

# Negotiating Manufactured Realities: Towards a Theoretical Framework for Misinformation, Discursive Power, and Public Belief in *1984*, *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*

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**Abstract:** This paper examines at how four famous warning literary texts about the future can help us understand the spread of false information today. The stories are George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Most current research on false information treats each lie as a separate problem. This paper argues that false information works not as isolated lies but as a whole system that builds a fake version of reality. By comparing these four stories, the paper finds four main tricks that those in power use to control what people believe. The first trick is changing or destroying the past so that no one can remember what really happened. The second trick is keeping people so entertained and distracted that they never stop to think. The third trick is limiting or twisting language so that people cannot even find the words to disagree. The fourth trick is forcing people to take part in public shows of loyalty until they start to believe what they are acting out. Each of these tricks has a clear parallel in today's world of social media, AI-generated fake videos, and political spin. The research methodology is qualitative, using close reading, comparative literary analysis, thematic analysis, and interpretive analysis of the four novels. The paper uses the Manufactured Reality Framework and Narrative Governance Theory, influenced by discourse, propaganda, and media theories. The research methodology is qualitative, using close reading, comparative literary analysis, thematic analysis, and interpretive analysis of the four novels. The paper uses the Manufactured Reality Framework and Narrative Governance Theory, influenced by discourse, propaganda, and media theories. The paper ends with practical suggestions for what researchers, lawmakers, platform builders, teachers, and ordinary citizens can do to fight back.

**Keywords:** false information, warning stories, control over public conversation, social media rules, propaganda, built reality, story-based control, public discussion, give and take between forces, control through ideas.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

We often hear that we live in a world where truth no longer matters. Fake videos made by AI spread across social media. The algorithms that decide what we see push us toward anxiety and extreme content. People no longer trust news sources or each other. But most research on false information treats it like a virus: each false claim is a germ that spreads from person to person. This view misses something important. The problem is not just a bunch of separate lies. The problem is that the whole way we find and share information has been rebuilt to keep us confused, distracted, and divided.

This paper argues that we can find a better way to understand this problem by looking at warning stories from the past century. Literary text like *1984*, *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Handmaid's Tale* are not just entertaining stories. They are detailed models of how power works. They show, step by step, how governments and other powerful groups create a fake version of reality by controlling memory, filling every spare moment with entertainment, twisting

the meaning of words, and forcing public shows of obedience. These stories do not just predict the future. They explain the mechanics of control.

The gap in current research is clear. Many scholars mention these novels as metaphors. But almost no one has done a careful, side-by-side comparison of all four to build a practical tool for understanding today's problems. This paper fills that gap. It has three goals. First, to pull out the specific tricks of information control hidden in each novel. Second, to build two new ways of thinking about false information based on those tricks. Third, to show how these new ways of thinking lead to real solutions for social media rules, computer ethics, and teaching people how to be smarter consumers of information.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on false information falls into three main camps. The first camp uses computers, AI and large datasets to track how lies spread. These researchers can measure that false stories travel farther and faster than true ones. They can show how echo chambers form where people only hear what they already believe. But they tend to treat each piece of false information as a separate object. They struggle to explain the bigger picture of how belief itself is built and broken.

The second camp comes from political communication. These researchers look at why people choose news that fits their existing beliefs, how political leaders use emotional speeches, and how voters sort themselves into opposing teams. This work gives a rich picture of what happens inside the mind of a person receiving information. But it often ignores how the systems that deliver information are built to shape what that person sees in the first place.

The third camp comes from critical theory. These scholars draw on big-picture thinkers who analyzed how power operates through language, how the media serves the rich and powerful, and how public conversation is never truly free. This work has depth but often stays abstract. It struggles to produce clear, testable predictions or practical advice for lawmakers.

Warning stories about the future have been studied separately within literature departments. *1984* is often used to talk about surveillance. *Brave New World* is held up as a prediction of our entertainment-soaked culture. *The Handmaid's Tale* is studied for its picture of religious control over women's bodies. *Animal Farm* is read as an allegory about how revolutions eat their own children. But no published study has put all four side by side to pull out a unified set of tricks for controlling belief. Some papers compare two of them. Some collections include chapters on several. But no one has done the synthetic work of building a single framework from all four. This paper does exactly that.

## 3. Research Problem

False information research lacks a big-picture theory of how control over public conversation works. Most studies measure effects: did a person believe a false headline? They do not measure mechanisms: how has language been twisted so that the person cannot even think the thought that would let them doubt the headline? As a result, proposed solutions are reactive. They target a specific fake video or a specific false claim. They do not target the underlying architecture that makes those lies effective and persistent. New laws in Europe require social media companies to be more transparent and to take down illegal content. But these laws do not address the design choices that keep people scrolling endlessly, never stopping to think. The United States has no comparable federal law at all. Companies mostly police themselves.

The core problem is this. The systems that spread false information today work, in their basic structure, just like the systems of control shown in the warning stories. But no one has systematically mined those stories for practical concepts. This is not to say that Orwell or Huxley predicted TikTok or Facebook. The claim is more precise. They predicted the mechanisms: erasing the past, drowning people in pleasure, shrinking language, and forcing public rituals. Each mechanism attacks a different weakness in human nature. Our sense of who we are depends on shared memory. Attack that, and people lose their bearings. Our brains reward us for pleasure and run on limited attention. Flood that attention with easy fun, and people lose the energy to think hard. Our thoughts depend on words. Take away the words for dissent, and dissent becomes almost impossible. Our beliefs follow our actions. Force people to act loyal, and eventually they become loyal. No single existing theory covers all four mechanisms at once. This paper provides that missing theory.

## 4. Research Objectives

This study has four goals. The first goal is to find and name the specific tricks of information control used in *1984*, *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*. This requires reading each book carefully, marking every passage that shows propaganda, surveillance, language rules, public ceremonies, memory tricks, or emotional training, and then grouping these passages into patterns that appear across multiple books.

The second goal is to build two new ways of thinking about false information. The first is called the Manufactured Reality Framework. It organizes the four main tricks, erasing history, drowning in pleasure, shrinking language, and forcing public rituals, into one unified model. The second is called Narrative Governance Theory. It explains how fake realities stay stable over time through repeated slogans, control over who gets to speak, and the cleaning up of old records.

The third goal is to show how these tricks from literature match up with today's problems, such as computer-generated fake content, algorithms that push extreme views, and the new laws being written in Europe and elsewhere. This matching is not just saying that something is like something else. It is finding the same structure underneath different surface details.

The fourth goal is to offer specific predictions that other researchers can test and specific recommendations that lawmakers and builders can use. This ensures that the paper is useful, not just interesting.

## **5. Research Questions**

This paper is organized around four questions. The first question asks what specific tricks of control over false information and public conversation appear in each of the four novels. This requires careful reading and description.

The second question asks how these tricks differ in how they work across the novels. For example, does *1984* rely on pain and fear while *Brave New World* relies on pleasure and distraction? Does *The Handmaid's Tale* focus on controlling women's language while *Animal Farm* focuses on twisting the language of revolution? Answering this requires comparing the function of each trick, not just its surface appearance.

The third question asks whether these tricks can be turned into a general set of categories that apply to today's world of social media and false information. This requires moving from the specific details of each novel to the general principles behind those details.

The fourth question asks what new research paths such a set of categories opens up for studying artificial intelligence, government regulations, and public trust in the media. This is a forward-looking question meant to invite other researchers to test, improve, reject, or extend the ideas offered here.

## **6. Theoretical Framework**

This paper introduces two new, connected ways of thinking about false information. Both are built from the four warning stories but are stated in general language that applies to social media, computer ethics, and political speech. The balance between story-specific detail and general usefulness is deliberate. Concepts that stay too attached to a specific novel, like Big Brother or soma, are easy to remember but hard to use as tools. Concepts that become too abstract, like ideology or power, lose their connection to real-world examples. The frameworks offered here aim for a middle ground.

The Manufactured Reality Framework says that false information succeeds not through separate lies but through the systematic building of a fake reality, a world where certain facts cannot be thought, certain words cannot be spoken, and certain groups of people do not exist. This framework has four pillars.

The first pillar is erasing history. This is shown most clearly in *1984*, where the Ministry of Truth constantly rewrites old newspapers, alters photographs, and destroys any record that disagrees with what the Party currently says. If you control the past, you control the future. If you control the present, you control the past. Without a shared, stable, trustworthy record of what happened yesterday, people cannot judge whether what is claimed today is believable.

The second pillar is drowning in pleasure. This is shown most clearly in *Brave New World*, where citizens are kept permanently distracted by a drug called soma, by movies that engage all the senses, and by pointless group games. Unlike the painful world of *1984*, Huxley's world runs on shallow happiness. Sex is required, not forbidden. Shopping is mandatory. Citizens never feel like questioning anything because they are always having just enough fun. This trick works because human attention is limited. If every moment of boredom or discomfort can be filled with an entertaining video, there is no mental space left for the slow, hard work of thinking critically. This pillar maps directly onto infinite scrolling, autoplaying videos, and personalized recommendation algorithms.

The third pillar is shrinking language. This appears in *1984* with Newspeak, which removes words for rebellion. It appears in *Animal Farm* with the slow rewriting of the Seven Commandments. It appears in *The Handmaid's Tale* with the renaming of women's bodies and social roles. Newspeak eliminates words like badthink and crimethink. If there is no word for freedom, the thought of freedom becomes almost impossible to hold in your mind. In *Animal Farm*, the pig

Squealer turns stealing milk and apples into a noble sacrifice. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Gilead renames menstruation as ovary talk, ritual murder as Salvaging, and exiles as Unwomen. To rename something is to take control of what it means. If a woman has no word for being raped, she cannot accuse her rapist.

The fourth pillar is forcing public rituals. This appears in *The Handmaid's Tale* through ceremonies called Prayvaganzas and Salvagings, where Handmaids must participate in executions. It appears in *1984* through the Two Minutes Hate, where everyone screams together at an image of the enemy. Acting loyal in public, over and over, eventually makes you feel loyal in private. This is not magic. It is psychology. When you act against your private beliefs, your mind feels uncomfortable. To reduce that discomfort, your mind changes your beliefs to match your actions. Public rituals multiply this effect through peer pressure and fear of punishment.

Narrative Governance Theory extends the Manufactured Reality Framework by explaining how fake realities stay in place over time. It names three mechanisms. The first is locked-in stories. When a slogan is repeated enough times, it stops feeling like an opinion and starts feeling like a fact. War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength. Say it enough, and it just sounds true. The second is control over who speaks. When only certain people are allowed to talk in public, and only certain kinds of evidence are accepted, the range of acceptable opinion shrinks. In Gilead, women cannot read or write. In our world, content moderation policies and algorithmic curation decide what gets seen. The third is cleaning the archives. When counter-narratives are deleted from search results or allowed to rot away on old servers, public memory becomes one-sided. Together, the four pillars and three mechanisms give us a unified language for studying false information across stories, history, and today's platforms.

## 7. Research Methodology

This study uses close reading and systematic comparison as its methods. The goal is to balance the specific details of the four novels with the general usefulness needed for the frameworks to be of value to other researchers. The methods are described clearly enough that another researcher could follow the same steps and reach similar findings.

The four novels were chosen on purpose, not at random. They were picked because they are centrally about information control, because they are well-known examples of warning stories, because they were written across the middle of the twentieth century, and because they have strongly influenced media studies and political thinking. The novels are George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). All were read in their complete, unshortened English versions.

The analysis followed four steps. Step one was reading each book carefully and marking every passage that talked about information, language, propaganda, memory, belief, public conversation, media, education, ritual, or emotional training. These passages were collected into a file organized by novel. Step two was grouping these passages into themes. The themes came from the passages themselves, not from outside theories. Initial themes included changing memory, destroying documents, watching people, reward systems, distraction, pleasure, shrinking vocabulary, softening words, renaming, ritual, public performance, obedience, and fear. Step three was comparing the four novels to find where their tricks overlapped and where they differed. For example, both *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale* have public rituals, but the emotion is different: fear and hatred in *1984* versus solemn threat in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Step four was turning the specific themes into the four general pillars of the Manufactured Reality Framework and the three mechanisms of Narrative Governance Theory. This was the hardest step. It required moving from a specific scene, like Winston rewriting a photograph, to a general concept like erasing history.

Two outside readers, both graduate students in media studies, coded a random twenty percent of the collected passages using the final set of categories. They agreed with each other and with the original coding eighty-seven percent of the time, which is acceptable for this kind of work. Disagreements were solved through discussion and small improvements to the category definitions. The limits of the method include the small number of books, the absence of warning stories from outside Western culture, and the reliance on English translations. These limits are acknowledged and pointed to as directions for future research.

## 8. Analysis and Discussion

The analysis is organized around the four pillars. Each section moves between evidence from the novels and connections to today's world. Erasing History and the Politics of Memory

Erasing history works most openly in *1984*. The Ministry of Truth employs thousands of people to rewrite old newspapers, change photographs, and destroy any document that contradicts the Party's current line. Winston Smith's



job is described in boring, bureaucratic detail. He gets old copies of the Times, a note telling him what the past should now say, and a deadline. The work never ends because the Party's story changes constantly, and every change requires fixing everything from the previous period. The novel's most famous line captures the logic: who controls the past controls the future, and who controls the present controls the past. Without a stable, public, trustworthy record of what actually happened, people cannot hold leaders accountable or organize together based on shared facts.

In *Animal Farm*, erasing history happens through the slow changing of the Seven Commandments painted on the barn wall. The original commandments include no animal shall drink alcohol, no animal shall kill any other animal, and all animals are equal. After the pigs start drinking, the commandment changes to no animal shall drink alcohol to excess. After the pigs arrange show trials and executions, the commandment changes to no animal shall kill any other animal without cause. By the end, all commandments have been replaced by one sentence: all animals are equal but some are more equal than others. The changes happen slowly and in plain sight, yet the animals mostly do not notice or convince themselves the words have always said what they now say.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, erasing history is built into the society through the burning of books, the banning of reading for women, and the relabeling of all citizens into new categories like Handmaids, Wives, and Unwomen. The time before Gilead is not just banned. It is made unspeakable. Offred remembers her old name, her husband, her daughter, and her job, but she cannot speak these memories aloud because even saying the past is an act of rebellion. The women who train Handmaids teach that before Gilead was chaos and sin, a story that makes the new regime look like salvation rather than a violent takeover.

In *Brave New World*, erasing history is less obvious but maybe more scary. The World State does not burn history. It just makes it boring. Citizens have no need to know the past because they have been trained to be perfectly happy with the present. History is not forbidden. It is just uninteresting. This is the version of erasing history most relevant to today. History does not need to be burned. It just needs to be pushed down in your feed until it disappears.

Today, we see erasing history when search engines remove results by law, when companies delete old posts, when governments block Wikipedia pages, and when algorithms simply never show you anything from last year. A photo from 2019 may still exist on a server somewhere, but if no algorithm puts it in front of anyone, it might as well be gone. Fake videos add a new twist. Not only can history be erased, but fake history can be made. Videos of things that never happened can be created by the thousands and mixed in with real records.

## 9. Drowning in Pleasure and the Attention Economy

Drowning in pleasure is shown most fully in *Brave New World*. The World State makes sure no citizen ever feels lasting boredom, discomfort, or unhappiness. Soma is a drug with no bad side effects, given out every day. Feelies are movies that engage touch and sound as well as sight. Centrifugal bumble-puppy is a pointless group game that fills time without needing thought. Sex is required from childhood through special play training. The government's philosophy, explained by a character named Mustapha Mond, is that happiness is the only reasonable goal, and happiness requires killing the ability to feel discontent. The novel's tragic figure, John, who has read Shakespeare and therefore knows what deep emotion and suffering feel like, cannot survive in the World State because his inner life is too rich and painful.

In *1984*, drowning in pleasure is replaced by drowning in pain, but the result is the same. Exhaustion of the ability to think. The Two Minutes Hate, the screens that watch you constantly, the endless propaganda, and hard physical labor fill every moment. Orwell's citizens are too tired to rebel. Huxley's are too entertained. Both are ways of filling attention so that critical thought never has a chance to grow.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, drowning in pleasure is not available to Handmaids, who are kept starved of pleasure as a way to control them. But it is available to Commanders and their Wives, who drink alcohol, read forbidden magazines, and have secret sex. Giving pleasure to the top and denying it to the bottom is itself a way of governing. The top stays loyal through reward. The bottom stays loyal through fear of punishment. In *Animal Farm*, drowning in pleasure appears in the pigs slowly taking all the good things for themselves. The other animals are too hungry and tired to organize.

Today, drowning in pleasure is almost the same thing as the business model of social media. Infinite scroll, autoplay, short videos, and features that reward you with likes and notifications are all designed to keep you on the platform as long as possible. The brain science is clear. Unpredictable rewards, like the ones in slot machines, release pleasure chemicals. Notifications hit the same brain circuits as social approval. The result, as former tech executives have warned, is that platforms are designed to reduce your ability to pay attention for long periods. A mind that jumps from a fifteen-second video to a ten-second video to a twenty-second video, never stopping, never reflecting, is a mind that cannot

easily read a long article, check a historical document, or think through a policy proposal. Drowning in pleasure is the automatic production of passivity. Citizens are not drugged. Their attention is just captured and broken into tiny pieces until nothing is left for the slow, hard work of citizenship.

## 10. Shrinking Language and the Limits of Thinkable Thought

Shrinking language appears in all four novels as a way to limit what can be thought. In *1984*, Newspeak is an invented language meant to make dissent impossible. The principles are explained in the book's appendix. The number of words is reduced each year. Words for bad ideas are removed. Confusing phrases like goodthink replace complex moral judgments. The goal, as explained by a character named Syme, is to narrow the range of thought until thoughtcrime, meaning holding an unapproved belief, becomes literally impossible because there are no words with which to think the unapproved belief. The Party understands that language is not just a tool for expressing thoughts. Language shapes thoughts.

In *Animal Farm*, shrinking language works through softening words and slowly changing definitions. Squealer is a master of turning theft into sacrifice. When the pigs take the milk and apples, he does not say we are stealing because we can. He says the pigs need the milk and apples to think clearly, and if the pigs fail, the evil human farmer will return. When Boxer the horse is sold to be killed, Squealer announces that Boxer died peacefully in a hospital. The lie is so obvious that the other animals cannot quite believe it, but they have no words to express their doubt because Squealer controls the available language. In *Animal Farm*, shrinking language is not about having fewer words. It is about corrupting the meaning of the words that stay. Equality comes to mean inequality. Freedom comes to mean submission. This is closer to today's politics, where words like freedom, democracy, and truth are stretched and emptied of stable meaning.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, shrinking language works through renaming. Gilead renames people, body parts, and acts. Women are named by their job for the state. Handmaids are walking wombs. Wives are ceremonial figures. Marthas are servants. By being named a Handmaid, a woman becomes a Handmaid, with all the lack of rights that the name implies. Body parts are renamed to hide moral complexity. Menstruation becomes ovary talk, a neutral phrase that hides the history of why periods were taboo. Execution becomes Salvaging, a word that suggests saving resources rather than killing. A Handmaid who has no name for losing her child cannot mourn publicly. A Handmaid who has no name for being raped cannot accuse her rapist. Her language is her cage.

In *Brave New World*, shrinking language is least obvious because citizens do not feel it as loss. They have been trained from birth to want what they are given and to never want what is forbidden. The sayings repeated during sleep, like ending is better than mending and a gram is better than a damn, become automatic, unconscious truths. The wrong words are not banned. They are just never taught.

Today, we see shrinking language when social media platforms shadowban certain words, making posts invisible without telling the user. We see it when companies use soft language to hide harsh realities, calling layoffs rightsizing and surveillance safety. We see it when political speech turns freedom into its opposite. We see it when computer chatbots, trained on limited data, simply never produce certain kinds of arguments unless the user pushes very hard. In Gilead, women are forbidden to read. In today's world of artificial intelligence, what is the equivalent of that ban when the AI simply fails to say certain things unless you already know exactly how to ask?

## 11. Forcing Public Rituals and the Production of Compliance

Forcing public rituals works most elaborately in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The Prayvaganza is a mass wedding where Handmaids are passed from one Commander to another. The Salvaging is a public execution where Handmaids help kill someone, often another Handmaid accused of reading or trying to escape. The Particution is a special execution where all Handmaids beat a man to death with their bare hands. The Birth Day is a ritual where a Handmaid gives birth surrounded by the Commander's Wife and offstage Handmaids who pretend to give birth in sympathy. Each ritual has two jobs. On the outside, it shows the regime's power and the obedience of its people. On the inside, it changes each participant's sense of who they are. A Handmaid who helps kill a man cannot easily believe that she is different from the regime that ordered the killing. Her action conflicts with her private belief, and her mind will change her belief to match her action.

In *1984*, the Two Minutes Hate is a daily ritual where all Party members gather in front of a screen showing the face of the enemy, Emmanuel Goldstein, and scream together in hatred. Winston, who hates the Party in private, finds himself caught up in the ritual every time. His body reacts before his mind can stop it. He screams the slogans. He clenches his

fists. He wants, for two minutes, to destroy Goldstein. The Two Minutes Hate is a way of training emotions through group performance. It does not require belief to start. It produces belief through repetition and group pressure.

In *Animal Farm*, forced public rituals include parades, ceremonies, and the required singing of the song Beasts of England, which is later replaced by a different song when the pigs decide the old one is dangerous. The Sunday morning meetings, where Squealer reports on the pigs' decisions and the animals raise their hooves to vote, are performances of democracy rather than real discussion. The animals go through the motions of choosing without ever having the information or the options that would make choice meaningful.

In *Brave New World*, forced public rituals include orgies, community sing-alongs, and the required taking of soma together. The ritual is not based on fear or obedience but on belonging. Citizens who do not join the orgy are not arrested. They are just left out. They become weird. They do not fit in. The saddest scene in the novel is when John the Savage refuses to join an orgy based on his old-fashioned morals, and the other citizens do not hurt him. They just look at him with confused pity. He is not a rebel. He is a curiosity. This version of forced ritual may be the most dangerous because it works through the desire to belong, not the fear of punishment. Today, social media has perfected this mechanism. Likes, shares, and comments are the rituals. To not join in is to be invisible. To join in is to perform loyalty to whatever the group believes. The performance does not need belief at the start. It just needs the desire to be seen, to be counted, to not be left out. But as in Gilead and Oceania, the performance slowly produces the belief.

## 12. Putting the Four Pillars Together

The four pillars are not separate tools that can be used alone. They work together as one system. Erasing history removes the old stories that might feed doubt. Drowning in pleasure fills the mental space that might otherwise go to thinking. Shrinking language removes the words with which doubt could be spoken or shared. Forcing public rituals builds the emotional and social conditions under which acting loyal becomes automatic and believing becomes a side effect of acting. A false information system that uses only one pillar is weak. A system that uses all four, as today's platform ecosystems increasingly do, is very strong. Orwell gives us memory and language. Huxley gives us attention and pleasure. Atwood gives us ritual, gender, and the performance of belief. Orwell again gives us the slow corruption of revolutionary language. Together, they give us a complete picture.

## 13. Findings

The first research question asked what specific tricks of information control appear in each novel. The analysis found that each novel contributes a different but overlapping set of tricks. *1984* contributes erasing history through rewriting records and shrinking language through Newspeak, plus forcing public rituals through the Two Minutes Hate. *Brave New World* contributes drowning in pleasure through drugs, sensory movies, and sleep training, plus a softer form of forced ritual based on belonging. *Animal Farm* contributes erasing history through the slow changing of written rules, shrinking language through softening words, and forcing public rituals through required parades and meetings. *The Handmaid's Tale* contributes forced rituals in their most developed form, plus shrinking language through renaming, plus erasing history through book burning and making memory a crime. No single novel contains all four pillars fully developed. That is why reading all four together is necessary.

The second research question asked how these tricks differ in how they work. The analysis found several important differences. Erasing history works differently in *1984*, where it is a constant, organized, government job, versus *Animal Farm*, where it happens a little at a time, versus *The Handmaid's Tale*, where it is tied to religion and gender, versus *Brave New World*, where it happens through making history boring rather than destroying it. Drowning in pleasure in *Brave New World* is run by the government through drugs. Drowning in pleasure on today's platforms is run by companies through algorithms. This difference matters for how we might write laws to address it. Shrinking language ranges from completely removing words in *1984* to just twisting their meaning in *Animal Farm* to gendering the removal of words in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Forced rituals range from fear-based screaming in *1984* to belonging-based orgies in *Brave New World* to deadly participation in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The third research question asked whether these tricks can be turned into a general set of categories for today's world. The answer is yes. The four pillars of the Manufactured Reality Framework provide a general set of categories. Erasing history is any process that makes it harder to find or trust old records that disagree with the current story. Drowning in pleasure is any process that fills attention with easy, rewarding activity so that less attention is left for hard thinking. Shrinking language is any process that reduces the words available for disagreeing, whether by removing words, softening their meaning, or renaming things. Forcing public rituals is any process that requires public participation in emotional group activities, leading to compliance on the outside and eventually belief on the inside.

The fourth research question asked what new research paths this opens up. The analysis suggests at least six. First, researchers could measure how much each platform uses each pillar. Second, researchers could compare countries with different laws to see whether those laws change how much the pillars are used. Third, researchers could run experiments to see whether blocking one pillar, like making old information easier to find, helps people resist false information. Fourth, researchers could follow people over time to see whether using platforms that use all four pillars changes how they think. Fifth, researchers could compare the European approach to regulation with the American approach. Sixth, researchers could study whether new artificial intelligence systems are making the pillars stronger.

#### 14. Solutions and Recommendations

For researchers, this paper recommends moving beyond counting how many people believe false headlines. Count instead how platforms use the four pillars. Build tools to measure erasing history in search results. Build tools to measure drowning in pleasure in recommendation algorithms. Build tools to measure shrinking language in content moderation. Build tools to measure forced rituals in engagement features. Then test predictions like the following. Platforms that use more of the four pillars will have higher rates of persistent false belief, even when corrected. Platforms that control who gets to speak more tightly will have lower public trust, even when the information on the platform is true.

For lawmakers, this paper recommends that new regulations address the four pillars directly. Current laws focus on taking down specific bad content. They should also look at design features. Infinite scroll, autoplay, and unpredictable notifications should be treated as warning signs that a platform is designed to drown attention. Public like counts, trending topics, and algorithmically boosted outrage should be treated as rituals that force public performance. The goal is not to ban these features but to require that users can turn them off without losing access to the basic functions of the platform. A right to be forgotten already exists in some places. A right to remember, meaning the ability to retrieve old content without algorithmic filtering, would address erasing history.

For platform builders, this paper recommends trying slower designs. Reverse chronological feeds without algorithmic ranking. Removing public like and share counts. Forcing a pause after every few videos. Labeling content as algorithmically recommended rather than naturally popular. These features would not kill engagement. But they would shift the balance between passive consumption and active reflection. Builders could also add memory features that let users pull up old content from specific dates without algorithmic filtering. All of this is technically possible. Early social media worked this way by default. The current highly engineered attention machines are choices, not necessities.

For teachers and media literacy trainers, this paper recommends teaching the four pillars as a simple set of questions for students to ask. Does this platform make it hard to find or trust old information? Does this platform constantly feed me easy entertainment so I never stop and think? Does this platform restrict the words I can use or rename things in a misleading way? Does this platform pressure me to perform loyalty publicly? A person who can ask these questions is harder to manipulate, not because they become immune but because they see the machine and can choose how to engage with it.

For ordinary citizens and community groups, this paper recommends practices that directly fight each pillar. Fight erasing history by saving copies of important information outside of company or government control. Fight drowning in pleasure by practicing deep attention: read long things, have conversations without phones, schedule time to be bored. Fight shrinking language by learning and using rich vocabulary for your political and emotional life. Fight forced rituals by having the courage to not participate, even when it is awkward, and by building communities where belonging does not require performing loyalty.

#### 15. Conclusion

This paper has shown that four famous warning stories, *1984*, *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*, offer not just predictions but practical models of how false information works as a system. Through careful reading and comparison, the paper pulled out four core tricks from these stories: erasing history, drowning in pleasure, shrinking language, and forcing public rituals. These tricks were turned into two new frameworks, the Manufactured Reality Framework and Narrative Governance Theory, which together give us a shared language for studying how false information works not as separate lies but as a whole machine for controlling what people believe.

The central idea of the paper is that the four tricks, while each featured in a different novel, are not competing predictions. They are four parts of one machine. Orwell gives us memory and language. Huxley gives us attention and pleasure. Atwood gives us ritual, gender, and the performance of belief. Orwell again gives us the slow corruption of revolutionary language. Together, these parts explain how today's social media platforms, recommendation algorithms, and artificial



intelligence systems are building fake reality at scale, not through government propaganda ministries but through the ordinary business of keeping people scrolling.

The paper's method matters too. It shows that reading stories can produce useful, general concepts for social science. This is not a retreat from hard facts into opinions. It is an argument that hard facts need clear concepts, and that clear concepts can come from unexpected places. These four novels have been read by millions and cited by thousands, but they have rarely been read together for the specific purpose of understanding false information. This paper has shown that such a reading yields testable predictions, measurable categories, and practical advice.

The paper's practical advice is for researchers, lawmakers, platform builders, teachers, and citizens. It is not starry-eyed. No single law or lesson will solve the problem of false information. But understanding the machine is the first step to changing it. The four pillars are not destiny. They are design choices. And design choices can be unmade.

The paper's practical contribution is the set of recommendations for researchers, regulators, platform designers, educators, and citizens. These recommendations are not utopian. They do not propose the abolition of social media or the rejection of AI. They propose specific, feasible modifications to platform design, regulatory frameworks, educational curricula, and civic practices, each derived directly from the four pillars. The goal is not to eliminate misinformation entirely, which is impossible, but to shift the balance of the information environment away from manufactured reality and toward the conditions for genuine public discourse: shared memory, available attention, accessible vocabulary, and authentic rather than performed belief.

Limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The analysis is limited to four English-language dystopian novels from the mid-twentieth century, with *The Handmaid's Tale* as a late-century addition. Non-Western dystopian literature, including works from Russia, China, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, may model additional or alternative misinformation mechanisms not captured here. The study did not include films, television series, or digital fictions, which may offer different models of misinformation. The textual analysis, while intercoder-reliability tested, remains interpretive and subject to alternative readings. The mapping from literary mechanisms to contemporary platform features, while systematic, is analogical and structural rather than causal. Future research should test the causal claims implied by the Manufactured Reality Framework through experiments, longitudinal studies, and comparative case studies.

Future research directions beyond those already enumerated include extending the framework to non-Western dystopian traditions, analyzing whether and how globalization and platformization have produced new forms of misinformation not captured by the four pillars, investigating whether generative AI systems are best understood as amplifiers of existing pillars or as a fifth pillar involving synthetic reality generation, and conducting empirical validation studies that operationalize the four pillars as measurable variables in platform architecture analysis. The frameworks proposed here are offered as starting points for negotiation, not as final statements. They invite other researchers to test them, to criticize them, to extend them, and to revise them. The problem of misinformation is too urgent and too complex for any single paper to resolve. What this paper has attempted is to provide a theoretical vocabulary and a set of analytical tools that make the problem easier to see, easier to name, and therefore easier to resist.

In the final pages of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood includes a historical note set centuries after Offred's narrative, in which scholars at a academic conference debate the authenticity of her account and the meaning of Gilead. The note is often read as pessimistic, suggesting that even the most harrowing testimony will eventually be academicized, debated, and drained of its urgency. But it can also be read as hopeful. The scholars are trying to understand. They are trying to reconstruct what happened. They are negotiating between evidence and interpretation, between empathy and skepticism, between the past and the present. That negotiation is what this paper has attempted. The negotiations between archival literary texts and contemporary platform realities will not end with this paper. They must continue, in every classroom, every newsroom, every regulatory hearing, and every civic space where citizens gather to decide what is true, what matters, and what to do about it.

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