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Power/Knowledge in George Orwell's *1984* and Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece*: A Foucauldian Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative comparative study examines how power operates through the control of knowledge in George Orwell's *1984* and "The Tragedy of Ohara" arc, Chapters 391–398 of Volume 41 of Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece*, analyzed using the official VIZ Media English translation. Following Sapardi Djoko Damono's comparative literature approach within Michel Foucault's power/knowledge framework, data were purposively selected using three criteria: explicit depiction of knowledge-control mechanisms, correspondence to one of four analytical aspects (control of information, production of knowledge, construction of truth, and exercise of power through discourse), and relevance to the comparative aims. Close reading and deductive, theory-driven coding were applied to quotations, dialogue, and manga panels. The findings show that both works represent knowledge as the primary object of politicaal control across all four aspects, yet differ in mechanism: *1984* sustains concealed, continuous, bureaucratic control through historical revision and language manipulation, whereas "The Tragedy of Ohara" enacts an overt, singular act of institutional violence through censorship, propaganda, and destruction of knowledge producers. Rather than extending Foucault's framework theoretically, the study demonstrates its continued applicability across cultural and medial boundaries, offering a modest contribution confined to these two texts rather than a generalizable claim about dystopian fiction or manga.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge holds that power is productive rather than purely repressive: it operates by producing, regulating, and circulating knowledge, while knowledge in turn reinforces existing power relations (Foucault, 1980). Knowledge is therefore never entirely neutral; it is shaped within relations of power that determine what is legitimized as truth (Aswar et al., 2026), and this dynamic operates not only through state institutions but also through discourse, language, and cultural narratives that make representations of power appear natural (Poorghorban, 2023). Literature provides a particularly rich site for examining this dynamic, functioning not merely as an aesthetic medium but as a discursive practice through which regimes of truth and power relations are represented and contested in both canonical literature and popular culture such as manga (Alandira & Hidayat, 2026).

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Two literary works exemplify this operation of power through knowledge control. George Orwell's *1984* (1949) depicts the totalitarian state of Oceania, where Big Brother's authority rests not on coercion alone but on the systematic falsification of history, language, and memory through the Ministry of Truth. Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece* (2006) presents a parallel case in "The Tragedy of Ohara," narrated through Nico Robin's flashbacks in the Enies Lobby Arc (Chapters 391–398): the World Government destroys Ohara Island via a Buster Call after its archaeologists nearly recover suppressed history recorded in the forbidden Poneglyphs, illustrating how violence is used to restrict historical truth.

Both cases raise the same underlying problem: how do authorities sustain power not through force alone, but by controlling what counts as knowledge and truth, and what happens when that control is extended across very different media and cultural contexts? This issue extends beyond literary analysis. Processes of historical revision and information suppression are not confined to fiction; they recur in real-world contexts where those in authority restrict access to records, archives, or historical narratives. Examining how such mechanisms are represented in a Western canonical novel and a globally circulated East Asian manga offers a way to test whether Foucault's power/knowledge framework, developed primarily from European institutional contexts, also illuminates how power operates through knowledge control in a markedly different narrative and cultural form. Although Foucault's analysis centers on discourse in institutional and predominantly textual settings, his account treats power/knowledge as a property of any signifying practice rather than of written language alone (Christensen, 2024), so a multimodal medium such as manga, which constructs meaning through the interplay of narrative text, panel composition, and imagery, constitutes an equally legitimate discursive site for examining how knowledge is produced, controlled, and contested (Kress & Leeuwen, 2021). As a globally circulated pop-culture form, manga also extends Foucauldian analysis beyond canonical literature into the visual media through which contemporary audiences most often encounter and negotiate ideas about truth and authority (El Shazly et al., 2026). This cross-media, cross-cultural angle is what motivates the present comparison, rather than treating either work as a self-contained case.

Previous studies have examined *1984* and *One Piece* separately, but together these studies point to a shared thematic concern with how institutional power sustains itself through surveillance, discourse, and the control of knowledge, even though each approaches this concern through a different theoretical and methodological lens. Applying Foucault's concept of panoptic surveillance, Shabbir (2026) showed how telescreens, the Thought Police, and the Ministry of Truth discipline Oceania's population in *1984*; using discourse analysis, Maulana & Qamal (2025) showed how bureaucratic legitimacy and information control sustain the World Government's authoritarian rule in *One Piece*; and, on the methodological side, Iskandar et al. (2024) demonstrated that comparative analysis can productively cross media—novel, Korean novel, and manga—establishing a precedent for reading works across different narrative forms. Taken together, these studies confirm that power, surveillance, and information control have each been examined within a single text or medium, and that cross-media comparison is methodologically viable, yet no study has paired *1984* and *One Piece* under Foucault's power/knowledge framework specifically, nor tested whether a framework developed from European institutional contexts extends to a non-Western narrative form. The present study addresses this dual gap by using a cross-media, cross-cultural comparison to determine whether Foucault's power/knowledge framework can illuminate how power operates through knowledge control beyond the European context in which it originated.

To address this gap, this study conducts a comparative analysis of *1984* and "The Tragedy of Ohara" using Foucault's concept of power/knowledge and Sapardi Djoko Damono's comparative literature approach. Foucault's framework is employed because it foregrounds the discursive operation of power through the regulation of information and historical truth. The analysis focuses on four dimensions: control of information, production of knowledge, construction of truth, and the exercise of power through discourse.

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This study therefore aims to analyze how power is exercised through the control of knowledge in both works and to identify the similarities and differences in how that control is represented. Specifically, it seeks to answer: (1) How is power exercised through the control of knowledge in *1984* and "The Tragedy of Ohara" in *One Piece*? and (2) What similarities and differences exist in how knowledge is suppressed, regulated, or controlled in both works?

This study contributes by applying Foucault's power/knowledge framework to a cross-media, cross-cultural comparison between a canonical Western novel and a Japanese manga, demonstrating the framework's continued analytical usefulness beyond its original European institutional context. Practically, it offers a comparative reading framework for understanding how systems of information control and historical manipulation operate across both canonical literature and contemporary popular culture.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine how power is represented through the control of knowledge in George Orwell's *1984* and Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece* ("The Tragedy of Ohara"). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth interpretation of meanings embedded in literary texts through narrative, dialogue, characterization, and visual representation rather than numerical measurement (Creswell, 2014). The study adopted Sapardi Djoko Damono's comparative literature approach to identify similarities and differences in the representation of power/knowledge across two literary works originating from different cultural traditions and literary media (Damono, 2015). Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge served as the primary analytical framework because it explains how power operates through the production, regulation, and legitimization of knowledge and truth.

2.2 Data Sources and Data Selection

The primary data consisted of George Orwell's *1984* (Orwell, 2024) and Chapters 391–398 of Volume 41 of Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece* (Oda, 2010). Data for *One Piece* were drawn from the official English-language translation licensed by VIZ Media, accessed through the MANGA Plus by SHUEISHA digital platform, with page numbers cited relative to individual chapters rather than print volume pagination. This edition was used because its licensed terminology (e.g., "Poneglyphs," "Void Century," "Demon Child") provides the standardized English vocabulary on which the discourse analysis in this study relies. Within Chapters 391–398, selected panels, dialogue, and narrative captions—rather than every page—were purposively drawn according to the criteria described below. These texts were purposively selected because both depict institutional practices of knowledge control and power relations that are relevant to the objectives of this study. In qualitative research, purposive sampling enables researchers to select data that are information-rich and directly relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2016).

The unit of analysis comprised textual quotations, dialogues, narrative descriptions, and manga panels that directly represented interactions between power and knowledge. Data were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria:

1. The data explicitly depicted mechanisms related to knowledge control or power;
2. The data corresponded to one or more analytical aspects derived from Foucault's concept of power/knowledge; and
3. The data contributed to the comparative objectives of the study by allowing similarities or differences between the two works to be identified.

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Secondary data consisted of books and recent peer-reviewed journal articles discussing Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge, discourse, and comparative literature to strengthen the theoretical interpretation of the findings.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through close reading, which involves a detailed and systematic examination of literary texts to identify meaningful textual evidence (Smith, 2016). Both literary works were read repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their narrative structures, dialogues, characterization, and visual representations.

During the reading process, quotations and manga panels relevant to the research objectives were documented together with their chapter, page number, and narrative context. These data were then organized into a data corpus before proceeding to the coding and analysis stages.

2.4 Coding Procedure

The study employed deductive (theory-driven) coding, in which analytical categories were established *a priori* based on Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge rather than being generated inductively from the data. Deductive coding is appropriate when qualitative analysis is guided by an existing theoretical framework, allowing researchers to systematically classify data according to predetermined concepts (Fife & Gossner, 2024).

Prior to analysis, four analytical categories were derived from Foucault's framework: control of information, production of knowledge, construction of truth, and exercise of power through discourse. During coding, each quotation, dialogue, narrative passage, and manga panel was examined and assigned to the analytical category that most accurately represented its dominant function. This procedure enabled the organization of textual evidence into theoretically meaningful categories before comparative interpretation was conducted. When a piece of evidence reflected multiple aspects simultaneously, it was classified according to its primary analytical emphasis to maintain consistency throughout the analysis. This coding strategy follows the use of predetermined coding frameworks recommended for qualitative studies employing established theoretical concepts (Bingham, 2023).

Table 1. Analytical Framework

Foucauldian Aspect	Analytical Indicators	Unit of Analysis	Analytical Focus
Control of Information	Censorship, restriction of information, destruction of documents, limitation of access to historical knowledge	Narrative, dialogue, quotations, manga panels	How institutions regulate or suppress information to maintain power
Production of Knowledge	Creation, preservation, manipulation, or destruction of knowledge by institutions or social actors	Narrative, dialogue, quotations, manga panels	How knowledge is produced or prevented from being produced
Construction of Truth	Official narratives, historical revision, propaganda, labeling, legitimization of truth	Narrative, dialogue, quotations, manga panels	How institutions construct and normalize particular versions of truth

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Exercise of Power through Discourse	Language, discourse, labels, rumors, ideological narratives	Narrative, dialogue, quotations, manga panels	How discourse shapes identities, public perception, and power relations

2.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994), interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

During the data reduction stage, textual quotations and manga panels that met the predetermined selection criteria were identified and coded using the four deductive analytical categories. Data unrelated to the research objectives were excluded.

The data display stage organized the coded evidence according to the four Foucauldian aspects to facilitate comparison between *1984* and *One Piece*. Textual and visual evidence from both works was grouped within each analytical category to identify recurring patterns, similarities, and differences.

Finally, during conclusion drawing and verification, the coded findings were interpreted using Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge together with Sapardi Djoko Damono's comparative literature approach. The interpretation focused on explaining how each literary work represents mechanisms of knowledge control, how these differ across cultural and literary contexts, and how they collectively demonstrate the relationship between power and knowledge. Throughout the analytical process, interpretations were continuously compared with the original textual evidence and relevant scholarly literature to ensure analytical consistency and theoretical validity.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Control of Information

Foucault explains that power operates not merely through direct repression but through the systematic control of what may be known and disseminated by the public (Al Jabbar, 2025); a regime of power determines which discourses it accepts and makes function as true. Control of Information thus refers to a system that restricts access to information as an instrument of power.

3.1.1. 1984

> *"...a large oblong slit protected by a wire grating... nicknamed memory holes... it would be whirled away on a current of warm air to the enormous furnaces which were hidden somewhere in the recesses of the building." (Orwell, 2024, p. 50).*

This quotation illustrates the institutionalized strategy of systematically destroying information employed by the Party. The *memory hole* functions as an administrative infrastructure specifically designed to ensure that documents no longer aligned with the Party's official narrative are permanently eliminated without leaving any trace. The term *memory hole* itself is highly symbolic, referring to a "hole" that consumes memory. By integrating this information-destruction system into the daily routine of the Ministry of Truth, the Party normalizes the erasure of truth as an ordinary bureaucratic practice.

> *"The messages he had received referred to articles or news-items... it was thought necessary to alter, or, as the official phrase had it, to rectify." (Orwell, 2024, p. 51).*

The quotation reveals how the Party deploys linguistic euphemism as an instrument of power. The word *rectify,* literally meaning to correct or set right, is strategically chosen to replace more truthful

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terms such as "alter" or "falsify." In adopting this phrase, the Party does more than manipulate the content of news articles; it manipulates the way its own employees understand the actions they are performing, framing the revision of fact as a legitimate and even necessary correction.

3.1.2. "The Tragedy of Ohara" One Piece

Figure 1. Spandam declares the destruction of Ohara as a global warning (Oda, 2010, Ch. 394, p. 11).
Note. From *One Piece, Chapters 391–398* [Vol. 41] (Ch. 394, p. 11), by E. Oda, 2010, VIZ Media (JN Productions, Trans.; Original work published 2006). Copyright 2006 by Shueisha, Inc.; English translation copyright 2010 by VIZ Media, LLC.

The scene in which Spandam explicitly states that the destruction of Ohara is not merely a punitive action but a spectacle of power deliberately designed for global public consumption exemplifies this mechanism. The declaration that destroying Ohara *"will show everyone exactly what happens to people who research the Void Century"* exposes a deeper logic: the World Government does not only intend to halt the production of knowledge in Ohara, but to prevent anyone across the world from even *intending* to seek similar information. This is a form of information control that operates through collective terror by making Ohara an *example*; the government effectively implants self-censorship within the global scholarly community. The most effective power is not that which coerces directly, but that which causes its subjects to voluntarily internalize the boundaries they must not cross.

This verbal declaration is reinforced by the panel's visual composition. Spandam is framed in a dominant, theatrical posture, elevated and gesturing outward as though performing for an audience beyond the panel itself, while the surrounding figures, including Olvia, are rendered smaller and register shock and powerlessness rather than confrontation. This visual asymmetry does not merely illustrate the dialogue; it stages the very spectacle the dialogue describes; power here is not only spoken but composed to be seen, positioning the reader as a witness to the same display of dominance that the World Government intends for its in-world audience.

3.1.3. Similarities

Both texts depict institutions of power that systematically control public access to information to preserve their authority. In *1984*, the Party destroys documents through the memory hole and revises

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historical records, whereas the World Government in *One Piece* persecutes Poneglyph scholars and destroys Ohara to prevent knowledge of the Void Century from spreading. In both works, information is treated as a political threat, prompting authorities not only to conceal it but also to eliminate its sources by destroying documents in *1984* and annihilating both scholars and their island in *One Piece*. This reflects Foucault's argument that every society maintains a "general politics of truth" by regulating which forms of discourse are permitted to function as truth (Aljedani & Alqarni, 2025). Both authorities therefore preserve their legitimacy by preventing alternative knowledge from surviving.

3.1.4. Differences

Despite pursuing the same objective, the two works differ in how information control is exercised. In *1984*, the Party employs a concealed and bureaucratic system, with historical revision and document destruction occurring invisibly within the Ministry of Truth so that citizens remain unaware of the manipulation. By contrast, the World Government in *One Piece* adopts an overt strategy by publicly destroying Ohara through the Buster Call to deter future attempts to uncover the Void Century. As Spandam declares, Ohara's destruction is intended to "show everyone exactly what happens" to those who seek forbidden knowledge, demonstrating that public spectacle itself functions as a mechanism of information control.

3.2 Production of Knowledge

Production of Knowledge refers to Foucault's concept that knowledge is never neutral or objectively discovered, but produced through specific procedures bound to relations of power (Nwadinihu, 2025) — a "system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" (Foucault, 1980, p. 133). Truth is thus constituted through practices that organize and authorize particular forms of knowledge, and its production is inseparable from the exercise of power (Lorenzini & Tiisala, 2024). This aspect focuses on how institutions generate new knowledge, what methods they employ, and how power shapes or obstructs that process.

3.2.1 1984

> *"...almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date... All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary." (Orwell, 2024, p. 53).*

The excerpt shows that the Party does more than manipulate existing information; it continuously reproduces historical knowledge to meet its political needs. The metaphor of the palimpsest illustrates that history is treated as a text that can be repeatedly erased and rewritten, while the phrase "almost minute by minute" emphasizes that historical revision operates as a routine institutional process rather than an occasional intervention.

> *"...We're destroying words... The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050." (Orwell, 2024, p. 65).*

This passage reveals the most paradoxical dimension of knowledge production in *1984*: knowledge is produced not by *adding* but by *subtracting*. Syme discloses that the true project of Newspeak is not the creation of new vocabulary but the systematic and deliberate destruction of existing words. This is a form of knowledge production that operates by eliminating words; the Party simultaneously eliminates the concepts that can only be expressed through those words. When a word ceases to exist, the thought that depends upon it ceases to exist alongside it.

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3.2.2 "The Tragedy of Ohara" One Piece

Figure 2. Ohara's scholars inscribe forbidden knowledge onto indestructible Poneglyphs to outlast the World Government's erasure (Oda, 2010, Ch. 395, p. 8).

Note. From *One Piece, Chapters 391–398* [Vol. 41] (Ch. 395, p. 8), by E. Oda, 2010, VIZ Media (JN Productions, Trans.; Original work published 2006). Copyright 2006 by Shueisha, Inc.; English translation copyright 2010 by VIZ Media, LLC.

This panel reveals a fundamental irony in the dynamics of knowledge production in the Ohara arc. The ancient kingdom anticipated its own destruction by preserving knowledge in an indestructible medium, namely the Poneglyph stones. The act of carving the truth of their existence onto stone is not merely ordinary documentation but a knowledge production strategy deliberately designed to outlast the dominant power's efforts at erasure. This illustrates the conflictual relationship between knowledge and power, as preserving alternative history directly challenges political legitimacy. Significantly, from a Foucauldian perspective, the panel implicitly acknowledges that the World Government does not object to the ancient weapons themselves, but rather to *"the very existence and idea of this kingdom,"* which it finds most threatening. This confirms that what is feared is not physical force but *knowledge* of an alternative history capable of dismantling the World Government's legitimacy.

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Figure 3. Ohara's destruction unfolds as Spandam declares that knowledge "propagates" and must be stopped from spreading (Oda, 2010, Ch. 396, p. 2).

Note. From *One Piece, Chapters 391–398* [Vol. 41] (Ch. 396, p. 2), by E. Oda, 2010, VIZ Media (JN Productions, Trans.; Original work published 2006). Copyright 2006 by Shueisha, Inc.; English translation copyright 2010 by VIZ Media, LLC.

This episode captures a moment that is Foucauldian in the most literal sense: the physical destruction of Ohara unfolds simultaneously with the utterance *"knowledge propagates... we cannot let it spread beyond the island."* The juxtaposition of the visual devastation and this dialogue is not incidental, but the panel illustrates that what is truly being destroyed is not the buildings or the people, but *the very process of knowledge production and dissemination itself*. The word "propagates" is particularly significant: it characterizes knowledge as something living, something that naturally tends to spread and multiply unless forcibly stopped. The World Government understands this, and it is precisely this understanding that makes total annihilation (rather than mere arrest or silencing) the only solution they choose. This reinforces Foucault's argument that production of knowledge and power relations exist in constant and inseparable tension because power cannot sustain itself as long as any alternative mechanism of knowledge production operates freely (Torkaman Rad, 2023; Foucault, 2020). Also visually striking is the contrast between the extraordinary scale of destruction (massive explosions, an entire island obliterated) and the actual scale of the threat (a small group of scholars reading stones). The disproportionate scale of power's response to the threat of knowledge itself reveals how fragile the World Government's legitimacy is in the face of historical truth.

3.2.3 Similarities

Both texts depict institutions of power that actively seek to control the process of production of knowledge as their primary strategy for sustaining dominance. In *1984*, the Ministry of Truth continuously reproduces history through the rectification mechanism operating *"almost minute by minute"*, while the Newspeak project is designed to destroy the very cognitive infrastructure that would allow critical thought to be produced at all. In Ohara, the World Government responds to the independent knowledge production of its scholars with total annihilation, directed both at the institution itself (the library and the island of Ohara) and at the producers of knowledge themselves (all of its archaeologists). Both institutions recognize that knowledge naturally spreads and therefore seek to suppress it at its source. This aligns with Foucault's argument that the production of truth is always

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bound to *"a system of ordered procedures"* controlled by those in power; both the Party and the World Government understand that sustaining power means sustaining a monopoly over that system of producing knowledge.

3.2.4 Differences

Despite both controlling knowledge production, the fundamental difference lies in the method and medium used to fill the void left by destroyed knowledge. In *1984*, the Party fills that void through a concealed and continuous bureaucratic mechanism. The Ministry of Truth reproduces history in real time through document revision, fabricated statistics, and the linguistic redesign of Newspeak, such that the public never realizes that the knowledge they receive is the result of construction. In Ohara, the World Government fills the void of knowledge about the Poneglyphs and Void Century with a single narrative disseminated publicly and directly by defining the Poneglyphs as weapons capable of destroying the world; the World Government requires no continuous revision mechanism, as the narrative of fear itself is sufficiently powerful to deter further exploration by anyone.

3.3 Construction of Truth

Foucault argues that truth is bound to power in a circular relation: systems of power produce and sustain truth, while truth extends the effects of power. Every society, he contends, possesses its own "regime of truth" — mechanisms determining which statements count as legitimate, who may articulate them, and how the true is distinguished from the false (Dana & Gutema, 2023). Truth, in other words, is not discovered but constructed by those who hold authority.

3.3.1 1984

> *"...'Who controls the past,' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.'... All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory." (Orwell, 2024, p. 47).*

The narrative presents the clearest articulation in *1984* of how truth is constructed through the control of historical narrative. The Party slogan establishes a circular logic of power: whoever controls the present controls the past, and whoever controls the past controls the future. By reconstructing the past, the Party determines both present reality and future possibilities. Crucially, the final line—" all that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory"—reveals that the Party's primary target is not historical records alone but individual memory itself. The Party seeks to produce a truth that is internally accepted rather than merely documented. As Foucault argues, every society operates through a "regime of truth" that defines the procedures for distinguishing truth from falsehood. Thus, this slogan openly declares Oceania's regime of truth: the Party alone determines what counts as historical truth, while citizens must suppress their own memories to conform to its version of reality. Thus, the Party's exercise of power extends beyond physical coercion to psychological domination, requiring individuals to reshape their own consciousness in accordance with the Party's constructed truth.

> *"...'Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four'?... 'And if the Party says that it is not four but five – then how many?'... 'Five! Five! Five!'" (Orwell, 2024, p. 286).*

This quotation represents the apex of the entire construction of truth in *1984*. The moment at which the Party no longer merely manipulates history or documents, but directly compels an individual to reject even the most fundamental objective reality. The mathematical fact that two plus two equals four is the most indisputable form of truth in human life because it depends neither on interpretation, cultural context, nor ideological perspective. Yet it is precisely for this reason that O'Brien selects it as the ultimate test: if Winston can be convinced that 2+2=5, then there is no other truth he can defend against the Party's intervention. This is not merely physical torture but an epistemological project: the total destruction of the individual's capacity to independently distinguish truth from falsehood.

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> *"The only real clue lay in the words 'refs unpersons'... Withers, however, was already an UNPERSON." (Orwell, 2024, p. 59).*

Orwell illustrates the Party's power to reconstruct the truth of a person's very existence. The status of "unperson" is beyond the deletion of administrative records, but it is an ontological declaration establishing that someone never existed in any official sense, regardless of the physical reality that they once lived, interacted with others, and were known by those around them. A key point is the uncertainty revealed in this passage: Winston does not know whether Withers is actually dead in a physical sense because the only "truth" available to him is the administrative code "refs unpersons" as established by the Party. This reflects that in Oceania, even the truth of a person's death is determined not by biological fact but by the Party's administrative declaration. The regime of truth determines *"who is charged with saying what counts as true,"* and in this case, only the Party holds the authority to establish whether a person "exists" or "does not exist," whether someone is "alive" or "officially dead."

3.3.2 "The Tragedy of Ohara" One Piece

Figure 4. The World Government publicly recasts Ohara's scholars from celebrated researchers into "demons" without any change in their actions (Oda, 2010, Ch. 394, p. 7).

Note. From *One Piece, Chapters 391–398* [Vol. 41] (Ch. 394, p. 7), by E. Oda, 2010, VIZ Media (JN Productions, Trans.; Original work published 2006). Copyright 2006 by Shueisha, Inc.; English translation copyright 2010 by VIZ Media, LLC.

This panel presents one of the most dramatic examples of truth construction in the Ohara arc: in a single announcement, the World Government completely reverses the public identity of Ohara's scholars from *"the island's pride and joy"* and *"brilliant scholars around the world"* to *"demons who desire the destruction of the world."* Most critical to emphasize is that not a single action of the scholars changed between before and after this announcement; they were doing the same thing (researching the Poneglyphs) both before and after the label was established. The only thing that changed was the World Government's authoritative declaration of how those actions were to be understood and judged by the public. The townspeople's reactions *"Why?!"* and *"What?!"* are narratively significant: they reveal that the public itself perceives the contradiction between the truth they personally know (the Ohara scholars were respected figures) and the truth just declared by authority. Yet their powerlessness to reject that declaration reinforces within a truth regime dominated by power that the knowledge held by individuals carries no legitimizing force without the support of an authorized institution.

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3.3.3 Similarities

Both texts portray truth as something constructed by authority rather than derived from objective reality. In *1984*, the Party compels Winston to accept that "2+2=5" and continuously rewrites history, while in *One Piece* the World Government redefines Ohara's respected scholars as "demons" despite no change in their actions. In both works, institutional authority determines what is accepted as truth, illustrating Foucault's view that truth is produced through power rather than independent observation. Consequently, alternative interpretations lose legitimacy because only the ruling institution possesses the authority to define reality.

3.3.4 Differences

Despite both constructing truth through authority, the two works differ in their primary targets and mechanisms. In *1984*, truth construction is directed at the individual, as the Party seeks to transform Winston's personal beliefs through prolonged psychological coercion until he genuinely accepts the Party's version of reality. In contrast, *One Piece* targets collective public perception by officially labeling Ohara's scholars as threats without attempting to secure each individual's belief. Furthermore, truth in *1984* is continuously revised to meet the Party's political needs, whereas in *One Piece* it becomes permanent after the destruction of Ohara eliminates all competing narratives. Thus, *1984* relies on ongoing ideological reconstruction, while *One Piece* secures authority through the irreversible eradication of alternative knowledge. This contrast is reinforced visually: whereas Winston's coercion unfolds entirely through prose interiority with no accompanying image, the Ohara scholars' relabeling is staged in Figure 4 through an explicit visual hierarchy in which an armed institutional body physically dominates the panel, showing that *One Piece*'s truth construction is not only collective but also enacted as a public, embodied spectacle rather than a private psychological process.

3.4 Exercise of Power through Discourse

Exercise of Power through Discourse refers to Foucault's idea that power operates primarily through discourse rather than direct coercion — a system of language, labeling, and narrative that shapes how people, events, and social realities are understood, rather than merely reflecting them. Power is thus exercised by defining what counts as legitimate knowledge and shaping how people perceive it; as Rambaree (2021) argues, dominant institutions maintain authority by normalizing discourses that legitimize existing power relations.

3.4.1 1984

> *"By 2050 – earlier, probably – all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared... Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness." (Orwell, 2024, p. 67).*

This passage demonstrates how discourse becomes the Party's most effective instrument of power. By eliminating Oldspeak, Newspeak gradually removes the linguistic resources necessary for critical thought, making resistance increasingly unimaginable. Syme's definition of orthodoxy as *"not thinking—not needing to think"* illustrates that the Party seeks unconscious compliance rather than forced obedience. This reflects Foucault's view that power operates through discourses that shape what can be thought and accepted as true (Prasai, 2021). As a result, ideological domination no longer depends primarily on coercion but on the structural limitation of thought itself.

> *"The real power... is not power over things, but over men... 'Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing.'" (Orwell, 2024, p. 305).*

The passage presents the clearest statement in *1984* of the Party's conception of power, expressed not through repression but through philosophical discourse. O'Brien defines power not as domination over material resources but over the human mind, conveying this idea to Winston through a structured

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explanation rather than physical coercion. Another important aspect is the metaphor of *"tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing,"* which portrays power as the reconstruction of identity and belief rather than mere destruction. O'Brien seeks not simply to subdue Winston physically but to reshape his consciousness according to the Party's will. Here, discourse functions as power in its purest form, using language to legitimize totalitarian ideology and transform psychological torture into a coherent political philosophy.

3.4.2 "The Tragedy of Ohara" One Piece

Figure 5. Townspeople construct Nico Robin's identity as the "Demon Child" through rumor and hearsay rather than firsthand knowledge (Oda, 2010, Ch. 398, p. 4).

Note. From *One Piece, Chapters 391–398* [Vol. 41] (Ch. 398, p. 4), by E. Oda, 2010, VIZ Media (JN Productions, Trans.; Original work published 2006). Copyright 2006 by Shueisha, Inc.; English translation copyright 2010 by VIZ Media, LLC.

This panel illustrates how power is exercised over Nico Robin not through her own actions but through the accumulation of labels and rumors that construct her public identity. The narrative progresses from shock over the bounty placed on an eight-year-old, to unverified claims that she sank six Navy warships, to her association with the "demons of Ohara," and finally to the fixed label "Demon Child." None of the speakers have witnessed Robin's actions firsthand; instead, they rely on mutually reinforcing rumors ("I hear," "I understand," "that's why"), demonstrating how discourse constructs social reality without empirical evidence. Most significant is the claim that "the ideology of those executed scholars has been passed on to her," through which Robin is condemned not for her own actions but for her association with Ohara. The concluding statements, "the demon child cannot be allowed to live" and "we cannot let her run loose," show how discourse legitimizes violence against a child by transforming inherited suspicion into accepted truth. This constructed identity persists into Chapter 391, where Robin is again labeled a "monster," this time because of her *Hana Hana no Mi* abilities, reinforcing that her identity is continually defined through fear-inducing labels rather than her actual conduct.

The visual composition of this panel reinforces how Robin's identity is constructed through diffuse, disembodied discourse rather than direct observation. Unlike the Navy's unified, hierarchically staged announcement in Figure 4, this panel fragments into several small, overlapping vignettes, each isolating a different anonymous speaker's face or gesture rather than situating them within a single continuous

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scene. Robin herself never appears within the panel; she is discussed but not shown, so the reader encounters her identity only through this scattered chorus of secondhand voices. This fragmented, decentralized visual structure enacts the panel's textual claim that rumor, rather than any single authoritative source, produces her reputation as the "Demon Child," illustrating how discourse can construct "truth" even in the absence of a unified institutional voice.

3.4.3 Similarities

Both texts demonstrate that discourse functions as a mechanism of power by shaping how individuals and groups are perceived. In *1984*, the Party uses Newspeak and O'Brien's ideological discourse to limit thought and redefine reality, whereas in *One Piece,* public narratives and the label "Demon Child" transform Nico Robin into a socially recognized threat despite the absence of evidence. In both works, discourse constructs social reality and legitimizes the exercise of power, supporting Foucault's argument that power depends upon the production and circulation of accepted truths. This finding also aligns with Haugaard (2021), who argues that the deepest dimension of power operates by shaping identities, beliefs, and perceptions rather than relying solely on coercion.

3.4.4 Differences

Despite both exercising power through discourse, the two works differ in how discourse operates. In *1984*, discourse functions preventively by restricting the language necessary for critical thought through Newspeak, thereby eliminating the possibility of resistance before it emerges. In contrast, *One Piece* employs discourse reactively, constructing Nico Robin's identity as the "Demon Child" through rumors and public labeling after she has already been identified as a perceived threat. Thus, *1984* controls thought by limiting linguistic possibilities, whereas *One Piece* controls public perception by reshaping the social meaning attached to an existing individual. This reactive, perception-based mechanism is reflected in Figure 5's fragmented composition, where multiple disembodied voices accumulate around Robin without her ever appearing on the panel, visually enacting how her identity is reshaped entirely through circulating discourse rather than any direct encounter.

3.5 Comparative Synthesis

Table 2. Comparative synthesis

Aspect	*1984*	*One Piece (Ohara Arc)*
Control of Information	Continuous bureaucratic revision (memory hole, Ministry of Truth)	Public destruction as spectacle (Buster Call)
Production of Knowledge	Linguistic restriction eliminating cognitive infrastructure (Newspeak)	Destruction of the knowledge-producing community (O'Hara's scholars)
Construction of Truth	Psychological internalization of doctrine ("2+2=5")	Public relabeling of identity ("demons")
Exercise of Power through Discourse	Preventive discourse foreclosing dissent (ideological philosophy)	Reactive discourse via stigmatizing rumor ("Demon Child")

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4. CONCLUSION

This study examined how power is exercised through the control of knowledge in George Orwell's *1984* and "The Tragedy of Ohara" in Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece*, using Foucault's concept of power/knowledge within a comparative literature approach. Beyond confirming that both narratives treat knowledge as the central object of political power, the comparison points to a deeper pattern: political legitimacy in both works is secured less through direct force than through the capacity to determine what may be known, said, and accepted as true. This recurrence across two texts separated by nation, era, and medium suggests that power/knowledge operates as a durable structural logic of authoritarian rule, rather than a feature specific to either Oceania's bureaucracy or the World Government's institutional order.

In direct response to the first research question, both works exercise power through the same four dimensions examined here: restricting information, producing substitute knowledge to fill the resulting void, constructing institutionally sanctioned truth, and exercising power through discourse. In *1984*, this control operates continuously and covertly, through the Party's ongoing revision of records, statistics, and language. In "The Tragedy of Ohara," it operates through a single, publicly declared act of institutional violence and historical destruction that, once enacted, requires no further revision.

In response to the second research question, both works rely on knowledge suppression as their central mechanism of control, aimed at eliminating narratives that could challenge institutional legitimacy. Where they differ is in method: *1984* sustains its regime of truth through concealed, ongoing management, whereas "The Tragedy of Ohara" achieves the same end through an overt, singular, irreversible act. These differences are best read as distinct authoritarian strategies, the continuous management of doubt versus its immediate foreclosure, rather than as fixed properties of the novel or the manga as media.

Theoretically, this study does not extend Foucault's power/knowledge framework in a new conceptual direction; rather, it applies the framework to a cross-media, cross-cultural comparison, demonstrating its continued usefulness beyond the European institutional contexts in which it was developed. That the same mechanisms linking authoritarian power, historical erasure, and knowledge control surface in both a 1949 British novel and a 2000s Japanese manga arc suggests they function as a recurring narrative archetype, one literature reproduces across cultures, mediums, and periods whenever it represents how political authority is built and sustained through control over what a society is permitted to know.

This study is limited to four analytical aspects of Foucault's framework and to one novel and one manga arc; its scope is accordingly confined to these two texts and should not be read as representative of dystopian fiction or manga more broadly. The transferability of these findings to other texts, media, or cultural contexts remains an open question. Future research may broaden the corpus to additional literary and visual narratives from diverse cultural contexts and apply complementary perspectives, such as Gramsci's hegemony or critical discourse analysis, to further examine the relationship between power and knowledge.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

The first author was responsible for the conceptualization of the study, literature review, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and manuscript preparation. The second and third authors supervised the research process, provided theoretical and methodological guidance, critically reviewed and revised the manuscript.

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RESEARCH INTEGRITY STATEMENT

AI DISCLOSURE

The authors used generative artificial intelligence Claude by Anthropic solely to assist with improving the clarity of academic English, grammar, and language editing during manuscript preparation. All conceptual development, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and final editorial decisions were conducted entirely by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content.

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