

# Translating and Interpreting George Orwell in Ukraine: A Study of Literary and Critical Engagement

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## ABSTRACT

*This article explores the different ways George Orwell's works have entered Ukrainian culture, with a particular focus on the translations that have introduced his sharp political commentary to Ukrainian readers. Apart from translations, we will examine other channels of interpretation, such as various adaptations and critical analyses, which have further expanded Orwell's reach and influence in Ukraine. By analyzing these various forms of transmission, we would like to shed light on how Orwell's themes have resonated in a Ukrainian context, and how his works continue to inspire reflection and discourse in a nation with its own complex history of socio-political struggle. This study represents the first attempt to gather and analyze the various interpretations of Orwell's legacy within Ukraine.*

## KEYWORDS

George Orwell, translations, Ukraine, adaptations

Ukrainian readers currently have access to most of the novels of George Orwell. A great number of them appeared in the twenty-first century and new versions continue to emerge. The first Ukrainian translation of Orwell's work appeared in 1947, thanks to a young scholar, Ihor Shevchenko, who used the pen name Ivan Cherniatynskyi. He managed to contact Orwell and asked him for permission to translate *Animal Farm*. Shevchenko explained that the book would have a significant intellectual value for the potential Ukrainian readers who were living at that time in displaced persons camps in Germany. This translation was published in Munich by the publishing house *Prometheus* and was greatly enriched by the fact that Orwell himself wrote an original new preface. In fact, Orwell wrote two prefaces for *Animal Farm*, but only the Ukrainian one was ever published. The original version, written early in 1947, has never been found, and Orwell scholars only have access to a back-translation from Ukrainian.<sup>1</sup> Orwell, obviously attempting to provide context for the book, summarizes his life and work, highlighting how his experience during the Spanish Civil War was instrumental in beginning to form suspicions about Soviet rule and doctrine. He puts it as follows: "To experience all this was a valuable object lesson: it taught me how easily totalitarian propaganda can control the opinion of enlightened people in democratic countries."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to make extremely clear the goal of not only this allegorical work, but his output in general: "... it was of the utmost importance to me that people in western Europe should see the Soviet regime for what it really was."<sup>3</sup> This was obviously a controversial thing to say at a time when the Soviet Union was

1 V. C. Letemendia, "Revolution on *Animal Farm*: Orwell's Neglected Commentary," *Journal of Modern Literature* 18, no. 1 (1992): 127–137.

2 George Orwell, "Preface to the Ukrainian Edition of *Animal Farm*," *The Orwell Foundation*, accessed June 22, 2025, <<https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/books-by-orwell/animal-farm/preface-to-the-ukrainian-edition-of-animal-farm-by-george-orwell/>>.

3 Orwell, "Preface."

still an ally of the West and was even more provocative, of course, for Ukrainian readers. Masha Karp provides a great deal of insight into the circumstances behind the translation and quotes from Shevchenko's letter to Orwell, describing the impact of his translation of the book on the readers in the camps: "Soviet refugees were my listeners. The effect was striking. They approved of almost all your interpretations."<sup>4</sup> Orwell's ability to strike a chord with Ukrainian people, who had experienced first-hand Soviet totalitarianism, is remarkable to say the least. Shevchenko provides further high praise claiming that "the mood of the book seems to correspond with their own actual state of mind."<sup>5</sup> The Ukrainian scholar Olha Luchuk has provided a detailed account of the first Ukrainian translation of *Animal Farm*, relying on the correspondence between Orwell and Shevchenko, as well as her own communication with the translator, to present a comprehensive picture of this significant work.

Since this time, eight more translations have been published, each trying to better render the novel's allegorical meanings for Ukrainian readers. Among these translations, Iryna Dybko's version published in Toronto in 1984 stands out as a loose, but provocative, translation. Roman Kukhar explains, in the foreword, that this approach was deliberate, aiming to make the allegorical connections between the characters and historical events even more apparent. Dybko, recreating Orwell's literary idea of *Animal Farm*, used clearer, more nationally-identified images, bringing the theme closer to the real world.<sup>6</sup> The book contains a list of characters whose names have been changed in order to emphasize what country and what people are meant. The boar Napoleon, for example, is translated as the boar Visarionov, this being a clear reference to Joseph Stalin, whose patronymic was Vissarionovich. While this translation offers fertile ground for scholarly analysis, the 1991 translation by Natalia Okotilenko, published in *Vitchyzna*, Ukraine's oldest literary magazine (1933-2012), is less valuable in this regard. Okotilenko's translation was unfortunately made from the Russian text rather than the original English, which compromises its fidelity to Orwell's intent. In that same year, two more translations were published, by O. Drozdovskyi and Yurii Shevchuk, the latter being published in the literary magazine "Vsesvit" ("Universe"), and reprinted later in 2015 by *Zhupanskyi* publishing house. Although the name O. Drozdovskyi is mentioned as the translator, Olha Luchuk suggests that it could have been a pen name for another author, as there is no evidence of the existence of a person of that name.<sup>7</sup> Additional translations appeared in 2021: Bohdana Nosenok's in *Folio Publishing House* and Viacheslav Stelmah's in *BookChef*. In 2022, Olena Lomakina's version was published by *Znannia Publishing House*. It is worth mentioning that the title *Animal Farm* has been translated into Ukrainian in several different ways, but the most fitting translations use the word "kolhosp" instead of "farm". "Kolhosp" refers to a Soviet collective farm, which accurately reflects the essence of Orwell's work. For the average Ukrainian reader, the word "farm" carries a generally positive connotation, while "kolhosp" evokes a negative image,

4 Masha Karp, *George Orwell and Russia* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 208.

5 Karp, *George Orwell and Russia*, 209.

6 Roman Kukhar, "Animal Farm by George Orwell Translated by Iryna Dybko," [In Ukrainian] *Animal Farm* (Baltimore-Toronto: Smoloskyp 1984), 5-9.

7 Olha Luchuk, "'Animal Farm' by George Orwell in Ukrainian Translations." [In Ukrainian] *Visnyk of the Lviv University. Series International Relations* 30 (2012): 391.

symbolizing a closed, forced community where individual rights were entirely disregarded. This distinction, arguably, better captures the meaning of Orwell's allegory for the Ukrainian audience.

The widespread interest in this work can be easily explained by the fact that, despite its allegorical nature, the events it describes resonate deeply with historical truths. The totalitarian oppression of the Soviet Union left a lasting impact on the collective memory of Ukrainians, making Orwell's portrayal of such regimes particularly meaningful. The still relatively fresh memories of the Holodomor would have made the message of the book particularly poignant and relevant for Ukrainian readers as the collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union, and in Ukraine in particular, by Stalin was undoubtedly one of the causes of the genocidal famine.

Orwell's novel *1984* has been no less significant for Ukrainian readers despite having been banned in the Soviet Union up until 1988. In 2022, the book was banned once again in Belarus, and the order required all versions of *1984* to be removed from sale.<sup>8</sup>

The first Ukrainian translation of the novel appeared as a fragment in the literary magazine *Vsesvit* in 1988 and was made by Vitalii Terekh. It was not until 2013, however, that a full translation of *1984* was published in Kryvyi Rih in a print run of more than 1,000 copies. Although not a professional translator at his own admission,<sup>9</sup> Vitalii Danmer's version has become widely known and is freely available on the Internet. Since then, the novel's popularity has continued to grow, with several translations now available in Ukraine (Viktor Shovkun's in 2015 for *Zhupanskyi Publishing House* and in 2021 Bohdana Nosenok's for *Folio*, Viacheslav Stelmakh's for *BookChef* and Olena Lomakina's for *Znannia*) each bringing the understanding of Orwell's chilling vision of a totalitarian order closer to the minds of Ukrainian readers.

In addition to the previously mentioned novels, *Zhupanskyi Publishing House* has also issued translations of other Orwell novels as part of their Masters of World Prose series. These include *Coming Up for Air* (2020) and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (2021), translated by Tetiana Kyryliuk; *A Clergyman's Daughter* (2021), translated by Mariia Holovko; *Homage to Catalonia* (2017), translated by Iryna Saviuk; *Down and Out in Paris and London* (2017), translated by Yehor Poliakov; and *Burmese Days* (2021), translated by Oksana Hordiienko. Additionally, Folio Publishing House has released *Homage to Catalonia* (2023) and *Down and Out in Paris and London* (2022), translated by Tereza Gnatyshyn. In 2025, *Zhupanskyi Publishing House* released Oksana Hordiienko's translation of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, together with *As I Please* (translated by Yuliia Kochatynska), a collection of articles Orwell wrote for the Tribune newspaper between 1943 and 1947.

As concerns his essays, only two of them are currently available in Ukrainian translation: *Freedom of the Park*, translated by Oksana Dashchakivska (2004), and *Politics and the English Language*, translated by Artem Pulemotov (2011). Both can be found in the online version of *The Independent Cultural Journal "I"*. The growing number of Orwell translations reflects the ongoing demand for his works in Ukraine, where they are of definite interest for people in search of

8 Olesia Kotubei-Herutska, "George Orwell: He Was One of the First to Compare Hitler and Stalin, and He Financed the Ukrainian Translation of the Dystopian Novel," [In Ukrainian] *Suspilne. Culture*, January 21, 2024. <<https://suspilne.media/culture/661610-dzordz-orvell-buv-odnim-z-persih-hto-porivnav-gitlera-i-stalina-sam-finansuvav-ukrainskij-pereklad-antiutopii/>>.

9 George Orwell, *1984*, [In Ukrainian] (Kryvyi Rih: Hurtom.com, 2013).

intellectual tools for understanding present-day sociopolitical realities. As stated in the annotation to the Ukrainian edition of *As I Please*, “Unfortunately, George Orwell’s observations from that time remain relevant today, drawing parallels and connections between our dissimilar yet similar times of war,”<sup>10</sup> a remark that accentuates why Orwell’s voice continues to resonate so strongly in Ukraine.

Orwell’s *1984* and *Animal Farm* have also become part of the secondary school world literature curriculum in Ukraine. This change reflects a broader shift in how world literature is perceived in the country. Back in 2004, the curriculum included at least 50% Russian authors, which limited the exposure of Ukrainian students to the richness of global literature and imposed an artificial value on Russian works. By 2024, no Russian authors remained in the curriculum, marking a significant cultural shift.

The significance of *1984* has not only been maintained through various translations, but has also expanded into new genre forms. Ukrainian readers were introduced to Orwell’s classic in a new format through the 2022 release of the French illustrator Xavier Coste’s graphic novel, translated into Ukrainian by Kateryna Pityk. In a review for the Ukrainian journalist platform MIND.UA, Alina Butenko stated that Coste’s illustrations served as a powerful tool for engaging the readers’ consciousness through visual perception as its content not only made the complex themes of the original work more accessible, but also encouraged readers to rethink totalitarianism in the modern world.<sup>11</sup>

Theatrical performances are another type of intermedial reading of *1984*, in addition to the well-known film adaptations, such as *1984* directed by Michael Radford that same year. Thus, in 2019, Kyiv Academic Drama Theater on Podil staged Michael Gene Sullivan’s adaptation of Orwell’s dystopia. The director Serhii Pavliuk brought Sullivan’s version to life, condensing the novel’s events to the interrogation of Winston Smith, and thereby intensifying the psychological tension of the narrative. As the Ukrainian critic and writer Maryna Smilianets noted in her review, viewers become passive victims of the interrogation, as it is impossible to watch someone being hurt and feel nothing – even if it is “not for real.”<sup>12</sup> Smilianets suggests that this discomfort serves as a reminder to value our freedom, expressed in the idea: “Freedom is the ability to say that two plus two is four. If this is possible, then everything else follows.”<sup>13</sup> To expand this thought, one could argue that in a world where the Party dictates reality, controlling even the most fundamental truths, the ability to assert that *two plus two equals four* becomes an act of defiance. It signifies the right to independent thought and objective reality, both of which are systematically undermined under oppressive regimes.

Intermedial adaptations of *1984* extend beyond classical theatre productions; with contemporary Ukrainian artists having taken it even further. As 18 January 18, 2020, the information and art project “Proteatr” posted on its website that the Kyiv Modern Ballet was about to present

10 Oleksii Zhupanskyi and Lesia Pishko, annotation to *As I Please* [in Ukrainian] (Kyiv: Zhupanskyi Publishing House, 2025), 4.

11 Alina Butenko, “Book of the Week: ‘1984. A Graphic Novel’ by George Orwell and Xavier Costa.” [In Ukrainian] *Mind.ua*, June 14, 2023, <<https://mind.ua/publications/20258603-knizhka-tizhnya-1984-grafichnij-roman-dzhordzha-orrvela-j-ksav-e-kosta>>.

12 Maryna Smilianets, “The Podil Theater Opened its 33rd Theatrical Season with the Premiere of *1984* by Serhii Pavliuk,” [In Ukrainian] *Mirror Weekly*, August 30, 2019, <[https://zn.ua/ukr/ART/dopit-iz-torturami-322144\\_.html](https://zn.ua/ukr/ART/dopit-iz-torturami-322144_.html)>.

13 Smilianets, “The Podil Theater.”

a one-act dystopian ballet, 1984: *Інша* (1984: *The Other*), featuring music by the cellist Hildur Guðnadóttir and the German composer-pianist Hauschka. *1984. The Other* is a fresh interpretation of Orwell's story, introducing new characters and a renewed understanding of global social issues. In an interview with Yevdokiia Feshchenko for *Ukraina Moloda*, leading dancer Ihor Miroshnychenko explains the play's concept and its central characters, simply named She and He: "We wanted to honor Orwell's novel, using its ideas and structure to create a parallel story to Winston Smith's."<sup>14</sup> The play portrays the Party's dominance through stage lighting as the main antagonist, with Big Brother appearing only as a shadow. She, the Other, is blind and thus unaffected by the Party's control through light, making her an object of ridicule. He, a devoted Party follower, eagerly consumes its "happiness pills." The consumption of these pills, as Miroshnychenko notes, is a choreographic metaphor for the so-called benefits the Party provides, similar to Orwell's disgusting gin, bad cigarettes, tasteless coffee or vile chocolate. Over time, He loses his hearing, becoming an Other himself, shattering his beliefs. By means of body percussion, physical theater, modern choreography, lighting design, and music, the production creates a new dimension for Orwell's dark world.

Another intermedial reinterpretation of *1984* comes from the director Vlada Belozorenko, who reimagines Orwell's classic novel through the lens of the Russian-Ukrainian war in her theatrical performance *1984: Occupation*. Belozorenko transforms Orwell's dystopia into a metaphor for contemporary realities, emphasizing the psychological and cultural toll of occupation. "Those who survive the occupation are forever wounded," she reflects. "The occupied and de-occupied territories of Ukraine are our nation's invisible scars – bitter and painful, requiring generations to heal. I want this story to remind us and the world that, under occupation, another war is waged daily – the war of a person for their humanity, identity, and freedom."<sup>15</sup>

The stage design intensifies this narrative, featuring piles of recycled materials fed into a shredder, symbolizing the destruction of documentary memory, culture, and language. Books, documents, and photographs are physically destroyed, mirroring the erasure of identity under totalitarian regimes. The actors' faceless costumes further reflect this loss of individuality, with subtle details serving as the only markers of personal identity.

In this adaptation, the oppressive regime of Oceania remains central, with its hybrid ministries and Big Brother's omnipresent surveillance. The production's atmosphere resembles a panopticon, a psychological prison where individuals behave as if they are under constant watch.<sup>16</sup>

A defining feature of such theater is that all communication in the performance occurs through body language. This choice enhances the emotional resonance of the story, as noted by Ihor Bilyts, the actor who portrayed Winston Smith. He shared that the reliance on physical expression to convey complex emotions was a challenge, but it made the narrative accessible even

14 Ihor Miroshnychenko, "Other Happiness Pills: A Ballet Based on George Orwell's *1984* Performed in Kyiv," [In Ukrainian] Interview by Yevdokiia Feshchenko. *Ukraina Moloda*, February 5, 2020, <<https://www.umoloda.kiev.ua/number/3562/164/142981/>>.

15 Vlada Belozorenko, "1984 OCCUPATION," [In Ukrainian] *Mariia Zankovetska Theater*. January 13, 2024, <<https://zankovetska.com.ua/repertoire/1984/>>.

16 Oleksii Palianychka, "1984. Alpacas vs. Orwell." [In Ukrainian] *Zbruc*, February 9, 2024. <<https://zbruc.eu/node/117668>>.

to those who were unfamiliar with Orwell's original work.<sup>17</sup> In the case of this adaptation, one can talk about powerful visual storytelling and a deep contextual reinterpretation. *1984: Occupation* thus becomes not just an adaptation of Orwell's work but a powerful commentary on the enduring struggles for freedom and identity in the face of the oppression which people face in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

Beyond the stage, *1984* has sparked a rich intertextual dialogue, inspiring works that both allude to Orwell's masterpiece and reimagine totalitarian futures. Among them are *1985* by Anthony Burgess, which combines essays on Orwell with a dystopian story about trade union dominance, and *1985* by the Hungarian author György Dalos, which explores life after Big Brother's death. Neither of these novels has been translated into Ukrainian, however, unlike Boualem Sansal's *2084: La fin du monde* (*2084: The End of the World*), which reached Ukrainian readers in 2016, just a year after its French release. While Burgess and Dalos reinterpret Orwell's themes in political and social contexts, Sansal radicalizes the totalitarian vision by fusing ideology with religious dogma, presenting a future where absolute control is enforced through both political and theological means.

In Sansal's novel, "the shift in the emphasis of totalitarianism from a mere state ideology to a state-religious ideology becomes, so to speak, new meat on the old skeleton of the world from 1984."<sup>18</sup> *2084* does not simply replicate Orwell's dystopia, but adapts its structure to contemporary concerns. If Orwell's *1984* depicted a regime that controlled truth through ideology and language, Sansal's *2084* suggests that in the modern world, religion can be instrumentalized to exert the same absolute control over individuals, dictating not only their actions and speech but even their innermost beliefs. Sandra Newman's novel *Julia: A Novel* (2023) is as a truly distinct reinterpretation. This novel reimagines *1984* entirely from Julia's perspective, preserving the main plot of Orwell's work, but viewed through a feminist lens. Newman introduces new themes, including abortion, sexual abuse, minority rights, thus adding a modern touch to the classical dystopian world. The Ukrainian translation by Nata Hrytsenko was published in 2024 under the shortened title *Julia: 1984*. Although there are no formal written reviews of the novel, the Ukrainian journalists, Emma Antoniuk and Yana Bryndzei discussed the book extensively on their YouTube channel *Palaie* (more than 150,000 followers), dedicated specifically to book reviews. They discuss the novel not just in connection with Orwell's *1984*, but also highlight a key difference in how power is portrayed. In Orwell's novel, fear is especially powerful because it is vague and ever-present as Big Brother is never actually seen, making the control feel absolute and inescapable. In *Julia*, however, the source of power is made visible: an aging, unstable man who once created the system, which has since begun to destroy itself. This shift makes totalitarian rule feel more personal and concrete. Antoniuk and Bryndzei also draw comparisons to modern regimes, pointing out similarities with Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un.<sup>19</sup> These examples of the way *1984* has been interpreted serve to demonstrate the book's ongoing inspirational power, something testified to by Dorian Lynskey,

17 Ihor Bilyts, "1984. Occupation," Interview. [In Ukrainian] *TRC First Western*, January 12, 2024, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2\\_Qe1wRKpo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2_Qe1wRKpo)>.

18 Andrii Martynenko, "Boualem Sansal '2084. The End of the World': George Orwell is Watching You," [In Ukrainian] *Chytomo*, May 23, 2016, <<https://archive.chytomo.com/uncategorized/boualem-sansal-2084-kinec-svitu-george-orwell-is-watching-you>>.

19 Emma Antoniuk and Yana Bryndzei, "'1984. Julia' by Sandra Newman." [In Ukrainian] *Palaie*, accessed August 6, 2024, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VX\\_VFatAwI&t=812s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VX_VFatAwI&t=812s)>.



the author of the book *The Ministry of Truth: A Biography of George Orwell's 1984*, who states that "it's a work of art and a means of reading the world."<sup>20</sup>

Cinematic explorations of Orwell's novels can also serve as an indirect tool to deepen the message of the films. A powerful example would be the movie *Mr. Jones* (2019) directed by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland. This film tells the story of Gareth Jones, a journalist who exposed the horrors of the Holodomor to the world in the early 1930s. In Ukraine, the film was released with the subtitle "The Price of Truth" which underscores the film's focus on the difficult realities Jones uncovered. Ukrainian scholars explain this decision as follows: "The Ukrainian title of the movie renders a powerful message which moves the spotlight from the journalist himself to the price one has to pay to bring the hidden truth to light, facing immense personal risks and formidable obstacles."<sup>21</sup> Throughout the film, there are subtle, but significant, references to Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*: posters, animal statuettes, and other visual cues. Orwell himself even appears in the film: in one scene, he is introduced to Jones and persuades the journalist to publish about the horrors he witnessed in Ukraine. These direct and indirect references to Orwell's works highlight the themes of surveillance and propaganda. In one scene, for example, Ada (a journalist who assisted Jones) and Jones are walking along the street, talking, while a man follows them. Ada urges Jones to speak quietly, explaining ironically that the man is her older brother. The reference to "Big Brother" is clear, symbolizing total surveillance, as depicted in *1984* and mirrored in the film. Holland emphasized in an interview that Orwell's presence in *Mr. Jones* was important to her: "because he somehow represents my [her] point of view – how to tell stories that are impossible to tell in times when people don't want to listen to the truth."<sup>22</sup> The screenplay for the movie was written by Andrea Chalupa, the author of *Orwell and the Refugees: The Untold Story of Animal Farm* (2012), in which she explores the link between George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Ukrainian refugees in postwar Germany and Austria. She examines how Orwell collaborated with Ihor Shevchenko to publish the first-ever Ukrainian translation of the novel in 1947, with 5,000 copies printed for distribution among displaced Ukrainian refugees. Only 2,000 copies survived, however, as U.S. soldiers confiscated and destroyed the rest, handing them over to Soviet authorities as supposed propaganda. Remarkably, among these surviving copies, one belonged to Chalupa's uncle, who had obtained it as a child in a refugee camp and later brought it with him to the United States.<sup>23</sup> Halyna Tatara from the Ukrainian Institute London emphasizes, in relation to Chalupa's work, the unique political agency of Ukrainian displaced people. She notes that after enduring Stalin's repression and mass persecution, they viewed political independence as a matter of survival. She

20 Dorian Lynskey, *The Ministry of Truth: The Biography of George Orwell's 1984* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2019), x.

21 Olha Bilyk, Nathan Greenfield, Nataliia Ivanotchak, Iryna Malyshevskaya and Nataliia Pyliachyk, "Unveiling the Shadows of Tragedy: Exploring a Multimodal Metaphor in Agnieszka Holland's *Mr. Jones*," *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae Film and Media Studies* 25 (2024): 76.

22 Agnieszka Holland, "Interview: Agnieszka Holland," Interview by Yonca Talu. *Film Comment*, December 17, 2019, <<https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/interview-agnieszka-holland/>>.

23 Andrea Chalupa, *Orwell and the Refugees: The Untold Story of Animal Farm*. Kindle Edition, 2012.

argues that Ukrainians were willing to die for their ideology, and Orwell's work resonated deeply with them precisely because of his own ideological convictions.<sup>24</sup>

This attempt at a diverse intermedial and intertextual exploration of Orwell's novels demonstrates that works written decades ago continue to resonate with modern audiences, and Ukrainian ones in particular, providing insights through various genres of representation.

The critical reception of Orwell's works around the world is in evidence by the large amount of respected publications reflecting various aspects of his private and professional life. In Ukraine, the critical understanding of Orwell's work can be called twofold: on the one hand, there are publications that deal directly with his novels, mainly *Animal Farm* and *1984*, and on the other hand, there have been works that consider the author's novels either within the realm of the dystopian genre or in comparison with the works of Ukrainian writers. The latter group contains mostly theses which examine the way the Ukrainian scholarly lens has shifted over time. Yurii Zhadanov in his thesis *George Orwell's Novel '1984' in the Context of Dystopian Literature of the First Half of the 20th Century*<sup>25</sup> provides an analysis of Orwell's renowned novel within the broader framework of dystopian literature that emerged during the early twentieth century. The study examines the way *1984* fits into or deviates from the typical characteristics of dystopian works from that period, exploring its themes, narrative techniques, and its place in the literary tradition of dystopian fiction. Despite being one of the first scholarly works in Ukraine to address the dystopian theme, it lacks a distinctly Ukrainian critical point of view, because the theoretical background relies largely on Russian scholars. This consequently amounts to a Ukrainian dissertation which reflects, in most cases, a Russian vision of the topic. This is not surprising given the fact that Ukraine was only beginning to recover from Russian influence and developing its own independent approaches to studying Orwell's legacy. A completely different approach can be observed in works which appeared later.

Olena Andreichykova (2024) examines Orwell's dystopian legacy alongside authors such as Aldous Huxley and Ray Bradbury, while also incorporating Volodymyr Vynnychenko's *The Solar Machine* and Yaroslav Melnyk's *Masha, or the Fourth Reich* (published first in Lithuanian *Maša, arba Postfašizmas* in 2013 and in 2016 in Ukrainian) into the broader "dystopian discussion." Written in 1920s Germany, *The Solar Machine* explores the crisis of "perfect stagnation," where the loss of self-improvement leads to personal and societal collapse. Andreichykova emphasizes that for Vynnychenko, human existence depends on continuous growth, and its absence results in moral and physical death.<sup>26</sup>

Since Vynnychenko's novel was written earlier, there is no basis to discuss Orwell's influence on his work. A connection with Melnyk's novel is certainly possible. Regardless of the question of direct influence, however, studying these works in comparison provides valuable insights and helps uncover new interpretations of recurring dystopian themes. *Masha, or the*

24 Halyna Tatara, "George Orwell and the Ukrainian Refugees: The Untold Story of *Animal Farm*," Ukrainian Institute London, July 31, 2012, <<https://ukrainianinstitute.org.uk/george-orwell-and-the-ukrainian-refugees-the-untold-story-of-animal-farm>>.

25 Yurii Zhadanov, *The Novel '1984' by George Orwell in the Context of the Dystopia of the First Half of the Twentieth Century*, [In Ukrainian] author's abstract of PhD diss., Dnipropetrovsk State University, 1999, 12–14.

26 Olena Andreichykova, *Genre Evolution of Modern Dystopia (Ukrainian and Foreign Literature)*, [In Ukrainian] PhD diss., Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University, 2024, 86–87.



*Fourth Reich* exemplifies one such theme, the absence of alternatives. The book depicts a world where the existing system is seen as the only way to live, forcing characters into resignation and passive acceptance of their reality. Placing Ukrainian dystopian novels alongside Orwell's works highlights how his political imagination may be culturally "translated" into a local literary version, making Ukrainian fiction an interpretive extension of Orwell's legacy. A comparative vision of Orwell's novels is presented in *Artistic and Journalistic Visions of Totalitarianism in the Works of M. Rudnytskyi and G. Orwell: A Receptive-Communicative Aspect*.<sup>27</sup> The dissertation explores the way totalitarianism is depicted in the works of both Ukrainian and British authors. The study focuses on how the authors' portrayals of totalitarian regimes are received and communicated to their audiences. Research has also demonstrated the way Orwell's works acquire new layers of meaning when they are studied alongside Ukraine's cultural and political history. Another comparative study is provided by Svitlana Kobuta in her thesis *The Concept of a Free Person in the Creative Heritage of Ivan Bahrianyi and George Orwell*.<sup>28</sup> Ivan Bahrianyi was a renowned Ukrainian novelist who faced persecution in Soviet Ukraine during Stalin's rule. After World War II, he emigrated to Germany, where he continued his literary and political work. His most celebrated novels, *Тигролови*, 1944 (*The Hunters and the Hunted*) and *Сад Гестиманський*, 1950 (*The Garden of Gethsemane*), explore themes of resistance and survival under oppression. In 1946, he wrote the pamphlet "Why I Am Not Going Back to the Soviet Union," in which he exposed the Soviet-Russian imperial system and its repressive nature. It can be assumed that, like Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Bahrianyi's pamphlet served as both a critique and a warning, offering a truthful depiction of the regime and its dangers. Kobuta states: "Both authors strongly condemned the existing political regimes and were not afraid to express their opinions, for which they were constantly criticized in the press. Their works, especially journalistic ones, were often subject not only to objections but also to malicious distortions."<sup>29</sup> She demonstrates that the writers shared similar ideas on freedom, equality, and struggle against totalitarian regimes, with their works highlighting the importance of personal freedom for humankind. Drawing such parallels, Kobuta positions Orwell within Ukraine's own intellectual struggle against authoritarianism, demonstrating that interpretations of the author may be seen as inseparable from Ukraine's cultural self-reflection.

There are also works which specifically explore translations of Orwell's novels focusing on the different techniques and strategies used by Ukrainian translators to convey the essence of these literary masterpieces to a broad and growing Ukrainian audience.<sup>30</sup> There are also texts

27 Oleh Bodnar, *Rudnytskyi and G. Orwell's Artistic-publicistic Visions of Totalitarianism: the Receptive and Communicative Aspect*. [In Ukrainian] PhD diss., Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatuk National Pedagogical University, 2012, 185.

28 Svitlana Kobuta, *The Concept of a 'Free Man' in the Creative Writings of Ivan Bahrianyi and George Orwell*. [In Ukrainian] PhD diss., Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, 2015, 225.

29 Kobuta, *The Concept of a 'Free Man'*, 34.

30 Olha Luchuk, "Animal Farm" by George Orwell in Ukrainian Translations". [In Ukrainian] *Visnyk of the Lviv University. Series International Relations* 30 (2012): 391. Olha Lyntvar and Yuliia Pletenetska. "Quasi-realias in the Dystopia Novel '1984' by George Orwell in Translation Dimension". [In Ukrainian] *Research Journal of Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University. Series "Philology" (Linguistics)* 12 (2019): 117–120. Svitlana Kobuta and Ivanna Devdiuk. "Author's Neologisms in George Orwell's Dystopia '1984': Pragmatics of the Translations". [In Ukrainian] *Folium*, special issue (2023): 67–73. <<https://doi.org/10.32782/folium/2023.3.9>>.

which either continue exploring dystopian and totalitarian themes in Orwell's novels,<sup>31</sup> or seek to broaden the comparative lens by drawing parallels between *1984* and lesser-known authors for a Ukrainian audience, such as the Swedish novelist Karin Boye and her novel *Kalloccain*. In their research, Nataliia Bulavynets and Iryna Malyshevska specifically examine the female characters in *1984* and *Kalloccain*, arguing that their psychological profiles are central to understanding internal conflicts, social marginalization, and the search for identity within totalitarian worlds.<sup>32</sup> This comparative approach highlights how both Orwell and Boye use female perspectives to explore broader themes of resistance, surveillance, and ideological control, offering new insights into the role of gender in dystopian fiction. The Russian-Ukrainian war triggered the appearance of articles in which authors attempt to analyze Orwell's *1984* from the current war perspective. Zlatslav Dubniak thus offers a philosophical rereading of *1984* in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, in particular after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. He states that "for contemporary generations of Ukrainians, the writer's totalitarian dystopia ceased to be a fictional story on the pages of a book and began to resemble the real state of existence of a neighboring country."<sup>33</sup> A similar view is shared by Rostyslav Semkiv who singles out five threats from modern Russia which Orwell has foreseen in his *1984*, these being the substitution of reality, total surveillance, torture as a means of persuasion, disregard for human life, and total fear.<sup>34</sup>

The critical reception of Orwell's works continues to grow, with new publications regularly providing fresh insights. The reception of Orwell's works in Ukraine can be traced through three key paths: translations, media interpretations, and critical reception. Each of these helps deepen an understanding of Orwell's ideas and has served to enrich Ukrainian culture. This reception has not been, however, by any means static. It has only been at the beginning of the twenty-first century that the Ukrainian intellectual world has begun to gain fresh perspectives on Orwell's legacy, interpreting his works in the context of Ukraine's efforts to establish its unique cultural and political self-definition. Since 2014, and especially after 2022, Orwell's works have acquired a renewed interest. *1984* and *Animal Farm* frequently appeared in political discourse as lenses through which to interpret Russian aggression and propaganda. By viewing Orwell's legacy through the unique perspective of Ukrainian experiences and history, Ukraine adds its voice to the global dialogue on his work. This engagement not only reaffirms Orwell's relevance in the Ukrainian context, but also demonstrates how his ideas resonate across cultures, reinforcing their universal significance.

31 Svitlana Romanchuk, "Moral Warnings for Young People on the Example of George Orwell's Dystopian Novel '1984'." [In Ukrainian] *International Science Journal of Education & Linguistics* 2, no. 4 (2023): 45–53. <<https://doi.org/10.46299/j.isjel.20230204.06>>. Anna Pidhorna, "Representation of the Concept of TOTALITARISM in George Orwell's Novel '1984'." *The Journal of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series "Philology"* 83 (January 2020): 9–15. <<https://doi.org/10.26565/2227-1864-2019-83-01>>. Hanna Kniaz and Anastasiia Ilchenko, "Poetics of Imagery in the Novel *Animal Farm* by G. Orwell." *Naukovi zapiski HNPu imeni G. S. Skovorodi Literaturoznavstvo* 4 (2019): 63–77.

32 Nataliia Bulavynets and Iryna Malyshevska. "The Psychology Of Female Characters In George Orwell's "1984" And Karin Boye's "Kalloccain"." [In Ukrainian.] *Scientific Notes of V. I. Vernadsky Taurida National University, Series: "Philology. Journalism"* 35, no. 5 (2024): 98–104. <<https://doi.org/10.32782/2710-4656/2024.5.2/16>>.

33 Zlatslav Dubniak, "'1984' After February 24th: A Philosophical Rereading of Orwell's Novel". *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 10 ( December 2023): 58. <<https://doi.org/10.18523/kmhj270983.2023-10.49-67>>.

34 Rostyslav Semkiv, "Five Dangers of Modern Russia Predicted by Orwell in His Novel 1984". [In Ukrainian] *Chytomo*, June 8, 2022. <<https://chytomo.com/5-nebezpek-suchasnoi-rosii-iaki-peredbachy-v-orvell-u-romani-1984/>>.

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