Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984) and Abortion ***Newspeak . . .***



Seventy years ago in June 1949 George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published.

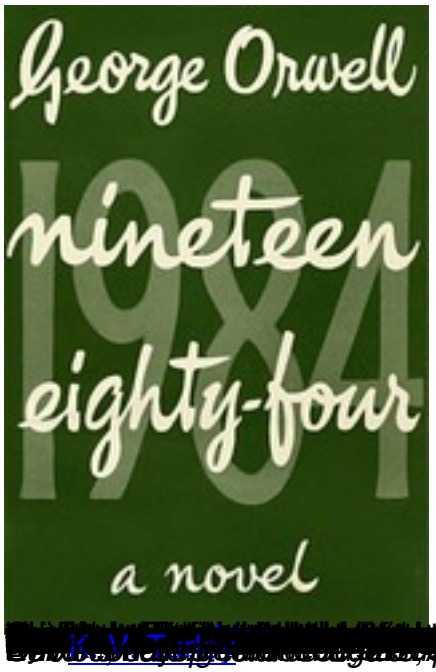
On June 7, 2019, the day prior to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s 70th anniversary, *The Guardian*, the United Kingdom's leading socialist newspaper, announced:
" Why the Guardian is changing the language it uses to describe abortion bans."

What follows in this pronouncement would have shocked even Orwell.

The Guardian claims that its “new style guidance encourages editors to avoid medically misleading terms like ‘heartbeat bill’ in reference to restrictive abortion laws sweeping the U.S.” *The Guardian* statement—it is not a report by any measure—goes on to inform us that “editors and reporters are encouraged to use the term ‘six-week abortion ban’ over ‘fetal heartbeat bill,’ unless they are quoting someone.”

So far, so bad. But *The Guardian*’s U.S. editor-in-chief, John Mulholland, then went further: “We want to avoid medically inaccurate, misleading language when covering women’s reproductive rights.” Probably, like me, you had to read that statement a couple of times. No doubt, like me, it still doesn’t make sense. I mean, what could be less misleading than a heartbeat? There is a heartbeat or there isn’t; a heartbeat denotes life—surely a fair assumption to make? Not according to *The Guardian,* it seems.

Referring to the fetal heartbeat bills, Mulholland writes: “These are arbitrary bans that don’t reflect fetal development—and the language around them is often motivated by politics, not science.” The paper then goes on to remind readers: “*The Guardian* style guide already encourages editors to use ‘anti-abortion’ over ‘pro-life’ for clarity, and ‘pro-choice’ over ‘pro-abortion’.” I suspect there are few regular readers of that media outlet who were not already aware of this exercise in linguistic bias. Nonetheless, the paper felt it necessary to restate their position—just in case anyone doubted its concern for “women’s reproductive rights” and its total lack of concern for the unborn child, male or female. On that subject, it is science that *The Guardian* and its readers dare not investigate. If they did, the reality of abortion could no longer be denied.


George Orwell
nineteen
eighty-four
1984
a novel