memory and modernity, as the period has been claimed for its momentous and revolutionary changes, memory has become a significant issue. Memory basically entails a questioning of the past. The past establishes the human existence and deals with the basic facts of human understanding that leads to perceiving the world. In other words, memory and history are crucial for human beings. Memories of the past have a great impact on the contemporary issues as Richard Terdiman, who calls memory as the “present past” to indicate that when people talk about memory, the immediate meaning of memory is the past experiences. Terdiman regards our period as the period of “memory crisis”; memory evolves into a complication. The connections of the societies with their pasts go under pressure, and a doubtful relation with the past becomes particularly severe generally in Europe. After the French revolution, memory became a crisis because the old forms of tradition --how people made meaning and how they connected with the past, present, and future-- were disrupted in a massive way as a result of urbanization and industrialization (Terdiman, 1993 ).

What I discuss in this article is how the totalitarian state of BigBrother in George Orwell’s *1984* deal with personal and collective memory and why does memory matter for them; what makes the memory  so powerful that the totalitarian rulers try to destroy or reconstruct all the traces of their communities’ past. The past has a pivotal role in establishing individual identity and in a larger scale collective identity. Peter J. Verovšek, scholar and writer, expresses that in each country collective memory is an essential factor for stabilization of the society. It is a source of social and political integration and also, it establishes a common identity among communities. (Verovšek, 2014).  The central factor for the formation of identity is the past. Linking the past memories of a group with its identity has been studied by scholars. In his theory of “collective memory”, Maurice Halbwachs claims that memory works as a mechanism to unite people and cement identity. Nietzsche and Locke believe that the collective identity of a society is rooted in its collective memory. Many other scholars confirm the role of the past memory in forming the present identity; for example, Marya Schechtman, scholar and writer, claims that the past memories are linked with individual’s identity, (Schechtman, 2010). Memory is a crucial element for controlling a society, as Hannah Arendt states “Memory is so dangerous for totalitarian rulers.” So controlling memory of people is the number one priority of the totalitarian regime of BigBrother. Past erasure is one of the issues that Orwell focused on in *1984*. The same theme erasing real past and constructing a new memory that exists in the novel can also be noticed in reality. Totalitarian rulers have tried to bring out a new kind of memory of the past so as to form a new type of identity. Hannah Arndet states that the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century took the issue of the past into much consideration. For Arndet one of the methods of securing hegemonic power is to control the past of a nation. Stalin’s forgery attempts to falsify the history of the Soviet Union is the best example. In 1938, Stalin rewrote the Russian Revolution history and it was not just a simple rewriting but it was erasing and wiping out any undesirable events and figures. Any official documents, books, authors, and readers were not a coincidence with the interests of the Stalin’s regime came to an end by the regime, (Arendt, 1976, 411-13). Erasing and denying the past memories can be noticed, as Uhl and Golsan show, in different countries such as Italy, France, and Austria, such countries deleted or denied their past when they were in cooperation with the Nazi regime. These countries erased the dark sides of their history of violence and repression after World War II. The same thing happens in Orwell’s *1984*. When the party finds that there is no correspondence between the party lines in the present with the past, they start to change or erase the past documents in order to fit the situation of the present. For example, Oceania and Eastasia are neighbor states and they live in peace together, but they were enemies several years ago. In the official documents, being an enemy with Eastasia is denied by the BigBrother’s regime. The totalitarian regime of *1984* wipes out the events of the past on account of the fact that the past does not meet its interests of the present.

In the ideological project of the party, erasing of past is taken into consideration in an extensive manner. Erasing past of Oceania and its mutability are regarded as one of the sacred principles of INGSOC; it is English Socialism, the ideological principles of the party, (Orwell, 31). What makes the memory so crucial that totalitarian powers erase it altogether? The obvious answer is that the party erases and alters the past of Oceania for two apparent reasons. First, depending on John Locke’s ideas on memory; there is a marginal relevance between memory and identity. Memory portrays and deep-roots in humankind, lack of memory in individuals makes them lose identity and the meaning of the life. The party’s deliberate intention of melting the past into mist is that the party wants people to lose their individual identity. Instead, the party effectively imposes its own favored meaning and principles on the people of Oceania. The second reason, the party’s purpose behind constant changing and erasing of Oceanian collective memory is to receive and secure its complete support of the “proles” (ordinary people of Oceania). Past erasure is one of the most influential means to take over individuals to show their willingness to the party. In 1984 the past is not only changed but it is destroyed as well. Memory (collective, individual) and the past embody the essence of a nation. Both memory and the past have a starring role in preserving unity and identity of the community, so they become the prime target of the BigBrother. Through controlling the collective memory of Oceania, it becomes effortless to capture the individual memory of Oceanian citizen. People’s memory in 1984 is dominated by the party’s ideological project and everything becomes in favor of the party. What the party desires for gradually becomes the reality for the people. For example, the party says that Oceania has never been an ally of Eurasea (neighbor state of Oceania), but this is an obvious lie, because Winston knows that Oceanian and Eurasia were allies four years ago. This reality exists nowhere except in Winston’s memory, then this complete lie becomes true forever and it is inscribed in the history of Oceania. That is what the party’s ideological project is about, it is called “Reality control” (Orwell 41). This is the absolute reinvention of the past. That is why the party permanently distorts every trace of the past for the sake of constructing a new past that fulfills the interests of the party.

“Memory hole” is One of the mechanisms that the party uses to wipe out the past memories of Oceania. Memory hole refers several holes in the Records Department in the Ministry of Truth in the Big Brother’s government in 1984. It works as a mechanism for destroying any historical documents that do not go with the party’s ideology. It is a place where records, photographs, and transcripts of past are “devoured by the flames”, “vanish in a flash of flame” (Orwell, 47, 283). It is a place wherein a single minute, the undesirable traces of past of Oceania “crumbled into ashes” (Orwell, 90). The memory hole is a systematic method to erase and abolish memory and historical documents of Oceania. The same mechanism can be found in this period; Thomson a CEO from John Brich Society draws a comparison between the “Memory Hole” and the Internet network, he states further that the Internet heads to role as the memory hole. He gives an example of an American woman activist; Victoria Woodhull, she was the leader of woman’s suffrage in America, and she was also the head of an American section; the section twelve of Communist International under Karl Marx. But if one looks up her name on the Internet (Wikipedia for example), one realizes that Wikipedia excludes the fact that she was the head of the communist section. Nowadays scholars and students use the Iinternet extensively for their academic research, so what Thomson argues is not impossible to happen. Information and data are easily handled by those who own the Internet service.The ultimate purpose of the memory hole by the party is that to erase any information in the old archive, books, and newspapers that contradict the “new truth” of the party. If the totalitarian regime changes its ideological line, people will not be able to find any clues in the past to oppose the “new truth”. The Thomson’s analogy of the “memory hole” with today’s Internet indicates that both work as a mechanism for hiding, distorting and erasing historical facts.

Keeping the past in dark by the party leads the majority of people not to realize the way of the life before. Consequently, this leads them to satisfy and appreciate their current life under the reign of BigBrother’s party. One of the party’s key aims at continual rewriting and falsifying the past is to ensure its fascist regime’s stability (Orwell 243). Alteration of the past allows the party to portray the picture of Oceania with the best possible color of the party. Most of the people in 1984 have no clues about the life before the party. If the mass people do not have any knowledge about their past and their life few decades before, it would be impossible for them to compare their current lives with the past. It is impossible to understand how the party has reshaped their lives. In this case, people are left with a blurred vision, so they will never capable of comprehending that the party oppresses them in a consequent manner. As a result, not only people never dare to rebel against the party but they keep on working according to the party’s schedule. The party systematically works on dealing with the past; there is an organized body to alter historical documents. The Records Department in the Ministry of Truth is an independent part. The primary job of this department is to remodel and alter the past (Orwell 51), it is the place where the party not only monopolizes all the documents but destroys as well. The party attempts to ruin and rule the entire domain of the history. The Records Department has another substantial job to do; transferring the reconstructed past into community through its media channels and powerful propaganda. The party takes media into strong consideration; it is the path that all its falsification and alteration of history become an everlasting truth. Through the multifunctional “telescreen” publicizes all the documents. Textbooks of schools, films, newspapers, plays, novels, music and entertainment shows, all these are unendingly spread the reconstructed documents to the citizens of Oceania. Media make the mass population not only helpless and powerless but also enslaves them and deprives them of rationality, intellectual and cultural resources.

One of the important techniques of imposing new memory is through Propaganda. Propaganda is one of the methods that the party broadcasts its falsifications and fixing them in the mind of people of Oceania. In 1984 the party extensively utilizes media to propagate for its interest. The party's political project to adopt propaganda not only for controlling behavior or attitudes of mass population but the way they think and believe as well. Beside the “minitrue” there is another department “Fiction Department”, it is a place where Julia, Winston's beloved works. Both of the departments broadcast propaganda in dissimilar ways. Yeo classifies two different kinds of propaganda that are distinctively adopted by the party; the first one is propaganda about real things, this type indicates making lies as facts; this includes the past records of history and news reports about the continuous war of the inner party with outer party and other states, then publishing them in the “Time” or on the telescreen to the mass population of Oceania. The disciplined mass population is driven to believe and regard those lies as real facts. The only purpose behind broadcasting propaganda may be that BigBrother wants to make his citizens appreciate their current state and leads them to consider their contemporary condition is better off than before the BigBrother comes to power. The Ministry of Truth where Winston works in, the only basic task of the ministry is to use all the means of press audio-visual, including books and telescreens programs to manipulate and control the mind of the “proles” of Oceania. The second type is propaganda of fiction; this type is mostly broadcasted by the Fiction Department, this department produces fictional stories with fictional characters to entertain the citizens of Oceania. For instance, Comrade Ogilvy is a fictional character who is made by the department to be a model in order to be followed by the ordinary people. Indeed entertainment is not the aim, but all the fictional characters serve BigBrother. The impact of mass propaganda leads the “proles” of Oceania to consider these fictional figures as real characters, (Yeo, 2010).

All the Party’s official organizations partake in the process of updating past in a continuous manner. Monopolizing past of Oceania is a marginal part of the Party’s ideology because minute by minute and day by day (Orwell, 47) updating of the past warrants the party to legalize its domination. Winston, who works in the Records Department, admits that he knows how all the alterations are made and he knows how the party enjoys the potential advantages of altering the past, but he does not understand why the party fabricates the past, (Orwell, 91). The Records Department regularly and steadily modifies the past for the sake of the party’s ideological ends. Whenever there is a discrepancy between reality and the ideological statements of the party, the department changes all traces of the statements. The reality itself is distorted by different techniques of brainwashing namely “doublethink”. Doublethink means to believe the distortions and lies of the party and regard them as truth, it is a vast system for cheating and tricking the mind of human, it means to believe two contradictory ideas at the same time; for example, the word blackwhite, as many words of Newspeak has two mutually contradictory indications, besides the actual fact of black is not white, but claim and believe that black is white. For the members of the party, black is white, to know this as a fact and to forget that anyone has believed the opposite. Even the names of the ministries in 1984 entail the idea of doublethink; Ministry of Peace concerns with war, Ministry of Love concerns with torturing people and Ministry of  Truth deals with propaganda and lies, (Orwell, 240, 253).

Through the persistent distortion of both the reality and the past, the party is able to stand firm that the party and its statements have never been incorrect. The party’s hegemonic power over the past makes it beyond the bounds of possibility to challenge the BigBrother’s party. When the memory of people is destroyed by the falsification techniques of the party, the party takes the center stage of the community to prove that the present condition is the ideal state that Oceania has ever been into, as Winston says while he speaks with Julia, his beloved, about the process of falsification.Winston says that without an endless present nothing exists (Orwell 178). The present is everything for the party. Winston’s speech refers that the present is the most essential and influential weapon for the party to dominate its power over the people by destroying the past of Oceania, because the present is the most effective mean to destroy the past and guarantees the future. The party employs the ideas of memory and past to lay an absolute and irreducible gap between a horrible state of Oceania before the party came to power and bright utopian of the present with the BigBrother. The party invents its own history; the majority of people at Winston’s age do not know about the life before the party. Majority of Oceanians only know from the invented lies in the history books of the party. In the history books, the party is everything, every improvement, invention, and victories are ascribed to the party. The party claims that the aeroplane is one of its inventions (Orwell 104). But Winston is sure that this is a complete lie because he saw aeroplane in his childhood before the party came to power. Winston reads the school’s history textbook that he lends from his friend’s child. In a paragraph about London, it describes London in this way; before the party’s revolution London was dirty, miserable, dark, no enough food for people to eat and everything from land, money, power were controlled by capitalists (Orwell 102). The telescreen continually releases statistics to convince people of Oceania that their current situation regarding food, house, clothes, health, education, and happiness is better than before the revolution of the party.  It can be figured out from the conversation between Winston and an old man at a bar, that life before the revolution of the party was better than current state under the party’s reign. Winston starts to refer to what being said in the history books about life between the current situation and before. Life, as it described in the invented history books of the party before revolution life was terrible, people experienced social injustice, lack of food, and oppression. But in fact, people’s life was better than the present. The old man remembers everything about life before the party came to the power he says: even “The beer was better and cheaper” (Orwell 114). The present is the priority of the party, it is the point where the BigBrother shapes the whole history. The history of Oceania starts with the upcoming of the party to the power. The original past does not exist anymore, and it is called the abolishment of past. The party rubs out and insists on erasing the prior memory of Oceania. Winston is fully aware of how the party rewrites the past, repainted all the pictures, streets and buildings are renamed by BigBrother. The biggest concern of the party is the present where controls all the past through reshaping history and destroying individuals’ memories.

Another advantage of destroying the memory of people is that the changeable temporal principle leads people to readily susceptible to brainwashing. Memory and identity closely link to each, the party deliberately exploit the memory of Oceania, the more exploited memory and history of people the fewer people fell certainty in terms their identity. Memory is regarded as a source of self-assurance. Since violating and destroying the memory of people becomes daily routine by the party, the life of people becomes unstable in term of identity. As in the case of Winston, he finds doubly difficult to remember his childhood. After the late fifties in 1984 all the historical records and official documents are disappeared, so Winston remains without any memory of his childhood and family memory. This makes him lose the sharpness of his life (Orwell, 37). Memory is the core of the human being; it helps to give a meaning of the life. Lack of self- knowledge about his past memories influences Winston’s life to be vague and amorphous. Adapting the same strategy, the party is capable of transforming citizens of Oceania into general amorphousness, and this is the favored situation that the party desires for. “Vaporized “ is the destiny of those people who stand against the party’s principles and interests. Anyone who becomes a threat to the party, he or she will be vaporized. It means the party erases that person as if he or she has never existed in the life. Winston’s parents seem likely vaporized or arrested secretly by the party. Winston lives in a situation with no parents, and he has to consider them as they have never existed in his life. According to the principles of the party, Winston came to existence from nobody, because his parents are “unperson”. Being a parentless child makes Winston to suffer much and find no clues of his origin. He is agonized with this case that is why he always tries to fill this scarcity by reversing his childhood’s memory.

Winston does not know why the totalitarian regime of BigBrother continually erases documents and controls every aspect of life in Oceania. What distresses Winston is that he never figures out the reason behind the party’s deliberate erasing of history. Winston knows the benefits of the falsifications, but he does not know “WHY” (Orwell, 91). Toward the end of 1984 the question appears again, this time by O’Brien in room 101, he reminds Winston of the question that he records in his diary. O’Brien says to Winston: “You comprehend very well how the party keeps its power on the majority of people, but you don’t know why maintain our dominant power? What motivates us? Why we want power?” (Orwell,300). Winston replies in a very simple way; for the good of people. Winston’s answer disturbs O’Brien so he starts to torture Winston again but severely this time, after that, O’Brien pulls back the lever (torturing machine in room 101) and begins to answer his question instead of Winston. “We as the party are not keen on what is good for people. We want power for our own sake only. Being solely in power is our ultimate end. For us power is not a mean, O’Brien goes on, we are not looking for happiness, long life, having a luxurious life, and being wealthy, all we want is an absolute power. We made the revolution to create a dictatorship. The purpose of power is the power only” (Orwell 301). Regarding O’Brien’s answer, it is clear that erasing all undesirable documents is one of the substantial strategies of the party to maintain its power over the people of Oceania. Since Orwell refers, denying and wiping out the history of people are the most powerful factors to control and destroy people. We can answer WHY that Winston does not understand it.Tthe party erases the past of Oceania to deprive people from the realization of life in once upon a time before the party came to power.

To forget the act of forgetting” (Orwell, 326) is a mechanism to wipe out any unfavorable or unwanted truth by the party. When the party rewrites information or erases someone from existence, the party members and the Inners especially not only have to forget it, but they have to forget the act of forgetting. In the room 101, O’Brien holds a photograph in his hand to show Winston how they are capable of wiping out people from existence. O’Brien puts the photo into the memory hole. After a while the photo becomes ashes. Winston shouts it exists, but O’Brien denies the existence of the figures in the photo. O’Brien says ashes are not identifiable, so they do not exist ever. Winston confirms that he remembers them and confirms their existence by saying “But it did exist! It does exist! It exists in memory. I remember it” (Orwell, 283). Winston asks O’Brien whether he remembers it or not, without any doubt O’Brien replies No. Winston feels helpless and his heart sinks because he is certain that O’Brien does not lie. Winston is sure that O’Brien totally forgets the photograph. “It was perfectly possible that O’Brien had really forgotten the photograph. And if so, then already he would have forgotten his denial of remembering it, and forgotten the act of forgetting.”(Orwell, 283). To survive under any totalitarian regime, one has to unquestionably give his/her absolute commitment to the orders of the regime, regardless whether the orders are rational or reasonable. O’Brien is as blind as a bat for the orders of the party. Whatever the party commands are the total truth. The more blindly one obeys the party the safer life one has.

Another important question from O’Brien to Winston about the existence of past history of Oceania, The prior history of Oceania exists in two different forms; the first one exists in the form of documents and records. The second one exists in the memory and minds of people. Both the forms are under control of the party. In the “room101,” O’Brien asks Winston “where does the past exist, if at all?” Winston answers “In records. It is written down”. O’Brien asks further “In records. And——?” then Winston replies “In the mind. In human memories” and O’Brien says “In memory. Very well, then. We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not?” (Orwell 313). O’Brien proudly says we as the Inner Party of Oceania take over all the records, the mind and the memory of every single person. The Ministry of Truth gives a new shape to the past records as the way the party desires. The Ministry rectifies history, updates the past and makes a copy of the origin history records on the base that every historical record must meet the interests of the party. What are against their will; they throw them away to the “Memory Hole”.

After updating and rewriting the past, the party invents a new or favorable history for the people of Oceania. The rectified historical documents are reprinted by the Ministry of Truth, and then publish to the mass population of Oceania. Some ‘Thoughtcrime’ people who actually existed in the past history of Oceania, but they will not exist anymore in the new history because they do not adapt themselves with the principles of the BigBrother’s party. Consequently, those thoughtcrime people are vaporized and abolished by the Ministry of Love in ‘room 101’. If the party finds any rebellion among the proles, the consequence of the rebellions will be disappearance and torture to death, without anyone knows about their aftermath. Every single trace of them will be destroyed as if they never existed in the history of Oceania. On the other hand, there are some other figures with no historical precedent in Oceania, but they become an actual and real hero of the present history of Oceania as in the case of Comrade Ogilvy. Winston at the Ministry of Truth, thinks about Comrade Ogilvy and says to himself “Today he should commemorate Comrade Ogilvy. Winston is sure that there is no such person as Comrade Ogilvy, but a few lines of print and a couple of faked photographs will soon bring him into existence” (Orwell 59). Comrade Ogilvy has no reference in the past history of Oceania, but now he exists in the new history of Oceania, because he is the most perfect and loyal member to the party. Winston makes up and designs the character of Comrade Ogilvy. For the party, Ogilvy is the best citizen of Oceania because from his childhood he dedicates his life to support the party, he never “drinked” and never smoked, he dies at the front line in fighting against the enemies of Oceania. That is the way the slogan of the party in 1984 can be perceived readily. The party has ultimate power in the present state of Oceania, how the party safeguards its future? By controlling the past. “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past”

To sum up the issues of memory in Orwell’s 1984, it can be clearly seen that the party in a systematic way erase and reconstruct the past memory of Oceania. The totalitarian regime of Bigbrother in a minute by minute manner update and destroy undesired parts of the past heritage of oceanian community. Because past memories link with the identity and unity of the nation. The past is not what the totalitarian regime desires for that is why the past is rubbed out by the totalitarian power in the novel, instead of the original past; the totalitarian state of BigBrother invents a new type of memory that fulfills their ideological ends. Media “telescreen” in *1984* has a pivotal effect to impose the new or reconstructed memory of the party. The “telescreen” is a powerful mean to make all the lies and falsifications to become true. The telescreen continually releases statistics to convince people of Oceania that their current situation regarding food, house, clothes, health, education and happiness is better than before the revolution of the party.

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