

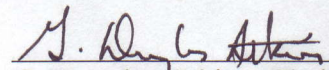
THE BANALITY OF VIRTUE: A MULTIFACETED VIEW OF GEORGE ORWELL
AS CHAMPION OF THE COMMON MAN


By

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Thomas F. Veale

M.A., University of Kansas, 2002

Submitted to the Department of English and the
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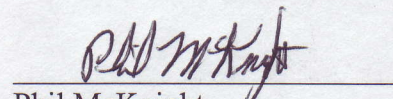

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Date Defended: 10 September 2007

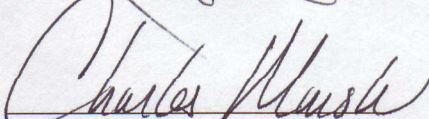
The Dissertation Committee for Thomas F. Veale certifies
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Committee:


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Thomas Veale's Dissertation on George Orwell

Gentlemen,

I am extremely sorry not to be able to join your deliberations on this defense, or rather not to have been able to do so in person. And I must further excuse myself in that, though I have had some experience of teaching at the graduate level, I have never before been invited to participate at this level. Unsure as I am of the precise etiquette, I shall simply write as if I were reviewing the work in informal session.

One further *caveat*: you will perhaps know that I have had several conversations with Mr Veale and a number of email exchanges, and you will have noticed that he has been kind enough to reference my own work on this author.

Overall, my own feeling is one of gratification at having been of any small assistance in this project. It seems to me that Mr Veale has a solid understanding of Orwell's work, as well as a proper sympathy with his subject that is uncontaminated by any undue admiration. I very much admire the way in which he has been able to "cross-cut", as it were, between the novels, the essays and the private correspondence, as well as between these three resources and the biographical details that we now have available to us. This synthesis is especially strong in all the references to the civil war in Spain, which I think Mr Veale is right to identify as the crux or hinge event in George Orwell's political and literary, as well as personal, evolution. In fact, the stress he lays on the importance of Andres Nin – as opposed to the more generally-accepted figure of Leon Trotsky – is one that I shall be incorporating into anything I myself may write on this topic in the future. The model for Emmanuel Goldstein in *Nineteen Eighty Four* is a highly important question, and all credit is due to Mr Veale in making this character and his ideas more rich and complex than caricature and allegory have so far suggested.

Another area in which I think the thesis excels is the close reading of Orwell's somewhat "love-hate" relationship with the work of Aldous Huxley and H.G. Wells. This is a well-trodden field for scholars, and the subject of dystopian fiction is itself a thoroughly-explored one, and as a laborer in this terrain I can say that I wish I had read Mr Veale's work before I contributed my own introduction to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and *Brave New World Revisited*. Wells's work is quite poorly understood in our own day, when it is examined at all, and Mr Veale has put himself to the trouble of thinking through its implications in a very fertile manner. *I

This brings me to a further observation about the general tension in Orwell's work between the mechanical and the natural, and between the pastoral and the urban. It actually constitutes an unresolved contradiction rather than a tension, and again Mr Veale is highly lucid in pointing this out, and in relating it to the multiple radical and conservative identities which the names "Blair" and "Orwell" have always been known to represent. In this connection, the use made of Gordon Comstock in *Keep The Aspidistra Flying* is again something that I wish I had taught Mr Veale, rather than been taught by him.

The mistakes and slips are remarkably few for a paper of this length. Certain repetitions could have been avoided also. On the slips (Peter Stansky not Richard, and the discrepant transliterations of the initials P.O.U.M., which are not successfully rendered until page 82) one

need say little. Mr Veale employs the word “brutalize” to mean “treat cruelly” rather than “become coarsened by treating others cruelly”, but this distinction has become a lost cause in the usage of recent years. Orwell’s work is not “banned” in North Korea, because there is no such thing as a “ban” in a country where nothing is published except worshipful material on the dictator. These are details. More seriously, I would want to disagree very strongly with the idea that Orwell would have welcomed the ethos of “multiculturalism”. My colleague Geoffrey Wheatcroft phrased this quite well when he wrote that in Britain the Right has won the economic argument and the Left has won the cultural one – exactly the opposite of what the no-nonsense egalitarian Orwell would have desired or expected.

My principal fault-finding would occur in the chapter on the “axis of evil”. I agree that with an author of this scope and reputation there is a temptation to engage in the very sport (“What Would George Orwell Do?” or – amusingly enough – WWGOD?) that Mr Veale slightly distrusts. I think, however, that all speculation about this became essentially profitless once the calendar year 1984 had been passed. It might be possible to ask what Orwell would have thought about the war in Indochina (because he had relevant experience in Asia and would have been likely to oppose any attempt to salvage French imperialism in that quarter) but there’s little point in guessing what he might have concluded about Khomeini’s revolution in Iran, for instance. However, and given how much of this section of the thesis is devoted to the Middle East, it is a mistake for Mr Veale to have overlooked Orwell’s fairly decided opposition to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1947. This subject, and its relationship it bears to Orwell’s arguments with Jewish colleagues at the offices of *Tribune* - T.R. Fyvel and Jon Kimche in particular - is one that I myself can be reproached for understating. (It also involves some necessary thinking about his possibly unresolved problems with “the Jewish question” considered as a whole.) But if one is to involve Orwell in discussions of today’s world, it is a significant omission that badly needs repair.

However, I think Mr Veale has made generally good use of his own experience as a West Point instructor in order to illuminate, without over-straining, the analogies that Orwell can provide, even anecdotally, to questions that confront all generations.

I very much admired the closing section on the inspiration that Orwell drew from the Protestant Reformation, and on the connected metaphor of glass. Two possibly fresh thoughts occur to me here: the sudden new currency of the word “transparency” in international discussions of political economy, and Orwell’s closing lines, in his poem about Spain, to the effect that “no bomb that ever burst/ shatters the crystal spirit.” Again, the analogy to the glass paperweight in *Nineteen Eighty Four* is one that I wish had occurred to me earlier.

I thank you for your patience in scanning these thoughts of mine and, were I to be asked to raise my hand, would vote to recommend this work as well-written, well-argued, well-sourced and documented, and deserving of publication.

Sincerely


Christopher Hitchens

31.viii.07

*1: On another dystopian detail, Mr Veale deserves praise for spotting the parallel with Sinclair Lewis in his discussion of the then well-worn phrase “It Can’t Happen Here”.

Abstract

This dissertation focuses on several aspects of the life and works of one Eric Arthur Blair, better known as George Orwell. It views Orwell as a servant of empire, as a revolutionary, as an intellectual, as an optimistic skeptic, as a writer, as a sort of prophet, and as a critic. It makes the case that Orwell wrote with the interests of the common people at the forefront of his mind, and that the threats to humanity and the liberal Western tradition existing in the 1930s and 1940s still exist today, albeit in a form that would have surprised Orwell himself. The passing of the year 1984 prompted a sigh of relief in Western societies who celebrated Big Brother's failure to arise in that celebrated year. As we end the first decade of the twenty-first century, we should consider whether or not we truly have avoided the perils of totalitarianism and the possible nightmare world that Orwell envisioned. This work engages Orwell's past, his present, and his unseen future: our own present. It applies Orwell to the postmodern world in an effort to emphasize that his work still matters.

Acknowledgments and Dedication

In 1983, my mother gave me her Book-of-the-Month Club first edition of Animal Farm. In 2007, my father made the 550-mile drive home with me from my dissertation defense in Lawrence, Kansas. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for helping me complete the cycle.

I would like to thank Christopher Hitchens for his exceptional generosity in aiding me with my work. He is an excellent host, a kind critic, and a fearless advocate of truth.

I would like to thank my professors and committee members from the University of Kansas: Doctors G. Douglas Atkins, Mike Johnson, Chuck Marsh, Philip Barnard, and Phil McKnight. Special thanks also go to graduate secretary Lydia Ash for keeping the proverbial ducks—or Jayhawks, if you will—in a row.

My wife and boys deserve special mention for bearing my frequent absences, both physical and mental. They are the best cheerleaders the world.

for H. Lewis Always...

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Introduction: “Why Orwell?”

Several years ago I got it into my mind that I wanted to study Jonathan Swift as a satirist. As I drafted my doctoral examination reading list, my advisor recommended that in addition to reading Orwell’s Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four as Swiftian satires, I should read Christopher Hitchens’s relatively recent book, Why Orwell Matters. I had seen Hitchens on television and was interested in reading more of what he had to say, so I added it to my list. As I read Orwell and considered Why Orwell Matters, I began to lose interest in Swift.

I was eventually able to strike up a dialogue with Christopher Hitchens, leading to his appearance at West Point, where I was teaching, and resulting ultimately in his generous acceptance of a place on my dissertation committee as an outside reader. Like Orwell, Hitchens has himself been distanced from the political left because of his pro-war beliefs. Paul Thomas’s description of Orwell’s position among leftists also applies to Hitchens: “no one likes a self-appointed conscience that dredges up inconvenient facts, revives uncherished memories, and raises awkward questions in public” (435). Both men love the truth and lack any fear in pursuing it, and I find that not only rare but admirable.

The doctoral requirement to produce something original and publishable is a daunting task for one who lacks passion in his subject area—witness the overwhelming number of “ABD” candidates who let the clock run out on their studies. I had a more personal obstacle in the endeavor, which I found amusingly described by Orwell’s close friend Richard Rees: “The first essential in literature is to have something interesting to say—which may be news to certain contemporary schools of literary criticism” (60). I

concluded that in order to be interesting and original, I would have to choose Orwell over Swift.

John Carey, whose *Everyman* collection of Orwell's essays is one of my main sources, described Orwell's "decency" and his "faith in the common man" (xxxix). Indeed, Orwell was a critic of many things, but rarely had a bad thing to say about the "common man." Perhaps he knew that *common* things, such as common sense, are actually not common at all. Even his views on popular culture are devoid of the class snobbery to which his Eton background "entitled" him. His appreciation for popular entertainment comes out in essays such as "Good Bad Books," "Boys' Weeklies," and "The Art of Donald McGill." Not only was he unafraid to speak up for the common, but he was also prepared to attack giants. Few critics have ever had the type of courage it takes to criticize a major literary figure such as H.G. Wells and then devote honest attention and study to twopenny postcards. What makes Orwell common is what makes him great.

Orwell appeals to us because he is timely and relevant. His status as a "master of plain prose" is refreshing, especially in the jargon-filled field of academia to which the dissertation belongs (Rees v). In listening to fellow graduate students discuss their dissertation subjects, I wondered what I could say about Orwell in their terms, and more often than not I recalled Lucky Jim's satire on academic writing's "niggling mindlessness, its funereal parade of yawn-enforcing facts, the pseudo-light it [throws] upon non-problems" (Amis 14). In undertaking this project, I wanted to say something in plain language about someone whose work truly champions the common man, whose work still speaks to today's world.

I was surprised to find during my research that Orwell remains largely ignored in comparison to other big names in literature. One would think that an author whose work is so timely and so personal would draw flocks of aspiring scholars. During one of our conversations in March 2005, Christopher Hitchens stated that his attraction to Orwell's work came early: as a teenager he felt as if Orwell's Coming Up for Air was talking *directly to him*. He called the phenomenon his "personal Orwell." A writer who talks directly to the reader is hard to resist. In one sense, it seems perverse to intrude on people's reading of Orwell by telling them what he is saying. In another sense, it is necessary to remind people that he does, in fact, talk to all of us. Orwell's pro-democratic, anti-totalitarian, *personal* message is what won me.

In the early months of my endeavor, I had no ready-made answer to the question of what my thesis was. I had no critical approach, and I could not boil Orwell down into one sentence without sounding overly simplistic. I was not alone in this either: John Rodden writes, "because Orwell has remained a mystery, a figure that succeeding generations find incapable of pinning down in a political pigeonhole—and also a man and writer on whom they can project a great range of their needs and aspirations—he allows himself to be rewritten constantly. Indeed, the rewriting of history is an ironic leitmotif of Orwell's afterlife" (256). I firmly believe that in criticism no single approach is the best approach, and I imagine a sort of kinship with Orwell because I think he would agree.

As I read most of Orwell's works for the first time and reread his best-known works, I found that the inability to reduce his view into one clean, easy sentence was perhaps the most interesting aspect of the man. The easiest way for me to understand him was to

address him as several people: a government worker, a revolutionary, an intellectual, an optimistic skeptic, a writer, a sort of prophet, and a critic. These are the categories under which I can make sense of him because these are the ways in which he speaks to me.

We see throughout Orwell's works that he knew words such as "common" can be hijacked for certain—often political—reasons, and can thus lose other meaningful uses. In "Politics and the English Language" he wrote, "In the case of a word like *democracy*, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it" (959). His awareness that words' meanings can be steered from other interpretations for purely political reasons appears in Nineteen Eighty-Four as doublespeak: the ability to say one thing and mean another. Syme's work in the Ministry of Truth is an excellent example of what Aldous Huxley described as a major threat to freedom: "the enemies of freedom systematically pervert the resources of language in order to wheedle or stampede their victims into thinking, feeling and acting as they, the mind-manipulators, want them to think, feel and act" (Brave New World Revisited 329).

Eventually one sees Orwell's constant concern for the *common* people as a controlling element in his writing. He assumed their mantle in the early 1930s in order to share their experience, leading ultimately to his writing of Down and Out in Paris and London and The Road to Wigan Pier. Part of his motivation was to understand a class upon which he'd been bred to look down. What he came to believe as a result, though, was that his social conditioning in the lower-upper-middle class and the preparatory school were the worst kind of brainwashing. He saw that his conditioning was unjust, and he came to the realization Winston Smith embodies in Nineteen Eighty-Four: "If

there is hope [. . .] it lies in the proles” (60). His lifelong endeavor became a struggle against class bias and recognition of the virtue of the common man. He constantly fought against the upbringing he described in The Road to Wigan Pier: “To me in my early boyhood, to nearly all children of families like mine, ‘common’ people seemed almost sub-human” (126).

At one time the upper classes used the adjective “common” as an insult, as they did other words such as *average*, *banal*, *base*, *mean*, *pedestrian*, *profane*, *vulgar*, and others. Despite the negative connotations of the word “common,” we do in fact value today that which is *common*: sense, decency, interest, ground, et cetera. Orwell was in the vanguard of a twentieth-century movement that questioned class structures and the politics of language and economics. The main characters in his novels are average people who struggle with their own sense of freedom—freedom constantly threatened by various agents: hubristic imperialism (Flory in Burmese Days, 1934), the church and patriarchy (Dorothy Hare in A Clergyman’s Daughter, 1935), capitalist materialism (Gordon Comstock in Keep the Aspidistra Flying, 1936), modern technology and the rise of “streamlined” totalitarians (George Bowling in Coming Up for Air, 1939), the betrayal of popular revolution (Snowball and Boxer in Animal Farm, 1945), and the threat of a world under totalitarianism (Winston Smith in Nineteen Eighty-Four, 1949). Orwell maintains a constant, sympathetic focus on the effect on the common people of these threats to freedom. Consider George Bowling’s prediction of Nazism unchecked:

I can see the war that’s coming and I can see the after-war, the food-queues and the secret police and the loudspeakers telling you what to think. And I’m not even exceptional in this. There are millions of others

like me. Ordinary chaps that I meet everywhere, chaps I run across in pubs, bus drivers and travelling salesmen for hardware firms, have got a feeling that the world's gone wrong. They can feel things cracking and collapsing under their feet. (Coming Up for Air 186)

This common, everyday man became Orwell's stock hero, and Orwell's concern with the rise of fascism rested on his knowledge—obtained firsthand in Spain—that fascism exploits the common man, or in Bowling's words, “the ordinary middling kind that moves on when the policeman tells him” (Coming Up For Air 195).

Orwell was a boy during the last days of World War One, when many convinced themselves that mankind was through with warfare. He saw the rise of fascism in Spain and had the courage to face it personally on the battlefield. After Franco's victory in Spain, Orwell saw the triumph of fascism and totalitarianism in Europe at large, and he never hesitated to point out its dangers—even when others on the Left refused to join him. We have obviously not seen the last of warfare, and though the Western world stomped out Nazism and Italian fascism in 1945 before watching Soviet totalitarianism crumble in the 1990s, we have not rid ourselves of ideological fascism, whose recent rise would most likely have greatly surprised Orwell were he alive to see it today. In “Such, Such Were the Joys” he wrote, “Religious belief, for instance, has largely vanished, dragging other kinds of nonsense after it” (1329); despite the resurgence of religion as a *causis belli*, our world is still remarkably similar to Orwell's.

Lionel Trilling's introduction to Homage to Catalonia recounts a conversation about Orwell with a student who remarked, “He was a virtuous man” (viii). This comment, according to Trilling, “was archaic in its bold commitment of sentiment, and it used an

archaic word in an archaic simplicity [. . .]. By some quirk of the spirit of the language, the form of that sentence brings out the primitive meaning of the word *virtuous*, which is not merely moral goodness, but fortitude and strength” (ibid.). Orwell’s moral excellence, his virtue, lies in his concern for humankind as a whole and not just for his own kind. This is clear when he draws the line between patriotism and nationalism in essays such as “Inside the Whale,” “The English People,” and “Notes on Nationalism,” among others.

What is common in Orwell is, then, his “virtue of not being a genius, of fronting the world with nothing more than one’s simple, direct, undeceived intelligence,” which encourages us all to be “intelligent according to our lights” (Trilling x, xi). Whenever we read and discuss Orwell, he forces us to challenge our own biases and preconceived notions. We must reconsider the thoughts and ideas behind our words. “Common” is not a bad word to him. In fact, one could say that his essential human decency is strengthened by his continuous struggle against the impulse to judge negatively that which is common. He never aspired to wealth, power, or greatness, and in so doing made being common its own form of virtue. He also refused to celebrate privilege, for in it he saw in it “a kind of spiritual inadequacy” (“Review of The Rock Pool by Cyril Connolly” 41). Christopher Hitchens characterizes this as Orwell’s recognition of the “banality of virtue,” a phrase that itself demands our reconsideration of the value of the common (10 Feb. 2007).

John Rodden mentions the popular question “What Would Jesus Do?” and its translation in the literary and political worlds: “What Would George Orwell Do?” The “WWGOD?” game is worth playing today because despite the passage of nearly six

decades after Orwell's death, he is still relevant. The game benefits us if we understand Orwell's origins, influences, and the interrelatedness of his works—both among themselves and their historical contexts and with our own times. This project is geared toward furthering our understanding that Orwell still matters.

Chapter 1: “Many Classes, Many Orwells” – Explorations of Class and Poverty

Richard Rees, a friend and associate of Orwell’s, states that there are “four separate and sharply contrasting strains in him”: the pessimistic rebel, a man respectful of and sympathetic to authority, a rationalist, and a romantic (6). Descriptions of the political man include Tory, Socialist, anarchist, and polemicist (Woodcock 56, 136, 189). Various permutations of these titles include “Tory anarchist”—a term Orwell used to describe Jonathan Swift in “Politics vs. Literature” (1100), which Rees was later to use in describing Orwell himself (Crick 102). Rees even called him a “Bohemian Tory” (qtd. in Taylor 107), but by the end of his life, Eric Blair the Old Etonian and servant of the Crown had become George Orwell the Socialist. He aligned himself with working people, but before he did so, he had to live among them.

The varying public faces that Orwell showed reflect a man who was always changing. He inexactly differentiated a “lower-upper middle class” and an “upper-middle class” in The Road to Wigan Pier (121), most probably because he was never fully comfortable with his own social status. His family had a legitimate claim to the middle-class label: his father served as an opium agent in India and his mother came from a family of prosperous teak merchants and ship builders in Burma (Taylor 15-16). The Blairs had no land, though; Richard Blair’s modest income never allowed for it. Thus, Orwell could claim that his family was bourgeois, and although he could not rid himself of his family history and his Eton accent, he did in fact renounce imperialism and class privilege.

Orwell had a complex concept of the class system, and as he traveled and wrote he reconsidered and challenged popular class opinions, such as that “The lower classes smell” (Wigan 127). D.J. Taylor states that Orwell’s work led him to see the English

working class's "own layers and its own antagonisms [that] played an important part in the view that Orwell came to take of the class system. This was a complex arrangement, he believed [. . .]" (182). For example, the working-class family whose expenditures go toward "keeping up appearances" became, for Orwell, "shabby-genteel" (Wigan 124). Taylor asserts that Orwell's own family was "shabby-genteel," and points to Orwell's 1943 Tribune essay on Thackeray's Vanity Fair, which paints the shabby-genteel as "living well on nothing a year" (Taylor 16). This is an apt description of the Blair family, whose son Eric would spend a good part of the rest of his life living check-to-check. In his March 1940 essay "Charles Dickens," Orwell's description of Dickens may very well betray his perception of his own upbringing: "Dickens had grown up near enough to poverty to be terrified of it, and in spite of his generosity of mind, he is not free from the special prejudices of the shabby-genteel" (157).

Orwell's travels in industrial England, reflected in The Road to Wigan Pier, show his simultaneous attraction to and revulsion from the lower classes, which was to persist throughout his literary life. The Road to Wigan Pier "had, *inter alia*, the effect of converting Orwell to Socialism or at any rate strengthening an already serious interest in it" (Taylor 174). Of course, it was not until his experience of socialism in Barcelona in 1937 that he declared his "desire to see Socialism established much more actual than it had been before" (Homage to Catalonia 105). As another world war loomed larger, he stated, "the only regime which, in the long run, will dare to permit freedom of speech is a Socialist regime" ("Why I Write" 92). Before this, he had already written in a letter to

Cyril Connolly, “I have seen wonderful things, and at last really believe in socialism, which I never did before” (Thomas 440).¹

The working classes would become Orwell’s symbol of hope in an increasingly dehumanized world. Nineteen Eighty-Four depicts members of the proletariat not only as the lowest class in Airstrip One but also as the hope of humanity. He writes, “If there is hope, *it must* lie in the proles, because only there, in those swarming disregarded masses, eighty-five percent of the population of Oceania, could the force to destroy the Party ever be generated” (60). Such words could come about only as a result of Orwell’s willingness to descend the class ladder, to grapple with biases, and to be willing to challenge the British status quo. His experience in Burma made him leave the Imperial Police. His experiences in London, Paris, and Wigan Pier opened him up to socialism, and his experience in Spain cemented his commitment. As he crystallized his political opinions, they crept into his fictional characters and even, as we have seen, into his thoughts on others, such as Charles Dickens. He began to stand for the common man instead of the privileged man.

Writing of his experience as an imperial policeman in Burma, Orwell stated in “Shooting an Elephant” that “I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better” (43). The young Eric Blair witnessed “the dirty work of Empire at close quarters” and decided that he could no longer serve England (ibid.). He decided instead to become a writer.

Upon his return to England in 1927, Blair quit the Burma Police, and by 1928 he was “Going native in London and Paris” (Crick 104). Down and Out in Paris and London (1933) *appears* to be the result of Orwell’s first attempt to make “first contact with

¹ Paul Thomas cites an 8 June 1937 letter to Cyril Connolly in CEJL, 1: 30.

poverty” (9). His quest to hit bottom may very well *not* have begun with this trip to Paris to work as a dishwasher, though. It certainly did not begin with his travels to the north of England on a mission for Victor Gollancz and the Left Book Club, which resulted in The Road to Wigan Pier in 1937. His urge to experience the life of the lowest social classes probably came in his teen years, fed by his own feelings of inadequacy as a middle-class boy and his likely reading of Jack London’s The People of the Abyss (1903). His initial resistance to socialism, according to Christopher Hitchens, came from an early sense of guilt resulting from the idea that the class system, within and without England, was a zero-sum game (17 Mar 06). D.J. Taylor differs in his assessment that for Orwell, the class system “was a complex arrangement, he believed, that could not be deciphered through simple economics” (182). Regardless of his view of economics—simplistic through his twenties and at least slightly more complex after Catalonia—he desired, in today’s parlance, a “regime change,” and he advocated as much in “The Lion and the Unicorn.”

In his “Review of The Soul of Man under Socialism by Oscar Wilde,” he stated that “Wilde makes two common but unjustified assumptions. One is that the world is immensely rich and is suffering chiefly from maldistribution,” and, “Secondly, Wilde assumes that it is a simple matter to arrange that all the unpleasant kinds of work shall be done by machinery” (1282). Orwell recognized the inequalities of the world, but most probably felt that a simple redistribution of wealth would result in a mediocre worldwide standard of living, at best.

As he did with H.G. Wells, Orwell attacked Wilde’s faith in machines as things that could improve the overall standard of living. This is a great source of angst in Orwell’s

fiction; machines cannot fix everything, as we see in The Road to Wigan Pier and Down and Out in Paris and London, and yet they can enable the worst form of control of one man over another, as we see in Nineteen Eighty-Four. Although he had seen what he *perceived* to be true socialism for a brief period in Barcelona, he was mature enough to recognize that “The abolition of private property does not of itself put food into anyone’s mouth” (ibid.). One could argue that Orwell thought in extremes—either we share wealth, or we hoard it. He appears to have found it difficult to accept the possibility that human societies can strike a balance between selflessness and greed.

Although Down and Out in Paris and London makes it seem as if his first actual “down and out” experience came in Paris in 1928, it did not. In fact, when he missed the last train to Cornwall from Eton in 1920, he had faced a choice “between a bed at the YMCA and nothing to eat or food and vagrancy. The young Orwell chose the latter” (Taylor 50). The unemployed Orwell of 1927-28 may very well have recounted this vagrant experience, and he had read Jack London’s describing a similar experience in The People of the Abyss, in which London recounts going “down into the under-world of London with an attitude of mind which I may best liken to that of the explorer” (9). Orwell’s urge to experience the life of the lower classes was most probably romantically inspired. He went “down and out” out of curiosity and a sense of adventure, and *not* out of necessity. If nothing else, it gave him material to write about.

The similarities between Orwell’s Down and Out in Paris and London and London’s The People of the Abyss are striking: both describe lower-class housing, food, the

English casual wards,² and general dirt and deprivation. His 1931 Adelphi article, “The Spike,” appears to have taken shape as chapter xxvii in Down and Out in Paris and London (1933), and shares its name with London’s chapter nine in The People of the Abyss—a sort of homage to London, one assumes. Although Orwell had not yet accepted socialism, he was certainly considering the Socialist ideas that London had embraced; in fact, London’s conversations with hop pickers in “The Spike” find new life in Dorothy Hare’s days of manual labor in Orwell’s A Clergyman’s Daughter.

Orwell’s post-Spain works seem to fuse personal experience with his recollections of the works of others. We shall explore this in detail in chapter four. Suffice it to say that he borrowed inspiration from time to time, but he knew he needed to gather his own material if he was going to become a writer. After having seen the exploited masses of Southeast Asia, perhaps Orwell thought trips to Paris and London would provide a useful transition back to life in Europe. Jack London promised that after experiencing life among the common masses, one would “tell the story of [his] adventure to groups of admiring friends. It would grow into a mighty story. [His] little eight-hour night would become an Odyssey and [he] a Homer” (The People of the Abyss 36).

London likens a man’s descent to the underworld of poverty to Homer’s work because the quest to “hit bottom” finds its roots as far back as Greek stoicism and it takes heroic form in Homer’s The Odyssey. The idea of leaving the world as it is, of abandoning wealth and privilege and purposefully descending the social ladder—or in Odysseus’s case, leaving a kingdom *and* actually descending into Hades—appealed to the post-World War One literary world, of which Orwell was a product. The idea pervades

² Casual wards were a strange mixture of homeless shelter, soup kitchen, and jail. They were designed to discourage vagrancy by keeping the homeless off of the streets at night, providing poor food and hygiene facilities, and limiting a vagrant’s stay in a given geographical area.

Hesse's Siddhartha and its 1922 contemporary, Joyce's Ulysses, whose style Orwell attempted to imitate in chapter III of A Clergyman's Daughter.

All of the abovementioned works, and even works of the past decade, such as Fight Club, display an antagonism to material culture—a culture that privileges money, convenience, and freedom from pain and want over masculinity. In this sense, the works all build upon one another. For Orwell, though, the descent was more than an escape from what his Gordon Comstock calls “the world of money”; it is rather an embracing of a “great sluttish underworld where failure and success have no meaning; a sort of kingdom of ghosts where all are equal” (Keep the Aspidistra Flying 203). One may argue that Gordon Comstock, in his eschewing of money and his turning to the impoverished life of a struggling writer is, in effect, a reflection of Orwell's own experiences between Burma and Spain. Comstock's friend and part-time financier, Ravelston, who runs the publication Antichrist, bears a striking relationship to The Adelphi's Richard Rees (Taylor 163). Comstock's fight against the money god represents Orwell's struggle with class biases, and most probably with his slow, hesitating conversion to socialism, which Rees had long sought. Keep the Aspidistra Flying parallels this conflicting desire in the Ravelston-Comstock relationship: the artist wants to “bottom out” in his rejection of the world that will not grant him success, and the successful businessman wants to save his artist friend.

Orwell's early descents into the lower classes appear to be attempts at purging himself of middle-class biases. In fact, David Astor claims that “on one level he undertook [his tramping adventures] simply to try to overcome his ingrained fastidiousness, his fear of dirt and sweat, to see how far he could push himself. A piece

like ‘The Spike’ offers a portrait of a man in whom limitless moral sympathy and outright physical disgust are uneasily contending” (Taylor 110). Writing of loves and hatreds, Orwell himself had stated, “Whether it is possible to get rid of them I do not know, but I do believe that it is possible to struggle against them, and that this is essentially a *moral* effort” (“Notes on Nationalism” 883). One can make the case that Orwell’s journeys into the lower classes were a form of escapism combined with therapy. In a sense, it was Blair who was “down and out” but it was Orwell who made sense of it.

With his gradual development into a Socialist, which began somewhere between Burma and Catalonia, he appears to have begun to recall his encounters with the poor as *politically* motivated—he was no longer gathering material for his works, but rather was exploring the lives of the exploited masses in order to become their champion. D.J. Taylor notes the common knowledge that young Blair was uncomfortable at Eton, and he adds that the discrepancy between his family’s income and that of his peers—a source of embarrassment for him—in the hindsight of his adulthood became a reason for him to identify with the poor. Taylor writes, “As an adult he was determined to convey the impression that he was there [at Eton] on sufferance, socially unsuited to the place and despised for his poverty. Each of these claims should be treated with a degree of skepticism” (52).

What is clear, however, is that he developed a strong distaste for class privilege at St. Cyprian’s and at Eton, where he saw that “The boys of the scholarship class were not all treated alike. If the boy were the son of rich parents to whom the saving of fees was not all-important, Sambo would goad him along in a comparatively fatherly way” (“Such, Such Were the Joys” 1300). Among the wealthier boys was a sense of entitlement that

Orwell hated because he had worked so hard for what they were freely given: an education. It appears that Orwell's personal experiences often metamorphosed into literary events bearing a striking resemblance to his real-life experiences, and we may be inclined to wonder whether his journeys into lower-class areas were politically or professionally motivated. Perhaps, with Orwell, political and personal interests were so intertwined as to be indistinguishable. Looking back on the privilege of his education, he wrote in "The Lion and the Unicorn" that "public-school education is partly a training in class prejudice and partly a sort of tax that the middle classes pay to the upper class in return for the right to enter certain professions" (336). Not only did he ultimately reject his profession, but he rejected the prejudices as well.

Despite his efforts in Paris, London, Wigan Pier, and Madrid, Orwell most likely never rid himself of the conflict between a bourgeois upbringing and a Socialist, bohemian lifestyle. Taylor illustrates this conflict in recounting a comical meeting between Orwell and "a militant Communist in Sheffield, who began a wholesale vilification of the bourgeoisie, [and during which Orwell] is supposed to have replied, 'Look here, I'm a bourgeois and my family are bourgeois. If you talk about them like that, I'll punch your head'" (181). Orwell never forgot Blair's background, and he was not necessarily ashamed of who he was or whence he came. He, like his counterpart in Keep the Aspidistra Flying, Gordon Comstock, knew that

That other world, the world of money and success, is always so strangely near. You don't escape it merely by taking refuge in dirt and misery. [. . .]
A letter, a telephone message, and from this squalor he could step straight back into the money-world—back to four quid a week, back to effort and

decency and slavery. Going to the devil isn't so easy as it sounds.

Sometimes your salvation haunts you down like the Hound of Heaven.

(219)

When we see how potentially interchangeable Orwell's actions and thoughts *can be* with those of his main characters, we are tempted to question whether or not Orwell truly was "down and out" in Paris or London. Taylor notes that "The impression conveyed by [Down and Out in Paris and London] is that Orwell was, literally, destitute and yet, as we know, Aunt Nellie was living a few streets away, not to mention the friends of the Saturday night suppers" (100). When one learns this fact, he may want to view it in the same light as one who discovers that Thoreau was not truly alone at Walden Pond, and that he was not far from the creature comforts of home that he had claimed to eschew.

Taylor further claims that not only had the missed-train incident in Cornwall in 1920 become a starting point for Orwell's idea of going "down and out" but that "he was capable of misrepresenting incidents that occurred at Eton if they could serve some later literary purpose. The Road to Wigan Pier, for instance, contains an account of the Eton peace celebrations of 1919" (Taylor 53). Again, Orwell blurs the borders between personal experience and literary work just as much as he blurs the line between Blair and Orwell. These same peace demonstrations in 1919 may also have influenced Nineteen Eighty-Four's Two Minutes Hate, as well, during which the people re-direct their frustrations with their living conditions and government against an enemy whose existence is questionable to begin with. It is classic misdirection, revolution by proxy. Another source of the Two Minutes Hate would have been the propaganda speeches that he and his fellow students had to listen to during World War One. He began to resist the

repeated demands that students learn to hate the Germans. His reaction *against* mandatory hatred comes out in Coming Up for Air, in which George Bowling listens to a speaker at a Left Book Club Meeting: “It’s a ghastly thing, really, to have a sort of human barrel-organ shooting propaganda at you by the hour. The same thing over and over again. Hate, hate, hate. Let’s all get together and have a good hate. Over and over” (175).

Because Orwell’s main characters and their experiences bear a striking resemblance to the author and his life, one may wonder just how fictional his characters truly are. Orwell not only uses his own experience, but he borrows freely from others. For example, in addition to his own experiences in Burma as a source for Burmese Days, the experience of one Captain H.F. Robinson may have influenced Orwell’s creation of Flory as the novel’s main character. Like Flory, Robinson suffered as a result of “a scandal involving his native mistress, whose exploits [afterward included] an attempt at suicide” (Taylor 68). Taylor asserts that, despite Orwell’s claim to have checked his character list for Burmese Days against government directories such as the Burma Civil List as a safeguard against libel, “Several of the characters’ names [. . .] are simply lifted from back numbers of the Rangoon Gazette” (81). Orwell also appears to have borrowed E.M. Forster’s Dr. Aziz from A Passage to India as the model for his own Dr. Veraswami. All of these characters are concerned with class-based and racial issues, just as Orwell himself was.

Taylor points out that Orwell claims in his introduction to the French edition of Down and Out in Paris and London, “everything I have described did take place at one time or another [. . . but that the characters are] intended more as representative types” (qtd. in

Taylor 99). Thus, we see that Orwell's main concern is not so much the detail of any given work, but rather the truths behind it: imperialism is wrong, capitalism creates poverty, and democracy and fascism cannot co-exist.

One must at some point ask himself whether or not the veracity of the story actually matters, or if what matters are the observations and conclusions of the mind at work. The choice between literary truth and actual truth was probably not a major concern for Orwell. He privileged his message over the actual truthfulness of the events as he recorded them; Stansky and Abrahams note, "No doubt it is unfair to hold a polemicist, whose principle interest is in scoring points, to accuracy in matters of fact, when it's the general impressions, not the minute or exact particulars, that count" (The Transformation 198).

The George Orwell persona eventually overtook Blair's identity such that by the end of his life he actually signed off as "George" in his personal correspondence. To Orwell, each man is at least two people, and in "The Art of Donald McGill," he writes, "If you look into your own mind, which are you, Don Quixote or Sancho Panza? Almost certainly you are both" (381). This is a humorous way for the author to acknowledge the difference between the individual and his persona(e). And yet the difference between the author and his persona confused people on occasion. Evelyn Waugh, whose service as a commando in World War Two Orwell admired—having himself been declared unfit for combat—begins a letter to Orwell with "Dear Orwell – Blair? – which do you prefer?" We assume that the man who died a Socialist in January of 1950 would have preferred Orwell: the name his widow chose to keep and the name by which the world remembers him. Blair was a pre-descent name; Orwell—taken from a typically English river—

reflected a man who, after some gentle meandering through the green hills of his native land, had finally found his place in the world. His pen name reflects the fact that he truly “had ‘gone native’ in his own country” (Pritchett n. pag.).

More than a half-century after the death of the man, we find a strong Labour Party in England, and government-run health care and unemployment services throughout Europe. In fact, the Socialist United States of Europe that Orwell claimed would be a necessity for survival in the atomic age (“Toward European Unity” 1243) has even taken its initial shape in the form of the European Union. Orwell would have been pleased to see socialism begin to thrive in Europe, and he would undoubtedly have been pleased to see multiculturalism and the end of militant imperialism as it existed in his time.

Despite the advances of socialist programs in Europe since the 1930s, what would have dismayed Orwell is the rise of what John Perkins calls “Economic Hit Men”: men whose selfish economic analyses justify massive World Bank loans to impoverished countries, which in turn result in lucrative private sector development contracts. Perkins claims that this new form of imperialism began with the modernizing of Saudi Arabia in the 1970s, and has led the Western world down a path of economic imperialism, the reaction against which came on the eleventh of September 2001 (Perkins 90-98).

The rise of the Economic Hit Men would probably not surprise Orwell, though; they are a mere mutation of the European capitalists Orwell grew to hate during his service in Burma. In fact, Alfred Noyes wrote of the corruption of corporate interests in The Edge of the Abyss (1943), which Orwell reviewed in 1944:

It is not surprising therefore, that these conditions [under which international corporations profit as a result of war among their constituent

nations] should make possible the appalling facts revealed by a United States ambassador in the diary of his sojourn in Berlin. It is not surprising that business firms should be found, as he relates in cold print, supplying both the materials of war and the funds for their purchase to ‘enemies’ of their own country, enemies whom they knew to be preparing for war against their own country; enemies who would then oblige them by increasing the demand for their products at home and among their allies.

(49)

Flory, of Burmese Days, probably speaks for young Imperial Policeman Eric Blair when he says, “The Indian Empire is a despotism—benevolent, no doubt, but still a despotism with theft as its final object” (60). The hatred of human exploitation is one thing that seems to have been a constant with our ever-changing subject. In fact, his decision to exit the Imperial Police, so clearly stated in “Shooting an Elephant,” indicates how strong his distaste for exploitation was, and “Such, Such Were the Joys” shows his lifelong distaste for human cruelty in general.

Writing “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius” in February 1941, Orwell hoped that World War Two would bring with it the triumph of true socialism and thus the end of one people’s exploitation of another. He argued that “What is wanted is a conscious open revolt by ordinary people against inefficiency, class privilege and the rule of the old” (323). By the end of the war, he had come to see the atomic bomb’s potential role in “robbing the exploited classes and peoples of all power to revolt,” thus making the continuation of colonial-imperial exploitation possible (“You and the Atom Bomb” 906).

The rise of economic imperialism and the growing gap worldwide between rich and poor, the rise of jihadism in the Middle East, the looming economic threat of China and increased Russo-Chinese military cooperation in Asia, unrest within Islamic communities in Europe, and nuclear proliferation attempts in Iran and North Korea may, in fact, bring us full-circle to Orwell's "permanent state of 'cold war'" (906). If he agreed with Mussolini on anything, it was that "Between democracy and totalitarianism there can be no compromise" (qtd. in "The Lion and the Unicorn" 345). Differing forms of democratic socialism, threatening but not necessarily clashing with capitalist imperialism, would potentially bring what Christopher Hitchens calls "eternal, horrible stability" of the type that exists in the world of Nineteen Eighty-Four (17 Mar. 06).

Orwell put his faith in the common people to preserve their own freedom. In "The English People," he wrote that if England is to survive, "it is the common people who must make it so" (648). Even the bourgeois, against whom Gordon Comstock of Keep the Aspidistra Flying struggles in his effort to be free of the money-world, seem to retain their respectability because of their common decency:

Our civilisation is founded on greed and fear, but in the lives of common men the greed and fear are mysteriously transmuted into something nobler. The lower-middle-class people in there, behind their lace curtains, with their children and their scraps of furniture and their aspidistras—they lived by the money-code, sure enough, and yet they contrived to keep their decency. The money-code as they interpreted it was not merely cynical and hoggish. They had their standards, their inviolable points of honor.

(239)

Just as Orwell changed greatly over the course of his life, so has the world since his death. It is strange that a man on whom so many labels have been stuck can end his life with one simple warning: either the free world stamps out totalitarianism, or the victory of totalitarianism marks the beginning of the end. People of all political persuasions and economic standings can agree on this. It thus appears that if one accepts the message, then the author's "true" identity never really mattered. His work may eventually come to reflect what he valued in Dickens's work: "telling small lies in order to emphasize what he regards as a big truth" ("A Hundred Up [Review of Martin Chuzzlewit by Charles Dickens]" 541).

Chapter 2: “The Revolutionary’s Struggle” – Views on Power

From 2003 to 2006, I taught English at West Point, an institution whose purpose is to provide the Army with tomorrow’s leadership. The faculty is largely military—approximately seventy percent—and instructors frequently seek to provoke thought and discussion as to the applicability of any given concept to the battlefield or to the military at large. One of my first basic writing assignments for plebes (freshmen) was to have them read and respond to Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant.” I found it remarkable how few of them were able to see how Orwell’s experiences in Burma relate to those of an American soldier in the twenty-first century. Cadets are rather literal, which is perhaps attributable to the fact that West Point is an engineering school. They are more comfortable with rules and calculation than they are with metaphors and the abstract. The buildings and uniforms are gray, but with respect to facts there are no gray areas; everything is black-and-white.

Cadets could see Orwell’s perceived need to shoot the elephant despite the fact that it was no longer a threat to the Burmese villagers. The villagers wanted to cut the elephant up for meat, and young Blair knew that he had to assert his authority, for if he did not, he might be trampled, “And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do” (“Shooting an Elephant” 48). As we sat in the classroom, recent graduates were serving as mayors of small villages in Afghanistan and Iraq, coordinating with traditional tribal leaders who had earned their people’s trust. The cadets eventually began to see their connections with Orwell. I don’t think that they would ever see or identify with what Kipling called the “white man’s burden,” but they did understand the intrusive Western rule over a foreign people.

Orwell regretted having to kill the elephant, for he saw it as an unnecessary act in the same manner in which he saw the Raj as an unnecessary imposition on a foreign people. Some members of today's military may feel similarly about our involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. For some, Afghanistan was the main fight against al-Qaeda. For others, Iraq was "unfinished business" from 1991. For still others, both fights may be wholly justified under the umbrella-term "Global War on Terrorism." For an even smaller portion, both fights may be unjustified. Regardless of one's personal politics, though, he has only two choices: to obey the National Command Authority or to "chuck up his job and get out of it," to paraphrase Orwell ("Shooting an Elephant" 43).

Once cadets have thought through the implications of serving in a job they hate, or of serving an empire that they do not believe is in the right, they are quick to make connections. "The elephant symbolizes British rule, and he wants to end it," they chime in. Perhaps not, I suggest. Perhaps he simply did not want to have to kill anything that day. Perhaps he realized in Burma that the rule of one man over another entails dirty work. This is probably the beginning of the anarchist strain in the man who became Orwell somewhere between his time in Burma and World War Two. He bitterly recalled seeing a Burmese man walk to the gallows, reflecting that he had seen the "unspeakable wrongness of cutting a life short when it is in full tide" ("A Hanging" 18). He began to see that under certain circumstances, certain powers of the state over the man that Hobbes had defended in Leviathan could be indefensible.

George Orwell first became a literary possibility when Eric Arthur Blair departed England for Burma in 1922. He joined the Indian Imperial Police because it was a "highly respectable, if not particularly glamorous, profession for a young man –

especially one with Eric's colonial connections" (Taylor 62). He appears to have quickly tired of the job, stating to Twentieth Century Authors in 1940 that he had quit "partly because the climate had ruined my health, partly because I already had a vague idea of writing a book, but mostly because I could not go on any longer serving an imperialism which I had come to regard as very largely a racket" (qtd. in Taylor 76).

It is also possible that Orwell himself feared becoming a racist and sadist if he were to stay in a situation in which he was the oppressor. In his "Introduction to Love of Life and Other Stories by Jack London," he made a statement that may well have applied to himself: "surely [. . .] London could foresee Fascism because he had a Fascist streak in himself: or at any rate a marked strain of brutality and an almost unconquerable preference for the strong man as against the weak man" (915). His main character in Burmese Days, Flory, may in fact speak for the author when he states, "the British Empire is simply a device for giving trade monopolies to the English – or rather to gangs of Jews and Scotchmen" (qtd. in Taylor 77). Orwell may very well have realized that if he did not get out of Burma soon, he would have visited his bitterness and frustration on the Burmese he was ostensibly there to protect.

Long before Blair served in Burma, however, he had learned tyranny firsthand as a schoolboy. He recounted in "Such, Such Were the Joys" that "There was a boy named Hardcastle, with no brains to speak of, but evidently in acute need of a scholarship. Sambo was flogging him towards the goal as one might do with a foundered horse" (1300). He saw the intense cruelty of men in power, and carried his revulsion for their power for the rest of his life. In his "Preface to the Ukrainian Edition of Animal Farm," he stated that upon his return from Spain to England, he witnessed a similar—and yet

very dissimilar—scene: “a little boy, perhaps ten years old, driving a cart-horse along a narrow path, whipping it whenever it tried to turn” (1214). He concluded in the horse’s case what Marx had concluded in the exploited workers’ case: “if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them” (ibid.). The animal revolution in 1945’s Animal Farm simply built upon his hatred for oppressive governments—governments that pervaded the 1930s and controlled world events through the 1940s. And despite his occasional disappointment with the live-for-today mentality of the strong, fertile, working lower classes, he never lost faith in them. His resilient proles in Nineteen Eighty-Four are the direct descendants of the lower-class generations that he knew: “The struggle of the working class is like the growth of a plant. The plant is blind and stupid, but it knows enough to keep pushing upwards towards the light, and it will do this in the face of endless discouragements,” all in the name of a decent life that they are aware is possible (“Looking Back on the Spanish War” 444).

The birth of Animal Farm’s allegory is obvious in Orwell’s account above, and one need not look too closely into “Such, Such Were the Joys” to see both the vestigial traces of Animal Farm and the faint origins of the Party’s brutal control of its people in Nineteen Eighty-Four. What makes the scene of Hardcastle being “flog[ed] towards the goal” different from the scene of the boy flogging the horse is that the horse has no way of understanding the power relation between himself and the small boy, whereas Hardcastle has the mental capacity to see his treatment as abuse, and yet he somehow refuses to (Hitchens 10 Feb. 2007).

These two scenes from Orwell’s past play differently into Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four. The foundering horse becomes Boxer in Animal Farm, who literally works

himself to death for pigs that are clearly his physical inferiors; he simply does not know better. Hardcastle, however, lives on as the sickeningly apologetic and compliant character Parsons in Nineteen Eighty-Four. Consider their cases in comparison:

[Hardcastle] went up for a scholarship at Uppingham, came back with a consciousness of having done badly, and a day or two later received a severe beating for idleness. “I wish I’d had that caning before I went up for the exam,” he said sadly – a remark which I felt to be contemptible, but which I perfectly well understood. (“Such, Such Were the Joys” 1300)

* * * * *

[Parsons to Smith in the Ministry of Love]: “Between you and me, old man, I’m glad they got me before it went any further. Do you know what I’m going to say to them when I go up before the tribunal? ‘Thank you,’ I’m going to say, ‘thank you for saving me before it was too late.’”

(Nineteen Eighty-Four 193)

Orwell’s understanding of power relations came early in his life at St. Cyprian’s: “That was the pattern of school life – a continuous triumph of the strong over the weak [. . .]. There were the strong, who deserved to win and always did win, and there were the weak, who deserved to lose and always did lose, everlastingly” (1322). We see, in this recollection, the birth of O’Brien.

The haunting specter of totalitarianism, often pitched to the people under the guise of some form of socialism, was offensive to him, not only as a Socialist but more importantly as a human being. He stated in his “Preface to the Ukrainian version of Animal Farm” that although the Soviets had defeated Nazi Germany’s brand of

totalitarianism, he recognized the Soviet Union as its own brand of totalitarianism: “it was of the utmost importance to me that people in western Europe should see the Soviet régime for what it really was” (1213). Ending the West’s obliviousness to the totalitarian regime in the USSR was of paramount importance to him.

Orwell was disturbed that the common Englishman, or “the man on the street has no real understanding of concentration camps, mass deportations, arrests without trial, press censorship, etc.” (ibid.). In other words, he saw two worlds at odds: the totalitarian regime that believed if it told the people a big enough lie, they would swallow it whole and the Western view that “it can’t happen here.”¹ His portrayal of the English “Jones Farm” was to show us that it can, in fact, happen anywhere. He recognized that, as with Soviet Russia, it was possible anywhere that “A dictatorship supposedly established for a limited purpose [could dig] itself in” (“Review of The Soul of Man under Socialism by Oscar Wilde” 1283). He had seen the Soviets ruin socialism and anarchism in Spain, and he was aware that—thanks to the Soviet Union—“Socialism comes to be thought of as meaning concentration camps and secret police forces” (ibid.). Nineteen Eighty-Four represents his second attempt to show the English the same potential that he had attempted to show with Animal Farm, but without the trappings of a “fairy story.”

Orwell’s days at St. Cyprian’s taught him not only the value of brute strength and intimidation but also of psychological manipulation and spying by those in power. At St. Cyprian’s he began to consider that “the whole business of religion seemed to be strewn with psychological impossibilities. The Prayer Book told you, for example, to love God and fear him: but how could you love someone whom you feared?” (“Such, Such Were

¹ This happens to be the title of Sinclair Lewis’s 1935 novel showing Americans how a fascist government could take power in the United States. Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four attempted to make the same argument to the English fourteen years later.

the Joys” 1323). In short, while living under the prying eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Vaughan Wilkes, Orwell began to see God as a threatening tyrant. This shook the young man’s faith to its foundations and opened the door for his creation of Big Brother decades later.

What made St. Cyprian’s worse for young Blair was that in his imagination, the headmaster and headmistress assumed godlike powers of continuous observation with the uncontested capacity to punish or praise as they saw fit. He wrote, “It did not seem to me strange that the headmaster of a private school should dispose of an army of informers” (1304), and by the time he left for Eton he felt that “all the while, at the middle of one’s heart [. . .] one’s only true feeling was hatred” (1313). His resentment of the hatred that others tried to instill in him and others appeared in 1939 in Coming Up for Air, when George Bowling listens cynically to the Left Book Club lecturer:

[. . .] for a moment, with my eyes shut, I managed to turn the tables on him. I got inside his skull. It was a peculiar sensation. For about a second I was inside him, you might almost say I *was* him. At any rate, I felt what he was feeling. I saw the vision that he was seeing. And it wasn’t at all the kind of vision that can be talked about. What he’s *saying* is merely that Hitler’s after us and we must all get together and have a good hate. Doesn’t go into the details. Leaves it all respectable. But what he’s *seeing* is something quite different. It’s a picture of himself smashing people’s faces in with a spanner. [. . .] And it’s all O.K. because the smashed faces belong to Fascists. You could hear it in the tone of his voice. (175)

Bowling recognizes that both sides in the war would use fear of each other to create blind hatred, and that the cult of personality would poison the hearts of the common people.

He foresees

The world we're going down into, the kind of hate-world, slogan-world. [. . .] And the processions and the posters with enormous faces, and the crowds of a million people all cheering for the Leader till they deafen themselves into thinking that they really worship him, and all the time, underneath, they hate him so that they want to puke. It's all going to happen. Or isn't it? Some days I know it's impossible, other days I know it's inevitable. That night, at any rate, I knew it was going to happen. It was all in the sound of the little lecturer's voice. (176)

Ten years after the war that Bowling foresaw in 1939 and 31 years after his departure from St. Cyprian's, Orwell's reactions to the administration's tyranny crystallized in Nineteen Eighty-Four's O'Brien, who states, "Power is in inflicting pain and humiliation. Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in shapes of your own choosing" (220). What Orwell had seen in Hitler became what Bowling saw in the lecturer. Both pointed toward a future that made Big Brother possible.

According to Bernard Crick's account of Orwell's days at St. Cyprian's, which incorporates Orwell's own words from "Such, Such Were the Joys" and "The Rediscovery of Europe," "History was taught 'as a series of unrelated, unintelligible but – in some way that was never explained to us – important facts with resounding phrases attached to them'" (30). Crick adds, "He felt strongly enough to tell the – possibly indifferent – Indian listeners to the BBC's wartime Eastern Service all about this: 'I used

to think of history as a sort of long scroll with thick black lines ruled across it at intervals. Each of these lines marked the end of what was called “a period”, and you were given to understand that what came afterwards was completely different from what had gone before” (ibid.). Thus, Orwell also learned a distrust of history at St. Cyprian’s that would carry over into Winston Smith’s job rewriting “facts” in the aptly misnamed “Ministry of Truth” in the author’s final novel.

The power of one man over another would become a controlling element for his fiction, from Dorothy Hare’s overbearing and uncaring father in A Clergyman’s Daughter, to capitalism and economic determinism in Keep the Aspidistra Flying, to Smith’s sessions with O’Brien in Nineteen Eighty-Four. For Orwell, tyranny almost always comes in the form of one class over another, as we see in Burmese Days, Down and Out in Paris and London, and The Road to Wigan Pier. He saw the Soviets ruin the basic idea of socialism for the West, and this was, in Trotsky’s terms, the truest sense of “revolution betrayed.”

Perhaps the most frightening form of tyranny that Orwell experienced was as a soldier in Spain during its civil war. There, he saw fascist tyranny firsthand, and not just on the Nazi-supported Loyalist side against which he fought, but even more unnerving was the tyranny of the Communist Party over the Marxist and anarchist factions on the Republican side. The Communist Party’s eventual takeover and the suppression of the Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) made Orwell’s existence as a soldier unbearable. In fact, the Communist arrest and execution of Andres Nin may have led directly to Orwell’s depiction of Snowball’s demise under Napoleon in Animal Farm,

which many believe simply to be an allegory for the disintegration of the Stalin-Trotsky relationship.

Coming Up for Air touches lightly on both class and political tyranny, as George Bowling, a relatively successful businessman, takes a return trip to the idealized countryside of his youth. As the RAF practices bombing runs overhead, he foresees war against Nazi fascism as inevitable: “1941 they say it’s booked for,” Bowling thinks to himself (Coming Up for Air 30). Bowling’s attitude is pessimistic; he does not care much for the modern world, in which “Everything is slick and streamlined, everything made out of something else” (27). He sees the rise of tyranny and efficiency as evidently, inextricably linked, and their dominance as gaining momentum on the continent.

Bowling recalls the happiness of his youth, a simpler time filled with fishing and books: peace and order everywhere. He recalls the images of the lion and the unicorn on the British soldier’s cap button as symbols of a passing world. He asks, “Is it gone forever? I’m not certain. But I tell you, it was a good world to live in. I belong to it. So do you” (36). Bowling has no sense of hopefulness about the future, and yet in two years’ time—as Coming Up for Air promises—Britain would be at war with Germany as promised, and, writing in the middle of the Blitz on London, Orwell predicted in “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius” that British classes would be able to unite against fascism, forming a bond that would be unbreakable after the war.

In this 1941 essay, in opposition to Bowling’s “streamlined” fascists, Orwell points to the British tendency to cling to inefficient yet comfortable systems as proof of the English belief in humanity over efficiency:

One has only to look at their methods of town-planning and water-supply,

their obstinate clinging to everything that is out of date and a nuisance, a spelling system that defies analysis and a system of weights and measures that is intelligible only to the compilers of arithmetic books, to see how little they care about mere efficiency. (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 293)

Orwell develops the oppositions between British democracy and fascist tyranny with respect to their sense of order and discipline. British police, for example, “carry no revolvers” (295), and “In the British army [. . .] the march is merely a formalized walk. It belongs to a society which is ruled by the sword, no doubt, but a sword which must never be taken out of the scabbard” (297). He contrasts the British soldier’s march to that of the fascist’s:

The goose-step, for instance, is one of the most horrible sights in the world, far more terrifying than a dive-bomber. It is simply an affirmation of naked power; contained within it, quite consciously and intentionally, is the vision of a boot crashing down on a face. (297)

One can quickly recognize the words of O’Brien in Orwell’s statement. O’Brien, grand inquisitor and spokesman for the streamlined men of the Party’s leadership in Nineteen Eighty-Four, tells Winston Smith, “If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 220). This is not Orwell’s image; fellow Socialist Jack London wrote in 1907 that fascist-capitalist interests would “grind [Marxist] revolutionists down under our heel, and we shall walk upon your faces” (The Iron Heel 63).

Smith defies O’Brien, initially, stating that “The spirit of Man” will defeat the Party (222). O’Brien, in response, makes Smith undress and view his emaciated, beaten body

in the mirror, telling him, “You are the last man [. . .]. You are the guardian of the human spirit. You shall see yourself as you are” (223). The Party’s system, efficient and measured, has no need for “the spirit of man,” and it does not cater to human needs. Smith slowly realizes that such efficiency—efficiency that overlooks human needs—is the true enemy of man.

As Smith researches pre-war Oceania, he speaks with a prole and buys him beer. The prole orders a “Pint of wallop” and gets a half-liter (75). The prole grumbles that “A ‘alf liter ain’t enough. It don’t satisfy. And a ’ole liter’s too much. It starts my bladder running” (75). Orwell needs to make no further comment as to the unsuitability of the Party’s system when it comes to satisfying human needs. The metric system, wholly rational and suited to science, does little in the way of satisfying human desires. In this instance, we see that which is efficient outweigh that which is ancient, traditional, and thus, in Orwell’s mind, entirely human.² We shall deal with mechanization, automation, and efficiency in detail in Chapter 4.

Orwell’s observations are remarkably clear with respect to the apparently trivial differences between democracies and their fascist governments. His work shows remarkable awareness of the simple details from which the casual observer may draw meaningful conclusions. In the United States, for example, the army has a “formalized walk” similar to the British Army’s as it marches. No live person may appear on an American postage stamp; this prevents a cult of the leader, one assumes. In North Korea, though, Kim Jong Il’s picture is plastered everywhere, and his army goose-steps

² Over one year after writing this sentence, it occurred to me that a pint is 16 ounces and a half-liter is 16.9 ounces; the two are nearly identical in measure. I wonder if Orwell realized this. Furthermore, I wonder if it would have mattered to him. His preference for the wonders of English inefficiency comes out clearly in “The Lion and the Unicorn” (293).

everywhere it goes—which, thankfully, is not too far. When we consider the world today and who potentially stands in the place of Hitler’s cult of power, we should consider that “the cult of power tends to be mixed up with a love of cruelty and wickedness for their own sakes” (“Raffles and Miss Blandish” 728).

Alex Comfort writes,

Nineteen Eighty-Four has not arrived in 1984, but the danger is postponed, not canceled, and many of its features are partly in place—nukespeak instead of Newspeak, politics conducted as a multimedia event. There are some things even Orwell did not foresee; he could have made Big Brother a Christian fundamentalist ayatollah and verisimilitude would not have been strained. (“1939 and 1984” 22).

Those who frequently read and consider Orwell’s works and the dangers of fascism, totalitarianism, and fundamentalism, can often, like Orwell himself, appear to be prophetic. Writing in 1983, Comfort seems to see the rise of religious fundamentalism and tyranny in our time in the same way that George Bowling saw that war with Nazism was inevitable.

Christopher Hitchens is quick to point out that after the events of September 11, 2001, people such as Alex Comfort, Thomas Pynchon, and Michael Moore claimed that Nineteen Eighty-Four had come to pass in the post-9/11 world (17 Mar. 2006). Pynchon writes in his recent introduction to a reprint of Nineteen Eighty-Four:

If [doublespeak] seems unreasonably perverse, recall that in the present-day United States, few have any problem with a war-making apparatus named “the department of defence,” any more than we have saying

“department of justice” with a straight face, despite well-documented abuses of human and constitutional rights by its most formidable arm, the FBI. Our nominally free news media are required to present “balanced” coverage, in which every “truth” is immediately neutered by an equal and opposite one. Every day public opinion is the target of rewritten history, official amnesia and outright lying, all of which is benevolently termed “spin,” as if it were no more harmful than a ride on a merry-go-round. (n. pag.).

Some, like Pynchon, believe that post-9/11 government actions and policies such as the PATRIOT Act embody a Nineteen Eighty-Four-like power of the government to monitor and control its people, while others dismiss such claims as hyperbole. The argument regarding our government’s power over the common citizen is heated and divisive, and although I respectfully disagree with Pynchon’s view that we are turning into a Big-Brother society, I do agree that the potential is increasing.

Pynchon discusses the “wonders of computer technology circa 2003, most notably the Internet, a development that promises social control on a scale those quaint old 20th-century tyrants with their goofy moustaches could only dream about,” and in this sense he is correct (ibid.). The heated and highly divisive debate over government’s power over us is something that is *necessary* in a free society because the threats to our freedoms change, and therefore so should our policies toward those threats. George W. Bush is no Big Brother, though. Nor is Rumsfeld³ or Cheney an O’Brien, and to draw such an analogy is to put Muslim terrorist Osama bin Laden in the Jewish Socialist

³ Between my first writing and later revision of this passage, Donald Rumsfeld resigned as US Secretary of Defense, which is something that O’Brien would most certainly not do.

Emmanuel Goldstein's shoes which, quite frankly, is both absurd and a disservice to Goldstein.

Sidney Drell writes that Orwell's version of power continuously maintained by one regime—no matter how democratic it may be—rests on the population's fear of a common enemy. He states that “[Orwell] wrote of intermittent bombs dropping on major industrial cities causing but few casualties, together with combat on peripheral battlefields that ‘involves very small numbers of people, mostly highly trained specialists, and causes comparatively few casualties’” (35). Such is the case in Goldstein's view of the world in Nineteen Eighty-Four. In The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism, Goldstein explains that “All three powers merely continue to produce atomic bombs and store them up against the decisive opportunity which they all believe will come sooner or later” (160). Thus, in Orwell's mind, deterrence is only temporary, but destruction is a virtual guarantee.

Orwell's nightmare vision of three warring “super-states,” Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, is remarkably close to what James Burnham describes in The Managerial Revolution, which Orwell reviewed for Polemic in 1946 (1052). Orwell describes Burnham's future world, as dominated by “the people who effectively control the means of production: that is, business executives, technicians, bureaucrats, and soldiers, lumped together by Burnham under the name of ‘managers’” (1052). John Perkins, who writes of the takeover of international government policy by corporations and their “Economic Hit Men,” would certainly agree that Burnham's worst fears have been realized today: money and private interest have a heavy hand to play in international affairs and policy (90-98).

Hannah Arendt gives us the Marxist explanation of imperialism, which asserts that it is a result of “superfluous money and superfluous men” in search of new resources and markets (151). This inevitably results in “foreign adventures” that serve in “healing domestic conflicts” (152). War is good business, in other words, and it gives the population a common goal and a place to send its surplus. But Hannah Arendt was not the first person to think of this idea. Shakespeare’s Henry IV (in Part II) tells young Prince Henry, “Be it thy course to busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels; that action, hence borne out, / May waste the memory of the former days” (IV.v.214-16). With this tactic in mind, one may even question whether Oceania’s wars against Eurasia and Eastasia are truly occurring, or whether the continuous war is a fiction designed to justify the people’s deprivation of the benefits of a surplus.

Nineteen Eighty-Four, except for the parading of foreign captives down the street, features a conspicuous absence of soldiers and military hardware. The wars, however, do make it possible for the government to blame shortages of consumer goods on someone else. The much-glorified “Floating Fortresses” of Nineteen Eighty-Four sound strangely like the “Flying Fortresses” of the US Army Air Corps in World War Two, in a time when the masses were encouraged to go without certain consumer goods so that servicemen at war would not have to. The questionability of the existence of the Floating Fortresses, and of the true identities of those firing rockets into Airstrip One, reaffirms the Party’s power, for not even we the readers know the truth. Emmanuel Goldstein understands this, and he states that for a country’s economy to survive without the people’s direct benefit, “Goods must be produced, but they need not be distributed. And

in practice the only way of achieving this was by continuous warfare” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 157).

Not only must we question the Party’s ability to impose fictional wars upon us, but we must also consider the existence of Big Brother himself. Big Brother is a specter; he is everywhere and yet nowhere. He is a convenient focal point for the Party’s power, for he “has monopolized the right and possibility of explanation, he appears to the outside world as the only person who knows what he is doing, i.e., the only representative of the movement with whom one may still talk in nontotalitarian terms and who, if reproached or opposed, cannot say: Don’t ask me, ask the Leader” (375). Real or not, Big Brother serves this function.

When O’Brien allows Smith to ask whether Big Brother exists, O’Brien answers, “Of course he exists. The Party exists. Big Brother is the embodiment of the Party” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 215). Smith asks for clarification of O’Brien’s answer: “Does he exist in the same way as I exist?” and O’Brien answers, “You do not exist” (214). What O’Brien does to Smith in Room 101 of the Ministry of Love is exactly what Orwell, Arendt, and others knew to be done the world over under the totalitarianism of the 1930s and 1940s. The breaking of a man is the ultimate exercise in power. Arendt thus quotes David Rousset’s observations on similar torture events under Nazism:

The triumph of the SS demands that the tortured victim allow himself to be led to the noose without protesting, that he renounce and abandon himself to the point of ceasing to affirm his own identity. And it is not for nothing. It is not gratuitously, out of sheer sadism, that the SS men desire his defeat. They know that the system which succeeds in destroying its

victim before he mounts the scaffold . . . is incomparably the best for keeping a whole people in slavery. (455)

The desire of the SS to have the condemned participate in his own condemnation, like O'Brien's stated desire of the Party to "make the brain perfect before we blow it out" (Nineteen Eighty-Four 210), dates at least as far back as the Inquisition, during which the condemned pronounced their own guilt before they were immolated or otherwise punished, presumably for their souls' sake.

O'Brien's denial of a satisfactory answer to Smith regarding Big Brother denies Smith's existence, as well. Smith says, "I think I exist [. . .]. I am conscious of my own identity" (Nineteen Eighty-Four 214). Thus, the Party's control of the individual not only brings about the Nietzschean destruction of the "last man" but it also upends Descartes's "cogito ergo sum," as well. We know that a Party that claims that $2+2=5$ is illogical. What is surprising is the lack of citizen challenge to this power, but again we must remember Hardcastle's caning, Parsons's thankfulness to the Party for jailing him, and Syme's joy in the destruction of his language: people are often all too willing to build their own cages and tie their own nooses, and Orwell knew it.

The Party controls not only history and language but also thought and reality. The true power of the Party lies in its ability to manipulate truth while itself remaining blameless for such manipulations. Big Brother is not only a figurehead but he is the first cause, as well. The Party itself is blameless. Even Aaronson, Jones, and Rutherford become Smith's fault during O'Brien's interrogation. O'Brien states, "Eleven years ago you created a legend about three men who had been condemned to death for treachery.

You pretended that you had seen a piece of paper which proved them innocent. No such piece of paper ever existed. You invented it, and later you grew to believe in it” (212).

The absolute power once held by priests and kings now seems to lie either with those who control our economies, whether command- or demand-directed, or with those who control our information. Karl Marx proposed the idea; Wells, London, and others wrote about it at the turn of the century; and Orwell and Huxley developed it as the Second World War waxed and waned. Orwell remains relevant because fascism and totalitarianism are still here, and so is God. Those former students of mine who did not learn this in my class will learn it for themselves shortly, when they are overseas facing elephants of their own.

Chapter 3: “Plain Words” – Orwell and Language

In his later years, Orwell condensed his thoughts on language into the well-known essay “Politics and the English Language,” in which he derides cliché, stock phrases, intrusions of foreign tongues into English, and, in short, advocates plain prose style. It was a matter of pride for him that Ferdie Mount, the seven-year-old nephew of his friends, the Powells, read Animal Farm and declared with admiration “that there were ‘no difficult words in it’” (Taylor 349). Orwell believed that “Good prose is like a windowpane” (“Why I Write” 1085), and he also “had remarked that one should never write anything the working classes don’t understand, or use adjectives” (Taylor 364). He saw a necessary connection between democracy and clear, true prose—indeed, clear language in general. He saw the connection because he had seen the Spanish Revolution go sour as the liberal English press looked on without true or meaningful comment.

Orwell began to see official lies in Spain and was alarmed to see them repeated upon his return to England in 1937. In “Spilling the Spanish Beans,” he attacked the liberal press, which through “far subtler methods of distortion [than the pro-Fascist press] have prevented the British public from grasping the real nature of the struggle” (66). Orwell quickly developed a hatred of the Communist Party’s lies as it painted the Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) and the Anarchists as Franco’s fifth column. In fact, he makes it clear that by the end of the Spanish Civil War, the Russian-backed Communists were actually more of a counter-revolutionary than a revolutionary force in Spain (67). He would ultimately portray such revolutionaries-turned-oligarchs in Animal Farm.

Before his hasty departure from Spain in 1937, Orwell began to see the brand of fascism that Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin would all embrace, whose “logical end is a

régime in which every opposition party and newspaper is suppressed and every dissentient of any importance is in jail. Of course, such a régime will be Fascism” (72). Orwell quickly noted the leftist press’s faith in the Russian Communist Party, and he noted the widespread misrepresentation of the POUM, the Anarchists, and other parties in the majority of reportage coming out of Spain. Orwell was well aware of the power-centralizing function of press; he knew that people assumed what is printed to be truth, or as Marshall McLuhan states, “power is in the *medium* and not in the *message* or the program” (216). He states that that the press “can color events by using them or by not using them at all” (204). Thus, simple control of the press was enough in 1930s England; when no one printed objections to the Left’s endorsement of the Soviet-backed effort in Spain, there was in fact no mainstream objection to it.

In the failure of the Spanish Revolution and its subsequent misrepresentation worldwide, Orwell saw firsthand the power of controlling “facts,” which became a significant theme in both of his post-World War Two novels. D.J. Taylor states, “It was in Spain that, for the first time in his life, Orwell saw newspaper articles that bore no relation to the known facts, read accounts of battles where no fighting had taken place, saw troops who had fought valiantly denounced as cowards and traitors” (239). To counteract the spread of fascism through deception and outright intervention in “the free press,” Orwell thus presented a vision for modern writers. In 1938, he wrote:

[. . .] the era of free speech is closing down. The freedom of the Press in Britain was always something of a fake, because in the last resort, money controls opinion; still so long as the legal right to say what you like exists, there are always loopholes for an unorthodox writer [. . .]. We have seen

what has happened to the freedom of the Press in Italy and Germany, and it will happen here sooner or later. The time is coming – not next year, perhaps not for ten or twenty years, but it is coming – when every writer will have the choice of being silenced altogether or of producing the dope that a privileged minority demands. (“Why I Join the I.L.P.” 92).

This passage is remarkable because just over a year after its publication, World War Two began with the invasion of Poland by two countries whose regimes had already taken control of the press. Within the next decade, Orwell would portray the production of “dope” for the population, and the liquidation of those “silenced” because they were a threat to the state in Nineteen Eighty-Four. In this novel, Orwell introduces Winston Smith, whose diary and illicit love affair with Julia, his sole means of free expression, ultimately land him in the Chestnut Tree Café awaiting his own execution: his own “silenc[ing] altogether.” Orwell also gives us Syme, who is “working on a jargon impermeable by free thought” (Hitchens 17 Mar. 06), and Julia, whose work produces “dope” on “novel-writing machines in the Fiction Department” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 108). We must also remember that Smith himself is routinely guilty of fabrications as a part of his job: he invents Comrade Ogilvy when the Party directs him to create a war hero.

As the worn-out phrase goes, “Victors write history.” What Orwell warns us against, however, is the writing of history by victors whose populations cannot challenge lies, or, in the nightmarish Nineteen Eighty-Four scenario, are so detached from the production of information that they cannot distinguish the truth from a lie at all. Taylor suggests that the Party’s control of truth, fact, and history in Nineteen Eighty-Four “marks [Orwell’s]

first attempt to connect his earlier thoughts about religion with the shadow of totalitarianism [. . .]. Orwell linked this abandonment to the decay of belief in an afterlife” (239). Taylor explains that “In the absence of any hope of divine judgment, or even the assumption that what happened on earth after one was dead mattered, autocrats could do what they liked” (239).

In the Ministry of Love, O’Brien clarifies the Party’s power and ability to do as it pleases when he lets Winston Smith ask any question he desires. Smith’s question is “Does [Big Brother] exist in the same way as I exist?” to which O’Brien answers, “You do not exist” (214). In the totalitarian state, truth is relative and the Party is God. In the totalitarian state, the Party becomes everything, and whatever it is not, it denies the existence of altogether. As long as Winston opposes the Party, he does not exist. Because O’Brien supports the Party, he is omnipotent.

In Spain, Orwell learned the perils of dissenting from the party line. He learned this when he saw that the leftist forces fighting Franco’s Loyalists were frequently more divided than united by ideology. The term “Trotskyist” was changing, and the instability of the word reflects the instability of the left in the mid-to-late 1930s. Orwell wrote that by the end of the civil war in Spain, “the real struggle [was] between revolution and counter-revolution; between the workers who [were] vainly trying to hold on to a little of what they won in 1936, and the Liberal-Communist bloc who [were] so successfully taking it away from them” (67). Orwell witnessed the increasing divisions between parties of the Left, attended by the assumption of an extremely negative connotation accompanying the term “Trotskyist.” In “Spilling the Spanish Beans,” he defined “Trotskyist” in several ways, explaining how the term took on different meanings for

different people. He stated that the term “is generally used to mean a disguised Fascist who poses as an ultra-revolutionary in order to split the Left-wing forces” (71).

It is strange how Orwell notes the world’s development of the term “Trotskyist” to the point at which it is virtually meaningless, and he credits this single word with the power to divide allies, even in the face of a common enemy. The term “Orwellian,” in fact, has itself undergone just such a mutation. When the press employs “doublespeak,” or when strong central governments are suspect, people tend to say that things are “Orwellian.” This is simply neither fair nor true. Orwellian prose is plain and clear, and Orwell stands—always—for *the truth*. And yet, his name has become an adjective to describe a nightmare world, a totalitarian state.

Orwell claims that the Soviet-backed Communists in Spain, who had more power than the Socialists or the Anarchists by virtue of their Soviet state sponsorship, did more to divide the Left during the Spanish Civil War than the ultra-revolutionaries did. He goes on to state that the scare-term *Trotskyist* “derives its peculiar power from the fact that it means three separate things. It can mean one who, like Trotsky, wishes for world-revolution; or a member of the actual organization of which Trotsky is head (the only legitimate use of the word); or the disguised Fascist already mentioned. The three meanings can be telescoped one into the other at will” (71).

Let us not forget that Orwell was no admirer of Trotsky; rather, he saw the Communists betray their promise of freedom through revolution with their murder of Trotsky. As a result, he recognized that, ultimately, revolution puts people into power whose sole aim becomes the retention of power itself. This is the central idea of Animal

Farm, at the end of which the pigs and the humans they ousted are indistinguishable from one another.

Animal Farm proposes that true revolution can, in fact, be betrayed by the revolutionaries themselves. As a popular fable, however, Animal Farm was not taken as seriously as Orwell had anticipated; he wanted to warn us of revolutions betrayed, and to introduce us to the idea that the perpetuation of power for power's sake is always a possible result of any fascist or totalitarian revolutionary movement. The concept of power for power's sake comes out again in Nineteen Eighty-Four's inquisitor, O'Brien, who makes it dreadfully clear that the Party does not exist to serve its constituents, but rather to serve itself. O'Brien is no pig, but rather a believable human character who would, in Orwell's mind, agree with Mussolini's statement that "Between democracy and totalitarianism [. . .] there can be no compromise" (qtd. in "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius" 345).

Orwell's final two novels concern themselves not only with fascism masked as democratic and revolutionary socialism, but also with the lies that fascist regimes employ in order to cement their power. The pigs in Animal Farm proclaim, "All animals are equal" (33), only to amend later The Seven Commandments to suit their own convenience: "ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL / BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS" (123). The porcine administration of Animal Farm satirizes the Stalin government of the Soviet Union, whose slogans promised one thing, while the Party gave the people something completely different. Both Nineteen Eighty-Four and Animal Farm give the use of language a great deal of attention, for the people's loss of

control over their own language directly leads to their loss of control over everything, in Orwell's view.

The ludicrous official optimism of the Stalin government—and one wonders if the Party's leadership believed itself—caught Eugene Lyons's eye with the promise of fulfilling one Five-Year Plan's projected output within four years: "'5-in-4' and '2+2=5' were posted and shouted throughout the land" (qtd. in Crick 248). This nonsensical equation assumes great importance in Orwell's successor to Animal Farm, Nineteen Eighty-Four. In his 1938 review of Lyons's book on his travels in the Soviet Union, Assignment in Utopia, Orwell built upon his denunciation of the leftist, pro-Soviet press in England by pointing to Lyons's evidence that in the Soviet Union "everyone lives in constant terror of denunciation, freedom of speech and of the press are obliterated to an extent we can hardly imagine" ("Review of Assignment in Utopia by Eugene Lyons" 91). Orwell knew that once the freedoms of speech and the press were destroyed, totalitarianism was soon to follow. In "The Prevention of Literature," published three years before Nineteen Eighty-Four, he had already begun to use newspeak principles in asserting, "The journalist is unfree, and is conscious of unfreedom, when he is forced to write lies or suppress what seems to him important news" (937).

The children's denunciations of their parents that Lyons reports find their way into Nineteen Eighty-Four, in which Smith's neighbor and co-worker Parsons gets turned in by his nine-year-old son. The boy, who appears early in the novel, announces himself with a "savage voice" (22). His voice indicates the hostility that pervades the novel. Not only do characters live in eternal fear of their government, which monitors and screams at them through the telescreen, but they live in fear of each other as well. Children are mere

agents of the state: Parsons's son and daughter appear dressed in "blue shorts, gray shirts, and red neckerchiefs which were the uniform of the Spies" (ibid.); this uniform resembles that of the Soviet Union's Young Pioneers, and serves as Orwell's satire on youth groups that brainwash the younger generations in totalitarian states.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is an excellent example of the totalitarian state's desire to isolate. It first isolates words from each other, selectively destroying those that do not fit its picture of the world. Next, it isolates words from actual meaning, thus enabling *doublethink* to become a reality. Finally, it isolates individuals from each other; no one but the Party and its leader can be trusted, not even one's family. Hannah Arendt saw this in the Soviet Union's paranoia about Trotskyites, paranoia that grew to the point at which Arendt cites Krivitsky's claim that merit was "gauged by the number of your denunciations of close comrades" (323). Treachery becomes a virtue under totalitarian governments, which evolve into "mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals" for whom truth no longer matters, for it has virtually ceased to exist (323). Again, we see that speech and language reflect freedom itself, and that once words fall under government control, the people's freedoms are soon to follow.

What makes Winston Smith dangerous to the government in Nineteen Eighty-Four is his ability to decide the truth for himself despite a tyrannical and intrusive Party that manipulates fact and history on a daily basis. Smith seems to be alone in his revulsion at the lying, and this probably explains why Orwell's working title for the novel was The Last Man in Europe (Crick 407). O'Brien's triumph as Smith's inquisitor is to make him admit that $2+2=5$, thus acknowledging that what the Party says is correct, no matter what. Not only is Smith the Nietzschean "last man" but he is also the last man in the sense that

he is completely alone in his struggle against O'Brien's and the Party's lies and manipulations. Arendt writes, "in this situation, man loses trust in himself as the partner of his thoughts and that elementary confidence in the world which is necessary to make experiences at all. Self and world, capacity for thought and experience are lost at the same time" (477). As discussed in the second chapter, "The Revolutionary's Struggle," Smith asserts his existence—his "elementary confidence in the world,"—and O'Brien destroys the notion of "cogito ergo sum" right before his very eyes.

Smith works in the Ministry of Truth with Syme, whose job is to revise the Newspeak Dictionary with the sole aim of controlling thought through controlling language. Syme brags to Smith about his work:

"The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition," he said. "We're getting the language into its final shape—the shape it's going to have when nobody speaks anything else. When we've finished with it, people like you will have to learn it all over again. You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words—scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050." (Nineteen Eighty-Four 45)

Christopher Hitchens suggests an irony beyond the obvious in this passage: the late Edwardian period's eleventh edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica was frequently criticized for its obvious biases (17 Mar. 2006). This is most likely Orwell's attack on the hubris of those who control print, such as the narrow-minded Syme, who revels in his

lordly power over the written word and claims, “It’s a beautiful thing, the destruction of words” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 45).

By having Syme work on the *eleventh* edition, Orwell subtly warns us of the potential end of objective truth: a concern he had developed watching the liberal press in the 1930s. What Syme does not realize is that he is creating his own prison through language. McLuhan suggests that differing media provide differing messages and transform the world in ways we do not necessarily realize. He calls the telephone “speech without walls”; the phonograph is a “music hall without walls”; the photograph is a “museum without walls”; the electric light is “space without walls”; and movies, the radio, and television are a “classroom without walls” (283). Even though neither Orwell nor McLuhan foresaw cyberspace, it is not hard to imagine them agreeing that instant, centrally controlled information truly creates “prisons without walls” (20). This is the world of Nineteen Eighty-Four, and Syme is both warden and trustee. So may we all become, Orwell warns us.

That Syme’s entrapment is self-imposed is not uncommon in totalitarian societies. Hannah Arendt states that the citizen of a totalitarian society “is not likely to waver when the monster begins to devour its own children,” and “he may even be willing to help in his own prosecution and frame his own death sentence if only his status as a member of the movement is not touched” (The Origins of Totalitarianism 307). Orwell brings Arendt’s observation to life with Syme in Nineteen Eighty-Four, and emphasizes how the state’s control of language, combined with the device of “thoughtcrime,” reinforces the regime’s power; even Parsons, whose own daughter turned him in, says, “I’m glad they got me before [my thoughtcrime] went any further” (193). Animal Farm warned the

world about what could happen if a government such as the Soviet Union, which conducted the 1938 show trials, took power. Of course, Animal Farm dealt with pigs, whiskey, milk, and apples; Nineteen Eighty-Four shows us the price *to humanity* of complacency when such governments arise.

Orwell had a theory about language and the value of words. He stated in “New Words,” written sometime between February and April of 1940, that words are imperfect “vehicles of thought,” and that “from the point of view of exactitude and expressiveness our language has remained in the Stone Age” (264). Although it would be a good thing if we could hastily coin words, “Languages can only grow slowly, like flowers; you can’t patch them up like pieces of machinery. Any *made-up* language must be characterless and lifeless [. . .]. The whole meaning of a word is in its slowly-acquired associations” (ibid.).

And so, in Orwell’s view, we find ourselves in a bad place; we know that it would be to our benefit instantly to be able to come up with new words that more closely reflect our thinking, and yet because we do not have “unmistakeable common knowledge,” we cannot simply draw words out of thin air (266). This is the world of 1940, however, and in Orwell’s world of Nineteen Eighty-Four, Big Brother and the Party *are the* common knowledge. They dictate not only words, but the ideas and the “facts” behind them. O’Brien tells Smith, “I could float off this floor like a soap bubble if I wished to. I do not wish to, because the Party does not wish it. You must get rid of those nineteenth-century ideas about the laws of nature. We make the laws of nature” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 218).

O'Brien very clearly presents the alternative to our messy, living language. We either agree on the meanings, or the agreement will be done for us, and the meanings will follow. "The Principles of Newspeak" state that control of thought is "done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever" (246). In Orwell's bleak future world, then, "It needed a sort of athleticism of mind, an ability at one moment to make the most delicate use of logic and at the next to be unconscious of the crudest logical errors. Stupidity was as necessary as intelligence, and as difficult to attain" (229). The Party's power is thus inextricably linked to its ability to control the language, for if one controls language, he controls thought as well.

O'Brien criticizes Smith's "nineteenth-century ideas" of objective truth; for O'Brien, the twentieth century is the age of totalitarianism's triumph. In O'Brien's assertion that he *could* float off of the floor in defiance of the laws of physics and gravity, Orwell satirizes what Hannah Arendt refers to as "a general training in supreme contempt for all facts and reality" (385). Comparing and explaining how totalitarianism worked in the Soviet Union and the Third Reich in the 1930s and 40s, Arendt emphasizes that the government's success hinges on its ability to impose ideas on the populace through "organized and terrorized public opinion" (388). She states that, in a world such as O'Brien's, "failures need not be recorded, admitted, and remembered. Factuality itself depends for its continued existence upon the existence of the nontotalitarian world" (ibid.).

Orwell criticized Samuel Butler's view that "the best art (ie. [sic] the most perfect thought-transference) must be 'lived' from one person to another," adding, "It need not be so if our language were more adequate" ("New Words" 269). In fact, Nineteen Eighty-Four's government eradicates art and literature altogether as a means of "thought-transference," thus making the written word in Oceania all the more important. One may be tempted to believe that government control over art, literature, and human interaction is undertaken out of mere cruelty, and he may be right. If government can dictate "common knowledge," control of the population naturally follows. Orwell concluded "New Words" by stating, "I think that the idea of the deliberate invention of words is at least worth thinking over" because of the "utter incomprehension [that] exists between human beings" (269). What he had in mind, though, was most probably a user-regulated language—such as English is known to be—and in Nineteen Eighty-Four, he shows us how "Any *made-up* language must be characterless and lifeless" ("New Words" 264). In fact, the invention of words lets O'Brien triumph, Smith be broken, and Syme be discarded despite his loyalty and hard work.

Smith's discussion with Syme parallels Gulliver's experience at the grand Academy of Lagado, in which some professors seek to improve their country's language by "entirely abolishing all Words whatsoever" (Swift 176). While teaching at West Point, my fellow English instructors and I continuously preached the idea of precision in language to our students, but instead of asking them to limit their word choices, we asserted along with Orwell that "What is above all needed is to let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about" ("Politics and the English Language" 965). In

Nineteen Eighty-Four, the Party takes the opposite approach: it chooses the word and dictates its meaning.

The Newspeak Dictionary reflects no choice between meaning and word. Not only are word choices reduced to a minimum, but the definitions are extremely narrow. By narrowing the language, Syme has attempted to narrow the human's capability for abstract thought. McLuhan states that "Without language [. . .] human intelligence would have remained totally involved in the objects of its attention" (79). Thanks to Syme and those like him, the residents of Oceania are limited to their concerns over rationing and fictitious traitors; their language seeks to allow them nothing else.

Orwell's debt to Swift is obvious in Nineteen Eighty-Four, but it appears elsewhere as well. Bernard Crick mentions that Orwell received a copy of Swift's Gulliver's Travels as a birthday present from his mother at the age of eight (20), and Orwell himself reports in his "Imaginary Interview" with Swift that "it's lived with me ever since so that I suppose a year has never passed without my re-reading at least part of it" (452). Orwell's cynical view of machine progress, which we shall discuss in detail in the next chapter, comes out in this imaginary interview with the Dean. Orwell asserts that today's poorest are better off than lords of old, and Swift replies, "Has that added anything to true wisdom or true refinement?" (458). Indeed, in the pigs of Animal Farm we see vestigial traces of Swift's Yahoos, and in the circle of correspondents in Richard Rees's Adelphi circle, we can almost distinguish a group of modern Scriblerians. Orwell builds upon a literary tradition that judges not words themselves but rather the thoughts behind them. Of course, in a free society, the users of a language themselves create and influence the meanings of words, and although he wrote of his disgust with loose word-play in

“Politics and the English Language,” he ultimately considered the alternative in Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Through Syme and the Ministry of Truth’s operations, Orwell provides a solid example of his assertion, “language can also corrupt thought” (“Politics and the English Language” 964). Syme states, “Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it [. . .]. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 46-47). Again, the Party’s hubris comes out in the word “perfect,” which is the same word that O’Brien uses to describe what Smith’s brain must become before the Party blows it out.

Free and honest communication thus begins with word selection. In Winston Smith’s world, the Party has already selected the people’s words for them, and thus their ability to convey meaning through language becomes an exercise in mechanics instead of an exercise in free thought. Novels in Nineteen Eighty-Four are machine-produced, a testament to the Party’s ability to control language to the point of meaninglessness. In his 1946 essay “Politics vs. Literature: An examination of *Gulliver’s Travels*,” one can tell that Swift’s works had a profound effect on Orwell’s ideas. He wrote of Swift’s Langdon, where the professors “write books by machinery” and attempt “not merely to make sure that people will think the right thoughts, but actually to make them less conscious” (1098). The Ministry of Truth, center of production for official—usually fictional—information, has aims similar to those of Swift’s professors.

Minitrue itself may in fact have been modeled on the main BBC building in Portland Place, from which Orwell did his broadcasting during World War Two. Bernard Crick

points out the similarity of the BBC building and the Ministry of Truth, and he adds that “There was a perpetual smell of cabbage in the B.B.C. Oxford Street staff canteen, too” (287). This smell stuck with Orwell, who recreated it as the “unusual boiled cabbage smell” in Nineteen Eighty-Four’s Victory Mansions (21). Again and again, we see how Orwell’s actual life and experiences find their way into his work. The likeness of the BBC buildings to the Ministry of Truth may reflect his distaste for a job that he quit because he felt that he was wasting his time (Crick 287); in fact, the room from which Orwell broadcast during World War Two was Room 101, and the singing prole woman whom Smith admires in Nineteen Eighty-Four closely resembles the charwomen Orwell would report hearing in the early morning while he worked there.

The BBC-Ministry of Truth connection is not the only one that critics have made from Orwell’s days during the Second World War, nor is the control of words the only way in which the government controls human behavior. Martin Esslin points out that while Orwell was broadcasting to the Far East, his wife Eileen was

working in the Ministry of Food (the Ministry of Plenty in Nineteen Eighty-Four). Her job was to prepare recipes for foods the ministry wanted to push onto the public. When potatoes were among the few items in good supply Eileen had to write recipes, to be broadcast on the BBC, for potato dishes proclaimed to be wholesome and full of vitamins. When this publicity worked too well and potatoes became short, Eileen had to compose material about the fattening effect of potatoes and their relatively poor nutritional value. When the British government wanted to conceal that the RAF possessed radar, a Ministry of Food propaganda campaign

stressed the value of carrots in improving night vision in the blackout.

(129-30)

Not only can one hear the telescreen announcing the changing of Oceania's "eternal" foes in this passage, but he is also reminded of the bitter title of one of Orwell's pre-war works: All Propaganda is Lies.

Orwell was certainly concerned with the control of language as a means of controlling thought, but he also developed a great degree of self-consciousness early in life with regard to the spoken language and one's accent as an indicator of his social class. When tramping about, he was known to use a Cockney accent but he feared discovery as a member of the lower-upper middle class. He recounted in Down and Out in Paris and London, "I dared not speak to anyone, imagining that they must notice a disparity between my accent and my clothes" (129). In Down and Out, Orwell took great interest in language and its effects. He jotted down remarkable terms of "London slang and swearing" (174), noting that some lower-class slang had even made its way into the mainstream: "No born Londoner (it is different with people of Scotch or Irish origin) now says 'bloody,' unless he is a man of some education" (176). It is thus not surprising that by the end of his life, Orwell was increasingly concerned with the effects of language on thought and perception. This may explain his concern that English has a "capacity for debasement" that he proposed would ultimately lead to poor thought, according to the logic of Gulliver's Travels and Nineteen Eighty-Four ("The English People" 634). The use of Newspeak in Nineteen Eighty-Four may be traced to his attacks on "ready-made phrases" that do one's thinking for him ("Politics and the English Language" 961).

According to Peter Stansky, Orwell had developed at St. Cyprian's "a love and command of language and reinforced that sense of authority found among the English upper classes" ("Orwell: The Man" 10). Thus, by the end of his childhood, Orwell had realized that power structures and language were inextricably linked. Orwell's journalistic fascination with exact language spurred him to develop the notion of "doublespeak" in Nineteen Eighty-Four, for which an extremely simplified and thus limited language, Newspeak, becomes the medium; thus, a man in Oceania can say one thing and mean another, such as one of the Party's slogans: "FREEDOM IS SLAVERY" (26). This, for Orwell, is the most dangerous aspect of language: that it can be manipulated to the point at which a person can say one thing and mean another, or that language can influence one's thinking to the point at which he can hold two contradictory thoughts at the same time. Language becomes not just a means by which the Party *influences* thought but rather actually *controls* it.

Barbara Allen Babcock notes that doublethink reinforces Party power by creating a "negative capability," which is "a state of mind described by Keats as 'when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'" ("Lawspeak and Doublethink" 90). Engaged in the continuous revision of history deep within the bowels of the Ministry of Truth, Winston Smith comes to the realization that Orwell had developed in 1946 in "The Prevention of Literature":

The organized lying practiced by totalitarian states is not, as is sometimes claimed, a temporary expedient of the same nature as military deception. It is something integral to totalitarianism, something that would still continue even if concentration camps and secret police forces had ceased

to be necessary [. . .]. From the totalitarian point of view history is something to be created rather than learned. A totalitarian state is in effect a theocracy, and its ruling caste, in order to keep its position, has to be thought of as infallible. (935-36)

It is strangely fitting to note that the biggest enemies of democracy today believe in the establishment of a worldwide theocracy, one whose authority derives from the printed word. Religious rule is, quite possibly, the original totalitarian state; Hitchens notes that “Before there was any such word [as totalitarianism], there was ABSOLUTISM” (17 Mar. 2006). Theocracy combines the power of a totalitarian state over the individual with religion’s potential for self-righteousness and irrationality. In Iran, for example, the mullahs disqualified forty-four percent of the Reform Party’s prospective candidates for parliament leading into the 2005 elections (Secor 64). Even more strangely, leaders in Iran today deny the existence of extermination camps in Europe during World War Two, make false claims of the West’s Zionism and greed, and blame their countries’ problems on Western decadence.

Orwell suggests that tyrants, oligarchs, totalitarians, and fascists achieve power only if their populations allow them to. The key to preventing the people’s loss of power is their retention of the right to “think fearlessly” and to use language toward that end (“The Prevention of Literature” 939). One needs either a certain hunger or apathy to enable a tyrant to succeed: Hitler’s people had such hunger, and so did the Ayatollah Khomeini’s Iranians. Both regimes rose through the powers of rhetoric, and they cemented their power by seizing the media. Both regimes used fear to eliminate opposition, as did the

Party in Oceania. The next chapter will consider the other means by which a regime takes and holds power: complacency.

Chapter 4: “The Streamlined People and the Machine Age” – Orwell’s Utopia

Orwell’s reading of the dystopian literature that was popular in his day influenced him greatly. In his review of James Burnham’s The Managerial Revolution, he mentions several other works that speculate on the future of society: Jack London’s The Iron Heel “foretold some of the essential features of Fascism,” and he points to such books as H.G. Wells’s When the Sleeper Wakes, Yevgeny Zamyatin’s We, and Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World as books that “described imaginary worlds in which the special problems of capitalism had been solved without bringing liberty, equality, or true happiness any nearer” (1055).

Orwell’s ties to these authors and their texts go far beyond the texts themselves in some cases. Orwell sat in Aldous Huxley’s French class at Eton, and Wells attended at least one of Orwell’s mother’s family’s tea parties (Taylor 45). There is also a Wells-Huxley connection: Wells had studied under Huxley’s grandfather, T.H. Huxley, at South Kensington (Hillegas vii). Thus, relationships and circumstance seem to have affected Orwell’s early reading patterns, and surely influenced his thoughts. We tend to think of writers and artists as individuals connected only by a school, movement, or approach. Orwell, however, was connected with literary figures in various ways throughout his life, often carrying their influence into his works in unmistakable ways.

His reading of utopian literature was so serious that D.J. Taylor makes mention of “the Buddicombs’ copy of Wells’ Modern Utopia, which he read so often that Jacintha’s parents made him a present of it” (45). Wells’s A Modern Utopia is rather difficult to envision as a reality; his people move too freely and care too little for personal, private property. Although it was clearly a boyhood favorite of Orwell, one can assume that he

came to see it as a pipe dream, and this realization—which probably incubated in Burma and crystallized in Spain—must have influenced his formation of the absolute failure of the centrally planned state in Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Orwell's early reading of A Modern Utopia exposed him to the notion of the planned, centrally controlled state: "A Utopia planned upon modern lines [. . .] will insist upon every citizen being properly housed, well nourished, and in good health, reasonably clean and clothed healthily [. . .]. In a phrasing that will be familiar to everyone interested in social reform, it will maintain a standard of life" (138). Of course, Wells's version of "maintain[ing]" a standard of life includes widespread industrialization and mechanization which, for Orwell, was suspect. Orwell sought in Nineteen Eighty-Four to show that Zamyatin-like failure of the centrally planned state, which begins with socialist ideals of equality and ends with totalitarianism.

He noted that in Wells's "characteristic Utopias [. . .], he returns to optimism and to a vision of humanity, 'liberated' by the machine, as a race of enlightened sunbathers whose sole topic of conversation is their own superiority to their ancestors" (The Road to Wigan Pier 203). In answer to Wells's belief in human progress through technology, he added, "But meanwhile the machine is here, and its corrupting effects are almost irresistible" (205). In fact, Orwell counters Wells by pointing to the post-World War One Englishman as evidence that one generation may in fact be *inferior* to its ancestors: "Where are the monstrous men with chests like barrels and moustaches like the wings of eagles who strode across my childhood's gaze twenty or thirty years ago? Buried, I suppose, in the Flanders mud" (98).

This resonates with some of us who are unconvinced that people today are “better” in any sense than they were in the past. Just the other day, as I tired of listening to my teenaged son pontificate on the merits of today’s high-tech military weaponry – knowledge based on his video-gaming experience, I must add, as opposed to my Army experience – I had to shut him down by saying, “I’d take a squad of farmboys from the 1940s with their iron-sighted Garands before I’d take a squad of your battery-powered, optically enhanced soldiers.” As a devotee of technology he gaped in disbelief, but as he returned to his boxed macaroni and his video games, I reflected that specialists in every health and sociological field today confirm what Orwell suspected as early as 1937: “We may find in the long run that tinned food is a deadlier weapon than the machine gun” (98). Unfortunately, Wigan Pier did not foresee the dangers of modern video games, which distort reality, prevent dialogue, and keep one sedentary for long periods.

Orwell’s attack on Wells’s faith in progress prompted an essay on the Wellsian utopia as a model for Nazi society: “Much of what Wells has imagined and worked for is physically there in Nazi Germany. The order, planning, the State encouragement of science, the steel, the concrete, the aeroplanes, are all there, but all in the service of ideas appropriate to the Stone Age” (“Wells, Hitler and the World State” 371). This quickly earned him a memorable response from Wells himself: “Read my early works [sic] you shit,” he is supposed to have written (Taylor 305).

In the fascist states of the 1930s and 40s, Orwell saw the state-planned and controlled economy taken and corrupted in the name of war production: “Fascism, at any rate the German version, is a form of capitalism that borrows from Socialism just such features as will make it efficient for war purposes” (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 317). As he

developed as a writer, gathering material by participating in and observing war, and also by going “on the tramp,” he began to consider the dark possibilities of government control that manifest themselves in Yevgeny Zamyatin’s We. His first exposure to Zamyatin came as a result of a gift from the University of London’s Gleb Struve, to whom he wrote, “I am interested in that kind of book, and even keep making notes for one myself that may get written sooner or later” (qtd. in Taylor 342). When he reviewed We for The Tribune on January 4, 1946, he wrote that its depiction of “the rebellion of the primitive human spirit against a rationalised, mechanised, painless world” is “on the whole more relevant [than Brave New World] to our own situation” (“Review of We by E.I. Zamyatin” n. pag.).

The use of socialism as a front for an efficient war machine, for which Orwell criticized the National Socialist Worker’s Party in Germany, resurfaces in Nineteen Eighty-Four, in which war materiel is plentiful but consumer goods such as razor blades and chocolate are scarce. Governments’ abilities to sell Marxist egalitarianism in an effort to centralize control became a major concern for Orwell in the late 1930s and 1940s. He noted in his 1946 review “James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution” that Burnham predicts a “drift away from old-style capitalism and towards a planned economy with an adoptive oligarchy in control. In Russia the capitalists were destroyed first and the workers were crushed later. In Germany the workers were crushed first, but the elimination of the capitalists had at any rate begun” (1057). This was a source of Orwell’s anarchism; although he saw the need for the state to aid the poor, he had a fear of the overextension of the state’s power that was grounded in recent historical experience.

Although he was certainly neither pro-capitalist nor pro-American, by 1947 he had concluded that if the world were to split into “three unconquerable superstates,” then at least the *possibility* would remain that “the liberal tradition will be strong enough within the Anglo-American section of the world to make life tolerable and even offer some hope of progress” (“Toward European Unity” 1246). However, he concludes with the assertion that “this is all speculation,” and that “The actual outlook, so far as I can calculate the probabilities, is very dark, and any serious thought should start from that fact” (ibid.).

Nineteen Eighty-Four appears to be a result of “serious thought” about the potential division of the world into three continuously warring superstates. Oceania, the Anglo-American bloc, in fact does not preserve the liberal tradition. Rather, its totalitarian state begins, like Hitler’s German socialism, as English socialism—or Ingsoc, in Newspeak. In Nineteen Eighty-Four, Orwell takes Burnham’s notion of three main world-power blocs and creates Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. He then takes Huxley’s machine-based society, which pampers its citizens into a sense of complacency in the interest of protecting people from themselves, and inverts it. In Brave New World, violence is strictly against the law; in Nineteen Eighty-Four, violence and the law are inseparable. However, both societies subordinate the individual’s interest to the state’s power, and this is where modern totalitarianism begins.

According to Orwell, Burnham suggests, “The rulers of this new society will be the people who effectively control the means of production [. . .] lumped together [. . .] under the name of ‘managers’” (“James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution” 1052). The notion that a select group of people can rule through control of resources and information

is not new; oligarchy is a timeworn concept. What Burnham suggested in the 1940s is what President Eisenhower warned the public of in his farewell address on January 17, 1961 as “the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.” Both Burnham and Eisenhower warn us of the potential dangers of special-interest groups that harbor information and other resources with the intent to rule thereby.

The control of government through private groups, sometimes referred to as “corporatocracy” (Perkins 26), is not new with Burnham or Eisenhower. In When the Sleeper Wakes, H.G. Wells creates a utopia in which experts hoard information: only a “sworn aeronaut” may know about aviation (182), and only “shareholders in the Medical Faculty Company” may be “medical men” (163). In this world, the masses cannot challenge those who possess the trade secrets of technology and government. But a mere pilot who knows that “A dozen spies are watching [him]” to ensure that he does not divulge the secrets of aviation can challenge Graham, Wells’s protagonist and “Master of the earth” (183). Graham’s place as “Master of the earth” is guaranteed solely through inheritance of capital and the benefits of “compound interest” (56). During his two-hundred-year slumber, Graham’s capital has accumulated to the point at which his holdings absorb virtually all of the world’s wealth. He awakens to a world that he owns and yet does not control. His situation suggests the potential for an emasculated capitalism, controlled by a state that looks socialist but is not. In essence, Graham and the Council can be viewed as a metaphor for private capitalism and a Nazi-like “socialist” state.

The idea that private ownership of capital can lead to domination and corruption is the true Socialist's primary argument against it. Orwell did not spend much time arguing about private property except where it involved the means of production, but he did show a specific concern about income disparities. He argued that the state should ensure the prevention of a significant gap between rich and poor through "Limitation of incomes, on such a scale that the highest tax-free income in Britain does not exceed the lowest by more than ten to one" ("The Lion and the Unicorn" 334).

Wells's hero "dream[s] of human equality – of a socialistic order – [and has] all those worn-out dreams of the nineteenth century fresh and vivid in [his] mind" (When the Sleeper Wakes 248). He is disturbed by the discovery that the Council controlling the modern world into which he has awakened is, in effect, "the board of his [inheritance's] trustees" (151). Graham not only recognizes that a profitable corporation rules the world according to its own interests but quickly ascertains that the modern state has abolished education, which it calls "Cram," after its recognition that "It only leads to trouble and discontent" (161). The state therefore controls the people by controlling their access not only to specialized knowledge but also to basic intellectual stimulation. Dystopian literature embraces the idea that a thinking individual is a threat to the state itself.

Winston Smith is just such a threat in Nineteen Eighty-four.

For Wells, the nineteenth-century liberal's dreams of socialism and equality have evolved—or devolved, as the case may be—into state-sponsored slavery. The labor movement and the welfare state, under the control of the Council, have developed into "The Labour Company." Ostrog explains its development to Graham:

The Labour Company ousted the workhouse. It grew – partly – out of

something – you, perhaps, may remember it – an emotional religious organisation called the Salvation Army – that became a business company. In the first place it was almost a charity. To save people from the workhouse rigours. Now I come to think of it, it was one of the earliest properties your Trustees acquired. They bought the Salvation Army and reconstructed it as this [. . .]. Nowadays there are no workhouses, no refuges and charities, nothing but that Company. Its offices are everywhere. That blue is its colour. And any man, woman or child who comes to be hungry and weary and with neither home nor friend nor resort, must go to the Company in the end – or seek some way of death. (198-99)

In this passage, Wells points us to the possible betrayal of the labor movement through the state’s control of charity. Not only does the government gain control of the individual through centralization of education and charity, but the system also ensures a sort of dependence on the government that the individual cannot break. In When the Sleeper Wakes, Wells suggests that the alternatives for the impoverished are limited to two: wage slavery or death.

Orwell was similarly concerned with the dehumanizing effects of state charity in the form of workhouses and their casual wards, or “spikes.” In Down and Out in Paris and London, he noted that workhouse-issued meal tickets—presumably intended to prevent the homeless from using their meager wages on liquor and cigarettes—became a means by which private businesses could bilk tramps. After a time in the workhouse, he and an associate received “meal tickets [that] were directed to a coffee-shop in Ilford,” at which

the proprietor served them reduced portions (Down and Out in Paris and London 149).

Orwell wrote, “It appeared that the shop habitually cheated the tramps of twopence or so on each ticket; having tickets instead of money, the tramps could not protest or go elsewhere” (ibid.).

Orwell does not suggest a conspiracy against the poor in the same way that Wells’s Labour Company suggests, but he does point to the dangers of mixing state charity with private interests. Orwell turned his temporary foray into the world of the English homeless into an opportunity to consider the evils of the living conditions of the poor by living among them and exploring the inefficacy of the state’s treatment of them. He noted, rather humorously, that “A beggar works by standing out of doors in all weathers and getting varicose veins, chronic bronchitis, etc. It is a trade like any other; quite useless, of course—but, then, many reputable trades are quite useless” (173). One delights in recalling that in “The Lion and the Unicorn” Orwell had called the “idle rich” an “entirely functionless class” (306). Love him or hate him, Orwell called things as he saw them. Wells’s Ostrog takes no such generous view of the poor. He brags that under the Council “Begging is prevented by the police of the ways. Besides, no one gives” (When the Sleeper Wakes 199).

Orwell saw the terrible effects of the welfare state, and he recognized its threat to human dignity. He seems to have recognized that the downtrodden are the safekeepers of the human spirit; one wonders if it is a coincidence that Winston Smith, Orwell’s “last man in Europe,” suffers from a varicose vein and overall poor health reminiscent of his description of the English spike’s downtrodden. Smith serves, in a sense, as a warning of the horrors of the centrally planned economy. His job in the Ministry of Truth provides

him with respectable work, and yet he bears the marks of London's poor in the 1930s. Smith's outward signs of poor health are manifestations of a sickness of the spirit under the Party's system. Only in his relationship with Julia does he break his reliance on Victory Gin, gain healthy weight, and rid himself of his "varicose ulcer" (Nineteen Eighty-Four 124).

Smith notes in Nineteen Eighty-Four, like Graham in When the Sleeper Wakes, that the procreative urge appears under totalitarian rule to survive only in the working classes; this, somehow, differentiates the working class from the middle and upper classes. Ostrog tells Graham with distaste that the population in general is in decline, "Except among the people under the Labour Company. They are reckless" (When the Sleeper Wakes 224). Winston Smith takes no such negative view. He notes that "The proles had stayed human" (Nineteen Eighty-Four 136), and as he watches a prole woman hang laundry, he thinks to himself, "The woman down there had no mind, she had only strong arms, a warm heart, and a fertile belly. He wondered how many children she had given birth to. It might easily be fifteen" (181).

When envisioning modern societies that seek to control their people, authors of dystopian fiction seem to agree that the state *has to* sever the connection between sex and procreation. Members of the Party in Nineteen Eighty-Four are encouraged to avoid intercourse altogether, other than for means of procreation, while the Proles appear to have no such aversion to the habit. Similarly, Wells's dependents of the Labour Company breed freely, and this becomes a cause for contempt. In Huxley's Brave New World, sex and procreation are mutually exclusive activities thanks to the "Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning" and the "Malthusian belt" (15, 61). Writing within four

years of the publication of Nineteen Eighty-Four, Ray Bradbury portrayed a similar utopian distaste for breeding in Fahrenheit 451:

“You know I haven’t any [children]! No one in his right mind, the good Lord knows, would have children!” said Mrs. Phelps, not quite sure why she was angry with this man.

“I wouldn’t say that,” said Mrs. Bowles. “I’ve had two children by Caesarian section. No use going through all that agony for a baby. The world must reproduce, you know, the race must go on. Besides, they sometimes look just like you, and that’s nice.” (96)

In Bradbury’s case, the only use for children other than ensuring the species in perpetuity is to showcase one’s own vanity. Ultimately, these authors suggest that divorcing sex and procreation has a dehumanizing effect; this explains Orwell’s aversion to all forms of birth control. His main character in Keep the Aspidistra Flying, Gordon Comstock, calls birth control “just another way they’ve found out of bullying us” (142).

Though Orwell realizes critical differences between the classes, he does not judge those lower than his own any more than he shows hate for those above his. In Down and Out in Paris and London, Orwell says, “I do not think there is anything about a beggar that sets him in a different class from other people, or gives most modern men the right to despise him” (173). The notion that “Money has become the grand test of virtue” (174) disgusted him, and this disgust came out clearly three years later, in his 1936 novel Keep the Aspidistra Flying. Here, Gordon Comstock develops the view that a centrally planned welfare state, as proposed by some Socialists, would demean the population. When Comstock’s friend and publisher, Ravelston, states that one must choose between

capitalism and socialism, Comstock attacks a world run by Socialists as “Some kind of Aldous Huxley Brave New World; only not so amusing. Four hours a day in a model factory, tightening up bolt number 6003. Rations served out in greaseproof paper at the communal kitchen. [. . .] All very well in its way, of course. Only we don’t want it” (88).

In Comstock’s statement against socialism, we can certainly see the early seeds of the filthy and depressed society in Nineteen Eighty-Four. Consider Smith’s dining experience in the bowels of the Ministry of Truth as a realization of Comstock’s socialist “communal kitchen”: “Winston and Syme pushed their trays beneath the grille. Onto each was dumped swiftly the regulation lunch—metal pannikin of pinkish-gray stew, a hunk of bread, a cube of cheese, a mug of milkless Victory Coffee, and one saccharine tablet” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 44). Orwell not only suggests that *ensuring* the provision of the necessities through bureaucratic state control dehumanizes the action itself, but we see again his distaste for tinned or ersatz foods, explained so memorably in The Road to Wigan Pier and Coming Up for Air. This world is Orwell’s imagined realization of the “glittering Wells world [against which] sensitive minds recoil” (The Road to Wigan Pier 190).

Smith only discovers his hunger under the influence of “oily tasting” Victory Gin (45). Indeed, Nineteen Eighty-Four centers upon Smith’s attempts to develop human feeling and emotion, two things that the Party has done its best to stamp out in all but the proles. In this novel, the Party limits human feelings through its attempt to control the sexual urge and the personal relationship. All are numb to emotion and sensation except

the proles. Among Party members, “No emotion was pure, because everything was mixed up with fear and hatred” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 105).

Similarly, Huxley’s Brave New World and Wells’s When The Sleeper Wakes push education, pain, and fear as far away from human experience as possible. As Graham watches the pleasure-centered citizens of his state dance, he utters his rejection of their culture and society, “Before God [. . .] I would rather be a wounded sentinel freezing in the snow than one of these painted fools!” (229); this is strangely reminiscent of Wordsworth’s poem “The World Is Too Much with Us,” which states that rather than being “out of tune” and unmoved by nature, “Great God! I’d rather be / A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;” (8-10). Graham adds, “I am uncivilized [. . .]. I am primitive – Paleolithic [. . .]. You must bear with my nineteenth century shocks and disgusts [. . .]. And while these dance, men are fighting – men are dying in Paris to keep the world – that they may dance” (229).

Wordsworth’s dislike of a culture enchanted with “getting and spending” reflects the same resistance to and reaction against the effects of material culture: what Comstock refers to as the “money-world” in Keep the Aspidistra Flying (219). Main characters in dystopian fiction appear always to react strongly to material culture; even Winston Smith’s reaction against the Party is a reaction against the Party’s material goods: food that is poor, reading material full of lies, and uniforms that limit one’s individuality.

So strong is Smith’s hatred of the Party that he and Julia agree to commit any crime in order to destroy it: murder, sabotage, treason, forgery, blackmail, drug trafficking, and several others (Nineteen Eighty-four 142). This urge to destroy had surfaced earlier in Keep the Aspidistra Flying: “Therefore the hatred of modern life, the desire to see our

money-civilisation blown to hell by bombs, was a thing he genuinely felt. [. . .] he had desired to hear the enemy aeroplanes zooming over London” (84). The urge lives on in modern novels such as Fight Club, which see modern material culture as dangerous to civilization.

Wells’s Graham, a self-admitted “primitive,” prefigures Huxley’s Savage, who is an aberration because he has a memory of the liberal arts and the humanistic spirit. Graham exclaims, “Curse this complex world! [. . .] and all the inventions of men! That a man must die like a rat in a snare and never see his foe!” which he abruptly recants with “That’s nonsense [. . .] I am a savage” (270). Wells suggests that Graham is a “savage” because nineteenth-century liberalism is dead in the world to which he awakens. His only option – as with Huxley’s savage in Brave New World or Pahlanuik’s Tyler Durden in Fight Club – is to destroy this world.

Graham’s delight in the defiant “Song of the Revolt,” of which Winston Smith’s admiration of the prole woman’s song in Nineteen Eighty-Four is reminiscent, reflects the uncivilized urge of violent resistance. The people in Graham’s age assume the survival of a civilization over time to be, in itself, a mark of progress; his guide Asano tells him, “In your days people could stand such crudities, they were nearer the barbaric by two hundred years” (238). The idea that technology and its attendant efficiency make us better becomes the focus of Wells’s satire in When the Sleeper Wakes. This 1899 satire is perhaps what Wells had in mind when he reacted so strongly against Orwell’s criticism in 1941’s “Wells, Hitler and the World State.”

All anti-utopians have a nemesis; Ostrog, Graham’s antithesis in When the Sleeper Wakes, eerily prefigures Orwell’s O’Brien from Nineteen Eighty-Four. Indeed, Wells’s

entire vision of the future in this novel seems to have been validated by the fascist movements of the early-mid twentieth century, and to have sent Orwell scrambling to his typewriter. Ostrog tells Graham,

The day of democracy is past [. . .]. Past for ever. That day began with the bowmen of Crecy, it ended when marching infantry, when common men in masses ceased to win the battles of the world, when costly cannon, great ironclads, and strategic railways became the means of power. To-day is the day of wealth. Wealth now is power as it never was before—it commands earth and sea and sky. All power is for those who can handle wealth. . . . You must accept facts, and these are facts. The world for the Crowd! The Crowd as Ruler! Even in your days that creed had been tried and condemned. To-day it has only one believer – a multiplex, silly one – the man in the Crowd. (205-06)

Anyone who can read this passage and not think of Nineteen Eighty-Four's O'Brien and Orwell's 1945 essay "You and the Atom Bomb" has not truly read Orwell with the level of attention his writing deserves. But let us read on in Wells:

The day of the common man is past. On the open countryside one man is as good as another, or nearly as good. The earlier aristocracy had a precarious tenure of strength and audacity. They were tempered. There were insurrections, duels, riots. The first real aristocracy, the first permanent aristocracy, came in with castles and armour, and vanished before the musket and bow. But this is the second aristocracy. The real one. Those days of gunpowder and democracy were only an eddy in the

stream. The common man is now a helpless unit. In these days we have the great machine of the city, and an organization complex beyond his understanding. (206)

This passage is remarkable in its ability to help us understand whence O'Brien comes and why Orwell felt so threatened by an atomically delivered Allied victory in 1945. Ostrog's statement above is remarkably similar to Orwell's in "You and the Atom Bomb": "ages in which the dominant weapon is expensive or difficult to make will tend to be ages of despotism, whereas when the dominant weapon is cheap and simple, the common people have a chance [. . .]. The great age of democracy and of national self-determination was the age of the musket and the rifle" (904). Essentially, Orwell's 1945 essay simply puts an exclamation mark on Wells's 1899 novel. Nineteen Eighty-Four shows us exactly how our future in the atomic age may look. It is the true end of democracy.

Orwell's essay asks us to consider a world run by men such as O'Brien or Wells's Ostrog, who are simply power worshippers. Ostrog, who came to life in 1899 with the first publication of When the Sleeper Wakes, may be the first fictional character to announce the political dangers—and the danger to humanity overall—of the coming of the machine age. Wells's contemporary Thomas Hardy approached World War One with a similar fear of technological and scientific progress, warning us of "All nations striving strong to make / Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters / they do no more for Christ's sake / Than you who are helpless in such matters" ("Channel Firing" 13-16). Ostrog makes it clear to us how governments can gain by ensuring that "The common man is now a helpless unit" (When the Sleeper Wakes 206).

Ostrog's attack on Graham's faith in "one believer – a multiplex, silly one – the man in the Crowd," for Orwell becomes O'Brien's attack on Winston Smith, who before meeting Julia feels alone in the world. We should remember that Orwell's original name for Nineteen Eighty-Four was The Last Man in Europe. At face value, this title suggests that Winston Smith's solitary stand against the government's lies makes him "the last man in Europe." This is probably not what Orwell intended with the title, though. Francis Fukuyama explains Nietzsche's idea of the "last man" as the "typical citizen of a liberal democracy [. . .] who, schooled by the founders of modern liberalism, gave up prideful belief in his or her own superior worth in favour of comfortable self-preservation. [. . .] Content with his happiness and unable to feel any sense of shame for being unable to rise above those wants, the last man ceased to be human." This puts Smith in a new light.

During Smith's early torture sessions in the Ministry of Love, O'Brien poses the question, "And you consider yourself morally superior to us, with our lies and our cruelty?" to which Smith responds, "Yes, I consider myself superior" (Nineteen Eighty-Four 222). In response, O'Brien seems to invoke Nietzsche: "If you are a man, Winston, you are the last man. Your kind is extinct; we are the inheritors. Do you understand that you are *alone*? You are outside history, you are non-existent" (ibid.). O'Brien orders Smith to look at his wretched figure in the mirror, saying "You are the last man [. . .]. You are the guardian of the human spirit. You shall see yourself as you are" (223). Horrified at his own appearance, Winston stands as O'Brien plucks a tooth from his head and says "You are rotting away [. . .]. Do you see that thing facing you? That is the last

man. If you are human, that is humanity. Now put your clothes on again” (224).

Winston’s humiliation and dehumanization is complete.

As Smith gazes at himself in horror, we realize that he is not the preserver of the human spirit, fighting valiantly to remain “the last man in Europe”—that role clearly goes to the proles. Rather, Smith caves under O’Brien’s pressure and “[wins] the victory over himself. He [loves] Big Brother” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 245). His victory over himself is a form of self-preservation. Having been broken in Room 101, Smith betrays himself, Julia, even the truth itself in the name of ending the pain. The modern state, by all accounts, simply destroys the individual as an act of self-preservation; this is power for power’s sake.

The torture of Zamyatin’s heroine I-330 in We, intended to extract a betrayal of D-503 similar to Winston of Julia in Nineteen Eighty-Four, is unsuccessful. Unlike Smith’s response to torture, I-330 “did not say a word” (We 232). When Smith cracks so easily in the name of self-preservation, he becomes Nietzsche’s shameless, un-human being. Orwell’s “last man” is toothless, gaunt, and cowed by the irresistible power of the Party. Smith thus becomes unique as the realization of the “last man,” whereas Zamyatin’s rebel does not break. Both authors show their protagonists as victims of the state’s power, though.

Huxley’s dystopian citizen is completely different from both Orwell’s and Zamyatin’s: Orwell describes Huxley’s citizen as one living in a “rationalised, mechanised, painless world” (“Review of We by E.I. Zamyatin” 72) who is expected to maintain a “proper standard of infantile decorum” at all times (Brave New World 96). The word “infantile” is telling; Khomeini’s notion of Islamic rule in Iran, as we shall

discuss in the next chapter, actually views citizens as children of the state. Brave New World elevates childlike behavior to a virtue.

The raw power and cruelty of the state in Nineteen Eighty-Four is what sets it apart from other dystopian novels. While Winston Smith is beaten into submission, Huxley's Bernard Marx has had submission conditioned into him since birth. In Brave New World, all citizens are Nietzschean "last men" by design, but only when the Director threatens to exile Marx does he feel that he "[stands] alone, embattled against the order of things; elated by the intoxicating consciousness of his individual significance and importance" (96). Brave New World essentially suggests the possibility that the individual *can* survive in the centrally planned state, while Nineteen Eighty-Four asserts that one of the central state's main goals is to eradicate the individual altogether. That Huxley's rebel is named Marx may suggest that hope for the preservation of the individual lies in socialism.

One wonders if when Orwell was imagining Smith's torture in Room 101 he thought of the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) leader Andres Nin. Nin's 1937 capture and murder by the Communists in Spain, in addition to the fact that there is no evidence that he was "broken" by his captors and murderers, made him a martyr for the Trotskyite and Anarchist causes. He, too, can be seen as the hope for the common man under socialism. Trotsky's account of "revolution betrayed" in Russia is thus probably not the only revolutionary betrayal that inspired the events of Animal Farm and the betrayals in Nineteen Eighty-Four. In fact, Bernard Crick asserts, "Much of Goldstein's testimony in Nineteen Eighty-Four seems to derive from pamphlets by or about Nin, rather than – as has been supposed – directly from Trotsky (246).

Of course, we cannot blame Smith for his betrayal of Julia. Most would succumb to such torture in the interest of self-preservation. In fact, Smith's own words seem to acknowledge early in the novel that he *is* Nietzsche's "last man" who, in Fukuyama's words, "ceased to be human" ("By way of an Introduction" n. pag.). When Syme brags that Newspeak will develop to the point at which conversation based on independent thought will be impossible, he is only restating what Orwell himself had written in "Politics and the English Language": "every [ready-made] phrase anaesthetizes a portion of one's brain" (964). Smith considers responding to Syme by saying "Except the proles" (47). Ironically Syme, who prides himself on his part in the demolition of independent thought, "divine[s] what [Smith is] going to say," and says, "The proles are not human beings" (*ibid.*). Winston realizes that "One of these days [. . .] Syme will be vaporized. He is too intelligent. He sees too clearly and speaks too plainly," and he is correct (*ibid.*). Later, Smith asserts his belief to Julia: "The proles are human beings [. . .]. We are not human" (137). Only those who are truly individuals are truly human in Smith's eyes.

Winston and Julia recognize from the outset of their relationship that when—and not if—they are caught, the Party will attempt to make them betray each other. He says, "We shall be utterly without power of any kind. The one thing that matters is that we shouldn't betray one another, although even that can't make the slightest difference" (Nineteen Eighty-Four 137). They agree that confession is unavoidable, but true betrayal of their love is impossible. O'Brien, having heard every word that they have ever said to each other, naturally ensures that their mutual betrayal is complete.

Smith's entire life has been a betrayal of sorts. He knows that his work at the Ministry of Truth is pure propaganda—and as Orwell's 1941-42 title reminds us, All Propaganda Is Lies. And yet, notwithstanding Smith's distaste for lies, his "greatest pleasure in life was in his work" (39). His joy does not lie in the propagation of official untruth, however. He derives pleasure from the intricacy and attention to detail that the job requires; if one is to rewrite history, he must cover all of his tracks, and Smith is good with details—or so he thinks. The Party, which has been watching him forever, indulges his need for satisfaction in his work, and the need for satisfaction in one's work is an aspect on which Huxley and Orwell agree.

In the words of George Woodcock, "To remain even mentally healthy [without the introduction of controlled substances such as Huxley's *soma* or Orwell's *Victory Gin*, the reader assumes] a man needs work and 'life has got to be lived largely in terms of effort'" (245).¹ The effort itself is not enough, however. All dystopian heroes eventually get sickened by their work: Winston Smith of Nineteen Eighty-Four, Bernard Marx of Brave New World, D-503 of We, Graham of When the Sleeper Wakes, and Montag of Fahrenheit 451, to name a few. In all of these novels, one's rejection of his work appears to be a necessary indicator of the fundamental desire to change his world.

Although we have seen Orwell's Gordon Comstock decry Huxley's Brave New World, in which one could spend "four hours a day in a model factory" and call it a profession, the work of those in Nineteen Eighty-Four, Brave New World, When the Sleeper Wakes, and We is not remarkably different: the government creates work, and the people do it virtually without complaint. Despite his hatred for Big Brother and his lies, Smith dutifully rewrites history in the Ministry of Truth. This suggests the

¹ Woodcock appears to be quoting Orwell from 1936 but he provides no references.

possibility that as long as a government keeps people busy and takes care of their basic needs, the people will not revolt. Even in Nineteen Eighty-Four, in which basic consumer goods are often in shortage, a relatively contented populace brings Nietzsche's fear of "the last man" into focus. Citizens accept the protection of the state and thus become "last men."

Woodcock's commentary on Nineteen Eighty-Four, while it does not concern itself with Huxley's work, seems to imply that in some sense, the society of Brave New World is becoming a reality: "Already a great deal of American social effort is directed towards providing for leisure activities; leisure, in fact, is becoming a big business, and some of the manifestations of this development have been futile enough to give substance to Orwell's arguments" (246). Orwell and Huxley were both wary of what Woodcock terms "mechanical progress," and their fears are not entirely ill grounded (ibid).

The jury is still out on whether or not we are headed toward the world of Big Brother or of Mustapha Mond. We do not know yet whether modern society will reduce St. Clements to a vague memory of a childhood nursery rhyme, as Orwell proposes, or whether Westminster Abbey will ultimately become a dance hall for all-night raves, as Huxley suggests. In asserting that Westminster Abbey will become a dance club, and that an ecumenical "Arch-Community-Songster of Canterbury" (Brave New World 158) will replace the Archbishop of Canterbury, Huxley appears to thumb his nose at his grandfather's former student, H.G. Wells, who asserts in A Modern Utopia,

[. . .] I who am an Englishman must needs stipulate that Westminster shall still be a seat of world Empire, one of several seats, if you will—where the ruling council of the world assembles. Then the arts will cluster

round this city, as gold gathers about wisdom, and here Englishmen will weave into wonderful prose and beautiful rhythms and subtly atmospheric forms, the intricate, austere and courageous imagination of our race. (243-44)

Aldous Huxley's post-World War cynicism reduces the human imagination and creativity that Wells celebrates to the drugged pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake.

Huxley's "savage" is, other than the elite of the One World State, the only person with a working knowledge of Shakespeare in Brave New World. Orwell's counterpart to Huxley's savage, Winston Smith, remembers only the name "Shakespeare," and celebrates his own individuality only as long as O'Brien and the party let him.

Twentieth-century dystopian novels inevitably suggest that literature—the cornerstone of the free intellect—is a threat to the state. Because of this, the state controls education or eliminates it altogether.

In dystopian literature, the impulse to learn is almost always suppressed or its energies are re-directed by the state. The same may generally be said of the sex urge. In A Modern Utopia, Wells concerns himself with the potential of overpopulation as proposed in Malthus's "Essay on the Principles of Population." Wells states that "State breeding of the population was a reasonable proposal for Plato to make, in view of the biological knowledge of his time and the purely tentative nature of his metaphysics; but from anyone in the days after Darwin, it is preposterous" (182).

Wells suggests that the species advances only so long as people may freely choose their partners, but that "In the initiative of the individual above the average, lies the reality of the future, which the State, presenting the average, may subserve but cannot

control” (A Modern Utopia 183). Huxley again thumbs his nose at his grandfather’s student as his inhabitants of the Brave New World are produced—not bred through human choice and naturally born—and raised under the watchful eye of the “Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning” (15). In Brave New World, humans engage in casual sexual intercourse by using “Malthusian belt[s]” replete with “the regulation supply of contraceptives” (56). In Brave New World, as in Nineteen Eighty-four, everyone is average, if that is the state’s desire.

The challenge to Wells’s assertion of controlled breeding that Huxley proposes is closer to modern fact. People wishing to avoid the creation of life can use birth-control pills or subcutaneously implanted devices to prevent effective ovulation, RU-486 pills to induce abortion, a wide variety of spermicides and natural or chemical barriers to prevent the meeting of egg and sperm, and, of course, abortion itself. Contrarily, for those who wish to create or enhance the living organism, modern laboratories can force conception *in vitro* or *in vivo*, scientists have successfully cloned living beings, stem-cell researchers have reproduced living organs using human tissues, and places such as the United States Military Academy’s “Center for Enhanced Performance” are perceived as making great strides in what is, essentially, the re-programming of the human mind for success. What is happening in the area of human breeding and development today is markedly closer to what Huxley foresees than to what Wells proposes. We are a society that refuses to accept the average, and our desire to mark ourselves as individuals manifests itself in tattooing, needless luxuries, acts of vanity that border on self-mutilation, and all other excesses so nicely wrapped up in the ubiquitous postmodern adjective *extreme*.

Wells asserts,

[. . .] to the modern thinker individuality is the significant fact of life, and the idea of the State, which is necessarily concerned with the average and general, selecting individualities in order to pair them and improve the race, an absurdity. [. . .] but compulsory pairing is one thing, and the maintenance of general limiting conditions is another, and one well within the scope of State activity. (183)

Here, his notion of the population of the future state begins to make sense. The modern totalitarian state relies on “general limiting conditions” to control its population; not even the oppressive government of Nineteen Eighty-Four forced couples together in the name of eugenics, although the Party did maintain that “All marriages between Party members had to be approved by a committee appointed for the purpose” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 57). Nazi Germany’s attempts at “the human stud farm” (A Modern Utopia 182) and its exercises in eugenics and race have been largely discredited, but in modern China we actually can see the government’s attempt to control couples’ production.

Christopher Hitchens notes the irony of the Chinese government’s population control efforts, which have produced a nation of only children in which the political term “brother” has nearly lost its real world cognate (“O, Brother, Why Art Thou?”). China’s economic penalties, levied against couples who produce more than one child, seem mild by comparison to the possible punishments threatened by Wells’s dystopian World State, in which if a couple’s production of children poses harm or hardship to the state, “we will take an absolutely effectual guarantee that neither you nor your partner offend again in this matter” (A Modern Utopia 184).

One shivers to consider the implications of the World State's "absolutely effectual guarantee," and yet we *must* consider it. The idea of chemical castration for sex offenders has been a serious topic of discussion in the United States for quite some time. Some may argue that it is only a matter of time before diminishing resources force governments to assert the controls formerly reserved for criminals against the population at large. This, indeed, is the idea behind modern dystopian films such as Fortress (1993), Gattaca (1997), and Code 46 (2003), in which simple childbirth or undesirable genetic coding can become a crime against the state. Modern fiction must continue to grapple with all aspects of government control over the population, especially the means by which the population renews itself. Gordon Comstock's 1936 view of birth control as a form of "bullying" certainly makes sense if one considers the potential for a state that mandates it, for whatever reasons.

Whereas Wells only lightly touches on the government's capability to intrude on the breeding process in A Modern Utopia, Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four does not need to dabble in population control, for the Party has seen to it that the sex drive is minimized, and the population—probably already weary from poor nutrition and questionable hygiene—has a release for its energy in the form of the Two Minutes Hate and Big Brother worship in general. Orwell discussed the public's outlet of excessive emotion in "The Sporting Spirit" (1945), in which he noted "the lunatic modern habit of identifying oneself with large power units and seeing everything in terms of competitive prestige" (970). Publicly vented aggression and anger are substitutes for the lack of "creative labor" that is typical of industrialized or utopian societies (ibid.).

Given the possible global movement toward either the world of Nineteen Eighty-Four or that of Brave New World, what we *do* know is that the enemies of democracy today do not let their people express themselves through unsanctioned art or sport—all leisure must in some sense serve the state: Afghanistan's Taliban regime banned soccer as something that takes one's energy away from the worship of Allah; the Islamic Republic's leadership viewed Iranians' celebration of their country's 1998 World Cup victory over the United States as "immoral" (Sciolino 253). Similarly, the Party's efforts at controlling the sex drive in Nineteen Eighty-Four center on the notion, as Julia explains to Winston, that "When you make love you're using up energy; and afterwards you feel happy and don't give a damn for anything. They can't bear you to feel like that. They want you to be bursting with energy all the time" (110-11). The totalitarian state's control over the individual becomes perfect when it has a hand in breeding, birth, education, vocation, and artistic or intellectual expression.

Art and sport in the decadent West, however, appear to serve themselves; many Westerners find it hard to believe that a wealthy and talented professional football player such as Pat Tillman would, for purely ideological and patriotic reasons, give up his sporting career—and ultimately his life—in the name of what Orwell called "Common decency" in Homage to Catalonia (47) by joining the Army's Rangers and going to Afghanistan. While free Western nations celebrate the individual—to a fault, perhaps—today's enemies of democracy and freedom appear to insist on the sublimation of self-interest into state interest: hero worship becomes the worship of Allah, the Dear Leader, or their dogmatic beliefs.

Orwell and his contemporaries lived in an age increasingly interested in the capabilities and potentials of the machine. The society of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World so worships modern assembly-line efficiency that it replaces "Lord" with "Ford," having apparently forgotten the existence and function of a spiritual deity. An inhabitant of Brave New World notes a time in which "All crosses had their tops cut and became T's. There was also a thing called God" (58). This shows the world's transition to the worship of machine efficiency as embodied in Ford's mass-production of the Model T. Huxley's society values "Community, Identity, Stability" at the expense of creativity and imagination (15). Huxley's introduction addresses his concern with the rise of machine efficiency. He states:

Indeed, unless we choose to decentralize and to use applied science, not as the end to which human beings are to be made the means, but as the means to producing a race of free individuals, we have only two alternatives to choose from: either a number of national, militarized totalitarianisms, having as their root the terror of the atomic bomb and as their consequence the destruction of civilization (or, if the warfare is limited, the perpetuation of militarism); or else one supranational totalitarianism, called into existence by the social chaos resulting from rapid technological progress in general and the atomic revolution in particular, and developing, under the need for efficiency and stability, into the welfare-tyranny of Utopia. You pays your money and you takes your choice. (13)

Only one "free individual" exists in Brave New World: "the Savage." As noted earlier, he is only one of a few left in the world who knows Shakespeare's works; Huxley's novel

itself, in fact, takes its name from a speech by Shakespeare's Miranda, who is in awe of the beautiful men swept ashore in The Tempest. The beautiful people of Brave New World do not inspire a similar, naïve reaction—youth and beauty are the norm in an age of pure pleasure and superficiality, an age that appears to have forgotten Shakespeare altogether.

Huxley's Savage, like Shakespeare's Caliban, comes from without Western society. Unlike members of the "civilized" world, he is not numbed by easy work, soma, and the endless pursuit of mindless pleasures. Orwell, in fact, had stated in 1946 in "Pleasure Spots" that in addition to "warmth, society, leisure, comfort, and security," man "also needs solitude, creative work, and the sense of wonder [. . .]. For man only stays human by preserving large patches of simplicity in his life while the tendency of many modern inventions [. . .] is to weaken his consciousness, dull his curiosity, and, in general, drive him nearer to the animals" (989). Huxley's Brave New World reflects a similar concern with convenience and ease, which ultimately lead to a virtual dehumanizing process, focusing people on carnal pleasures only, to the detriment of the human intellect. Lenina and Henry take a "*soma*-holiday" as they dance in Westminster Abbey (79), and Lenina insists on ruining Bernard's brief enjoyment of the English Channel—reminiscent of Arnold's "Dover Beach"—by blasting machine-produced music through their helicopter's cabin (89).²

It is interesting that Ray Bradbury's Montag foolishly reads forbidden poetry to his wife's friends in Fahrenheit 451, and "Dover Beach" is the poem that he chooses. The injunction to "be true / To one another!" despite a cold, restless, and changing world

² In his foreword to the recent combined publication of Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited, Christopher Hitchens reminds us that Matthew Arnold was Huxley's maternal uncle (xi).

evokes an emotional response among the women, and to them he becomes “nasty” and “crazy” (101) and almost beastly or savage. Montag tells Mrs. Bowles to “Go home and think of your first husband divorced and your second husband killed in a jet and your third husband blowing his brains out, go home and think of the dozen abortions you’ve had, go home and think of that and your damn Caesarian sections, too, and your children who hate your guts!” (ibid.). This breach of the law precipitates Montag’s eventual flight from the city, and we see that, as in Brave New World, in Fahrenheit 451 the enjoyment of the arts and nature rests only with the savages, strangers to “progress” who live beyond the city’s walls. It is not surprising that Zamyatin, Wells, Huxley, Orwell, Bradbury, and others make it clear that the cities have limits, and that beyond these limits lies humanity’s best chance to survive.

Orwell must have had both Huxley’s Savage and his Brave New World counterpart, Bernard Marx, on his mind when he created Nineteen Eighty-Four’s Winston Smith. Tired of his drab surroundings and the soma-like Victory gin that, courtesy of the Party, appears to be the only readily obtainable and easily affordable consumer good in Oceania, Smith develops the courage to write “DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER” in his diary, and even leaves it open on his table (Nineteen Eighty-Four 19). After this first overt act of rebellion against the Party, Winston goes to sleep and dreams. His dreams take him to an idyllic Golden Country, very much like the unsettled areas in Zamyatin’s We, Huxley’s Brave New World, and Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451. The outer limits of these civilizations serve to contrast utopian progress with a natural state, and as we see in dystopian novels, a character’s rejection of utopia necessitates the urge to destroy it. Before Smith awakens from his dream, he imagines Julia and the way in which she

disrobes: “With its grace and carelessness it seemed to annihilate a whole culture, a whole system of thought, as though Big Brother and the Party and the Thought Police could all be swept into nothingness by a single splendid movement of the arm. That too was a gesture belonging to the ancient time. Winston woke up with the word ‘Shakespeare’ on his lips” (29).

Of all of the possible things to which Orwell could have had Winston Smith wake from his pleasant dream, he chose Shakespeare, the knowledge of whose works is perhaps the only thing Huxley’s *Savage* shares with the Controller in Brave New World. Shakespeare represents the ways of old; he stands for the human world before the rise of mechanization. Shakespeare represents an age before the machine-produced art and music that is so well respected in Brave New World, and made to seem so revolting by Zamyatin’s “phono-lecturer” in We (16):

Simply by turning this handle, any of you can produce up to three sonatas an hour. Yet think how much effort this had cost your forebears! They were able to create only by whipping themselves up to fits of “inspiration” –an unknown form of epilepsy. (17)

Modern readers may assume that Julia’s machine-produced novels in Nineteen Eighty-Four are the first manifestation of the machine age’s encroachment on human creativity. In reality, Huxley’s machine-produced music in Brave New World predates Orwell’s in Nineteen Eighty-Four by seventeen years. Zamyatin’s machine-created music predates Huxley’s by twelve years. Wells is probably the first to write of machine production’s impact on human intelligence and creativity: his “Babble Machines,” like Orwell’s telescreens, “work with counter suggestions in the cause of law and order. We

must keep the grip tight; that is all” (When the Sleeper Wakes 204). When machines can produce utterances on their own, they make humans seem less important, and they devalue human effort and skill. In the postmodern era, popular screenplays such as The Terminator, Asimov’s I, Robot, and the Cold War classic Wargames have advanced this notion with great success.

The life of relative ease that machines make possible thus numbs the human intellect and stifles the imagination. Writing The Road to Wigan Pier in 1937, Orwell noted his concern that “The machine would even encroach upon the activities we now class as ‘art’; it is doing so already, via the camera and the radio. Mechanise the world as fully as it might be mechanised, and whichever way you turn there will be some machine cutting you off from the chance of working—that is, of living” (198). Orwell was not the first to note this trend; writing about technologies that enable reproduction of original work, Marxist critic Walter Benjamin asserted that the machine’s ability to reproduce original works itself had a negative effect on originality in his 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (Appignanesi and Garratt 18).

We know that in addition to Benjamin’s views on art, Huxley’s, Wells’s, and Zamyatin’s ideas on utopia also preceded Orwell’s. Orwell’s vision extends beyond the Babble Machine’s ability to manipulate the masses, though. With machine production, he sees the end of skill: “With the tools and materials available then, there will be no possibility of mistake, hence no room for skill. Making a table will be easier and duller than peeling a potato. In such circumstances it is nonsense to talk of ‘creative work’” (The Road to Wigan Pier 199). Anyone who has ever assembled a prefabricated piece of furniture, be it solid wood from Ikea or laminated particle-board from Wal-Mart, knows

that Orwell is right. If we want quality today, we must either go to the often prohibitively expensive specialty store or to the antique shop. Skill and quality largely seem to have departed our everyday world.

Perhaps an equally disturbing trend that Orwell noticed—as did Wells—was the needless creation of pastimes to fulfill the human need for occasional uncertainty or danger. While Huxley’s citizens of Brave New World were encouraged to engage in elaborate pastimes that require special gear that encourages consumerism, Orwell gave due consideration to the presumption in Wells’s dystopian fiction that

[. . .] qualities such as strength, courage, generosity, etc., will be kept alive because they are comely qualities and necessary attributes of a full human being. Presumably, for instance, the inhabitants of Utopia would create artificial dangers in order to exercise their courage, and do dumb-bell exercises to harden muscles which they would no longer be obliged to use. And here you observe the huge contradiction which is usually present in the idea of progress. (The Road to Wigan Pier 194)

Who could argue that either Huxley *or* Wells is wrong? Our children need special shoes for every activity, and it is “essential” to them that they own their own gear. We buy tap water in bottles that is at least five times as expensive per gallon as the gasoline whose price we complain about frequently. In complaining about water’s price, we fail to remember see that we are usually within feet of a water fountain. We go bungee-jumping and hang-gliding, or we know someone who has, simply for the *thrill* of it. We go to Third-World countries, film television shows with Americans complaining about bugs and humidity, and call the show Survivor. Perhaps worst of all, we have made

theater of human relationships under the constant gaze of a camera and called it Big Brother. The novelists' stomachs would turn.

Zamyatin's D-503 recognizes the harmful effects of the machine when he describes the phono-lecturer's epilepsy as "a sickness of the spirit, pain . . . Slow, sweet pain—a bite—and you want it still deeper, still more painful" (We 17). D-503 clearly recognizes the "Slow, sweet pain" as human passion—a notion long dead to members of the One World State. D-503 engages in illicit sex as his sense of human passion awakens. Zamyatin's One World State and Orwell's Oceania both tolerate human coupling, viewing sexual partners strictly as coequals under the state. When D-503 and I-330 and Winston and Julia come together as loving couples, their sexual liberation is a crime against the state because it eliminates the state's role in the relationship. Consider the two couples' encounters in comparison:

She wore a short, old, vivid yellow dress, a black hat, black stockings.

The dress was of light silk. I could see the stockings, very long, much higher than the knees. And the bare throat, and the shadow between . . .

"Look, you are clearly trying to be original, but don't you . . ."

"Clearly," she interrupted me, "to be original is to be in some way distinct from others. Hence, to be original is to violate equality." (We 28)

* * * * *

The improvement in her appearance was startling. With just a few dabs of color in the right places, she had become not only very much prettier, but, above all, far more feminine. Her short hair and boyish overalls merely

added to the effect. [. . .] “Yes, dear, scent, too. And do you know what I’m going to do next? I’m going to get hold of a real woman’s frock from somewhere and wear it instead of these bloody trousers. I’ll wear silk stockings and high-heeled shoes! In this room I’m going to be a woman, not a Party comrade.” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 118)

Zamyatin’s and Orwell’s main characters recognize human individuality and desire as a necessary component of the sexual act. The authors’ fears of the coming machine age manifest themselves in their subjects’ rejection of passionless sex that leads to the virtual end of the nuclear family, or in the case of Nineteen Eighty-Four, the end of family loyalty but not the family itself, which is too valuable as a mechanism of the state’s elaborate network of spies.

Zamyatin’s We also highlights the disappearance of the individual with the assignation of numbers to people instead of proper names, and Orwell’s Winston Smith is similarly known to the telescreen as “6079 Smith W” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 34). Smith dedicates his diary “to the future or to the past, to a time when thought is free, when men are different from one another and do not live alone—to a time when truth exists and what is done cannot be undone” (27). Again, we see the government’s elimination of individuality as the most dangerous threat to humanity, and this is Orwell’s warning to us about the centrally planned state.

Zamyatin’s D-503 lives in a world in which humans are “The Infinitesimal of the Third Order” (We 107), and the occupants of Huxley’s Brave New World, in which human beings come from hatcheries, cannot conceptualize “what ‘living with one’s family’ meant” (42). What is truly haunting about these stories is that they build

nightmare worlds, the power structures of which are reinforced by Big Brother-like governments, under which—as in our world, Hitchens notes in his “Foreword” to Huxley’s work—“Sex has been divorced from procreation to a degree hard to imagine” (vii). Orwell, it is again worth noting, was against birth control in any form.

As different as the dystopian societies of Wells, Zamyatin, Huxley, and Orwell may seem, they are remarkably similar in that whoever is in control seeks to control human behavior through the regulation or even the elimination of passions and, thus, of individuality. The central powers in We and Nineteen Eighty-Four both seem to agree that humans will largely submit their freedoms to the state in exchange for its protection. The modern world and its governments are, in a sense, Hobbes’s Leviathan gone bad. Zamyatin’s D-503 writes of “the instinct of unfreedom [that] is organically inherent in man from time immemorial” (We 4). Winston Smith works in the Ministry of Truth, which exists to reinforce The Party’s three slogans: “WAR IS PEACE / FREEDOM IS SLAVERY / IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 26). These slogans show the influence of Huxley’s “unfreedom.”

Winston Smith lives in a world that George Bowling foresees in Orwell’s 1939 work, Coming Up for Air. Bowling is revolted by a fake-tasting sausage, made possible by the Nazi regime’s development of “Ersatz, they call it” (27). The Germans developed Ersatz foods to fulfill—however poorly—consumer demands as the country diverted more and more natural resources into the war industry instead of into the grocery markets. Bowling sees the products, and the people who produce them, as “streamlined.” Upon biting the sausage, he states

It gave me the feeling that I’d bitten into the modern world and discovered

what it was really made of. That's the way we're going nowadays. Everything's slick and streamlined, everything made out of something else. Celluloid, rubber, chromium-steel everywhere, arc-lamps blazing all night, glass roofs over your head, radios all playing the same tune, no vegetation left, everything cemented over, mock-turtles grazing under the neutral fruit-trees. (Coming Up for Air 27-28)

In his search for something pure, where there *is* still vegetation left, Bowling goes to the place of his youth, Lower Binfield. Before he arrives to find that the perfect fishing hole of his youth is a rubbish heap, he muses that “The very idea of sitting all day under a willow tree beside a quiet pool—and being able to find a quiet pool to sit beside—belongs to the time before the war, before the radio, before aeroplanes, before Hitler” (87). Hitler and his Master Race are for Bowling, and thus for Orwell, the frontrunners in the race to streamline the world. If they succeed, Bowling suggests, the world itself becomes a rubbish heap.

What Bowling looks for and does not find is exactly what Winston Smith discovers in what he thinks of as “the Golden Country” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 103). Smith dreams of “a stream with green pools where dace were swimming” (*ibid.*), and Bowling similarly dreams of “The great fish [that] were gliding round in the pool behind Binfield House. Nobody knew about them except me; they were stored away in my mind” (Coming Up for Air 94). Both men hold a fondness for a natural country they once knew, untainted by human influence. Bowling's fishing hole is a dump when he returns to it, however, and the Party, as it turns out, has bugged Smith's “Golden Country,” recording his and Julia's every sin. Approximately one year after Orwell published Nineteen Eighty-four, Ray

Bradbury wrote a similar passage, joining Zamyatin, Huxley, Wells, and Orwell in describing the remembered pastoral ideal which is never to return to modern man:

[Montag] remembered a farm he had visited when he was very young, one of the rare few times he discovered that somewhere behind the seven veils of unreality, beyond the walls of parlors and beyond the tin moat of the city, cows chewed grass and pigs sat in warm ponds at noon and dogs barked after white sheep on a hill. (Fahrenheit 451 142)

Lecturing on the human tendency to romanticize the natural is not Orwell's main message, however. As Bowling considers the changes he has seen in his lifetime, one thing that strikes him is our tendency to shy away from death as technology distances us from each other. During his walk, Bowling considers the arrangements and ways of life in old country villages:

[. . .] the churchyard was bang in the middle of the town, so that you never went a day without remembering how you'd got to end. And yet what was it that people had in those days? A feeling of security, even when they weren't secure. More exactly, it was a feeling of continuity. All of them knew they'd got to die [. . .] Whatever might happen to themselves, things would go on as they'd known them. (125)

Bowling's fond reminiscences of a simpler time, with the churchyard as a central figure in town life, do not necessarily reflect a fondness for religion. Bowling himself says, "I don't believe it made very much difference that what's called religious belief was still prevalent in those days" (125). His true fondness is for the necessary connection of the people to the land, and D.J. Taylor notes that "The Blairs, by the time Eric arrived among

them, were casualties of a distinctive shift in early nineteenth-century English social history: the flight from the land” (13). Orwell’s generation had seen the family’s slow movement away from ancestral grounds with family plots in nearby cemeteries.

Bowling’s lament over the corruption of Upper Binfield appears also to be Orwell’s lament over the decline of humanity in an age of “streamlined people.” Orwell’s account of the country churchyard, through Bowling, seems to reflect Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village,” which focuses on his “regretting the depopulation of the country,” in which he “inveigh[s] against the increase of cur luxuries; and here also [. . .] expect[s] the shout of modern politicians against [him]” (“To Sir Joshua Reynolds” 1252). A world without reminders of mortality, Orwell and Goldsmith both suggest, leads to a world in which humans forget their humanity.

Smith’s arrest in Nineteen Eighty-Four directly follows his assertion to Julia, “We are the dead” (182). The crowning act of his becoming human lies with his recognition that he is not truly alive; he has forgotten his humanity and therefore has not lived. George Bowling in Coming Up for Air makes a similar assertion about an intellectual who pays no attention to the threats of modernity: “HE’S DEAD. He’s a ghost. All people like that are dead. [. . .] Perhaps a man really dies when his brain stops, when he loses the power to take in a new idea” (188).

Walking through the West Point cemetery with a visiting friend in late December 2005, I pointed out the stones that had been reserved for the living. She remarked on the care being taken of the yard, adding that in her hometown in Germany, families are required to maintain their own plots monthly, “So that for your whole life you are caring for where you’ll be when you’re dead” (Buchanan). As she spoke, I could not help

recalling Bowling's return to Lower Binfield in Coming up for Air. My friend's words very closely resembled Bowling's continuing thoughts: "We had our churchyard plumb in the middle of the town, you passed it every day, you saw the spot where your grandfather was lying and where some day you were going to lie yourself" (Coming Up for Air 213). Such traditions and the sense of security and "continuity" they provide are slowly disappearing from the earth, and Orwell lamented their passing as he witnessed it.

Orwell's works paint a curious picture of an ever-changing world. In Coming Up for Air, we have the notion that modern science and its attendant conveniences threaten human society as a whole by distancing people from each other and from the land. As Bowling ponders men's separation from each other and from the land, he witnesses an RAF practice bombing run gone awry. This adds to his disgust, and emphasizes what the author says in his review of Wells's '42 to '44: A Contemporary Memoir upon Human Behaviour During the Crisis of the World Revolution: "The machine culture thrives on bombs" (607).

One of his main criticisms of H.G. Wells, in fact, lies in the recognition that Wells puts too much faith in technology's ability to improve human life. In "Wells, Hitler and the World State," Orwell says,

But unfortunately the equation of science with common sense does not really hold good. The aeroplane, which was looked forward to as a civilizing influence but in practice has hardly been used except for dropping bombs, is the symbol of that fact. Modern Germany is far more scientific than England, and far more barbarous. Much of what Wells has imagined and worked for is physically there in Nazi Germany. (371)

This assertion, fearful of technology and science, appears to make Orwell “seem less contemporary” today (Hitchens 17 Mar. 2006). However, it also reflects a healthy fear of the potential uses for such technologies in the wrong hands. Orwell uses Nineteen Eighty-Four to show us an extreme example of the dire possibilities for humanity if George Bowling’s “streamlined people” should ever take charge.

We see the effect of human detachment when utopians are exposed to the carnage of war. Huxley’s “streamlined people” in Brave New World have forgotten the horrors of the Nine Years’ War, which has been reduced to the memory of a chemical weapon formula and the vision of “some bits of flesh and mucus, a foot, with the boot still on it, flying through the air and landing, flop, in the middle of the geraniums—the scarlet ones; such a splendid show that summer!” (Brave New World 53).

The thinker’s jump from gore to pleasure within the same sentence reflects the sense of detachment inherent in the machine age. Winston Smith in a similar situation views a “bloody stump, the hand was so completely whitened as to resemble a plaster cast. He kicked the thing into the gutter” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 72). This, Orwell suggests, is one of the roads that we may choose to travel with the planned economy and the centralized state. In such a society, the sense of human suffering is lost amid complacency and self-concern. It does not present a promising future for humankind.

Chapter 5: “The Axis of Evil” – Iran, Iraq, and North Korea

It would be folly to assert that Orwell was always right. Chapter Six will explore the several ways in which he was not, but he was, if anything, fair. He said of Hitler, “I would certainly kill him if I could get within reach of him,” and yet he admitted that he could not hate him (“Review of Mein Kampf” 251). As US and Allied death tolls mount in Iraq and Afghanistan, we should consider why our enemies are in fact our enemies, and we should be as fair with them as Orwell was with Hitler. If we can get beyond simple hatred for our enemies, perhaps we can understand what makes them so.

Orwell states in “Notes on the Way” (1940) that “Hitler is only the ghost of our own past rising against us” (255). His assertion is that pacifists and appeasement supporters of the 1930s created the Führer whom the Allies would have had to defeat in the next decade. Although Bush’s speechwriters were most probably referring to Mark 12:30 in the President’s post-9/11 war on terrorism speech—“He that is not with me is against me” (KJV)—his words are strikingly close to what Orwell was saying about fascism in early 1940: “When war has started there is no such thing as neutrality. All activities are war activities. Whether you want to or not, you are obliged to help either your own side or the enemy. The Pacifists, Communists, Fascists, etc., are at this moment helping Hitler” (255). His essays through the mid-1940s showed a slight turning away from politics while his country was fighting the Axis powers.

Orwell’s pro-war logic, which made sense in the 1940s, makes just as much sense today. Fittingly enough, Bush’s titling of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as the “Axis of Evil” hearkens back to the foes of Orwell’s time. The Allies’ failure to defeat Germany and Japan early is reflected in the West’s failure to deal with the Kim and Hussein

regimes that led to the current state of the world today. The failures of appeasement and negotiation in attempts to avoid small wars lead, in fact, to bigger and more costly wars. Orwell knew this; his Left saw it in the 1930s, and leftists such as Christopher Hitchens see it today: fascism means war.

Currently, Iran's leader wants to wipe Israel from the map. Iraq is mired in what appears to be civil war to fill the vacuum left by Hussein's Ba'ath regime, and many think that Iran's mullahs have something to do with the unrest in Iraq. North Korea flaunts its potential for nuclear weapons as it faces massive starvation and economic failure. At different times and in different places, the West has had the chance to end these problems through prompt and overwhelming military action. Looking back, we may be tempted to ask why we simply didn't fix these situations before they became the bigger problems of today. We can almost imagine Orwell looking back with us, nodding his silent agreement.

I do not intend to suggest that Orwell would have been behind a US-led military occupation of Iraq, but I will mention that in "The Lion and the Unicorn" he recommended revolution—violent, if it need be—when "a fundamental shift in power" is needed (323). Rather than call for a Coalition invasion in 2003, I believe that Orwell would have publicly questioned why the West did not back an Iraqi rebellion that Kanan Makiya recalls from 28 February 1991: a tank commander from the defeated Iraqi army had the courage to blast Hussein's image off of a building in Basra while the people stormed Ba'ath headquarters there (Cruelty and Silence 59-60). This mini-revolution failed, though, and what followed was indeed the "horror of peace" that Christopher Hitchens describes (17 Mar. 2006). When we consider that the French could have

defeated Hitler in 1939 and the Allies could have killed or captured Hussein in 1991, we see that we repeat old mistakes despite our knowledge that old mistakes are repeatable.

One needs not read too many of Orwell's personal essays to gather that he was convinced of the correctness of his own views. He had, after all, abandoned his lucrative post in imperial Burma, suffered rejection by his own family and friends, and even the rejection of the Left as he pursued what he honestly believed to be the only decent thing: to stand up to despotism and the exploitation of the masses. He had even taken a bullet through the neck in Spain as payment for his convictions. Despite his own hardship and suffering, he persisted in believing that a man cannot simply accept world events because he himself cannot change them. Writing of Henry Miller's indifference to politics during World War Two, he noted,

To simply say "I accept" in an age like our own is to say that you accept concentration-camps, rubber truncheons, Hitler, Stalin, bombs, aeroplanes, tinned food, machine-guns, putsches, purges, slogans, Bedaux belts, gas-masks, submarines, spies, provocateurs, press-censorship, secret prisons, aspirins, Hollywood films and political murders. Not *only* those things, of course, but those things among others. ("Inside the Whale" 219)

In October 2006, my local newspaper headline read "N. Korea claims nuclear test" (Faiola). Some half-century after the "Cold War" turned hot on the Korean peninsula, the United States continues to lead the free world in opposition to despotism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, often with great opposition—or at least reticence—from its Western allies. In many ways, President George W. Bush's use of the military against Hussein and the Taliban resembles the type of action that Orwell saw

as necessary against the fascist regimes of the 1930s. Were he alive today, Orwell would doubtlessly watch with great interest as Iraq struggles toward representative government, Iran attempts to become a world power, Afghan poppy farmers struggle with the suppression and resurgence of the Taliban, and North Korea tests its missiles, even as it teeters on the brink of economic implosion.

Orwell matters just as much today as he did in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s because a basic truth about men and power persists: bad people attempt to prosper at the expense of the common. The prevention of bad people from prospering is certainly one of President Bush's motivations for pursuing his military strategy, and yet his opponents, both foreign and domestic, often categorize Bush himself as one such man. The battle lines are clearly drawn: either one believes the biggest threats to world peace and prosperity include Iran, North Korea, and the former regime in Iraq, or one does not. Orwell, for reasons we shall discuss, would most likely have agreed that these three states hold—or recently held—a place in the “Axis of Evil.” He may not have agreed with the US-led approach to fixing the problem, but he would have agreed that there is indeed a problem in what President Bush has named the “Axis of Evil.”

Because his political views were so lucid respecting the nature of the totalitarian state, Orwell's work has been banned in many places. Yet, according to John Rodden, the Andropov regime actually “exempted the West's prize Cold Warrior from blame. In fact, Soviet leaders even approved the publication of a limited edition of Nineteen Eighty-Four. (Copies were carefully restricted to the Party elite.)” (32). That an author's work faces a blanket ban under any regime is a testament to the fact that it contains some painful truths about governments and power: when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, John

Rodden interviewed East Germans who “recalled their astonishment that an Englishman who had never lived under a dictatorship could describe with such accuracy the regime of terror that they had experienced as young people in rebellion against the state” (56-57). It is fair to assume that the East German reception of Orwell’s dystopian vision is not unique, and perhaps his ideas are worth considering with respect to some of the world’s other troubled nations.

Iran: The Resurgent Islamic Republic

One may wonder what Orwell would think of Iran’s current desire to develop nuclear technology. He made it clear in “You and the Atom Bomb” that weapons of mass destruction, with their relative scarcity and often prohibitively high cost, do not necessarily further the cause of national self-determination. What he meant, of course, is that inexpensive and easily procured weapons were once crucial in maintaining a balance of power among governments, the people they govern, and the people whom they threaten. We should remember his statement that “ages in which the dominant weapon is expensive or difficult to make will tend to be ages of despotism” (“You and the Atom Bomb” 904). Thus, Iran’s desire for nuclear technology reflects an understandable—yet not totally logical—desire to resist the West by acquiring nuclear weapons, the great equalizers. On the other hand, if the obtaining of a nuclear bomb should somehow become easy for a nation, then we find ourselves in what Orwell called “the worst possibility of all,” resulting in an everlasting, tenuous peace in which “Civilizations of this type might remain static for thousands of years” (“Toward European Unity” 1242).

Are the Iranians what Orwell refers to as “the common people,” though? Elaine Sciolino of The New York Times states that “the Islamic Republic is faced with a choice: reinvent itself or face the wrath of its population. Amid prayer and sacrifice and praise for martyrdom, there is a yearning, indeed a demand, for Roman candles and picnics” (Persian Mirrors 67). Such people sound “common” enough. Of course, Sciolino was writing at the height of then-President Mohammed-Reza Khatami’s power, when the elected Iranian government appeared to represent the people’s desire for progressive reform.

Since then, the Islamic Republic has indeed “reinvented itself” with its new President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who sides with Iran’s Islamic hard-liners. Unlike Khatami, Ahmadinejad does not want to liberalize the country. Written in 2000, Sciolino’s “Rule Nine” in Persian Mirrors states, “A time bomb is ticking and it has nothing to do with explosives” (39). One now wonders *just what* the nature of this time bomb is. When Sciolino was writing, Khatami was enjoying his re-election. Things are different now, with the resumption of the Iranian nuclear program and Ahmadinejad’s frequent and unmistakable promises to end Israel.

Like Orwell, Ahmadinejad presents himself as a man of the people with “unkempt hair and downscale dress” (“Ahmadinejad getting the last laugh”). Such a description is reminiscent of Orwell’s appearance, recalled by Jack Common as “the real thing: outcast, gifted pauper, kicker against authority, perhaps near-criminal” (qtd. in Shelden 136). This is not where the similarity ends, though. Orwell declared in 1946 that “The two or three great States that really matter have never even pretended to agree to any of [the United Nations’] conditions, and they have so arranged the constitution of U.N.O. that

their own actions cannot even be discussed” (“In Front of Your Nose” 1042).

Ahmadinejad and Orwell appear to see eye-to-eye on the issue of the highest-ranked world powers. Not only does Ahmadinejad, like Orwell, “[emphasize] social justice,” but he openly “attack[s] the current world order, dismissing the United Nations as ‘one-sided, stacked against the world of Islam’” (“Ahmadinejad getting the last laugh”).

Ahmadinejad presents Iran’s nuclear program “under the cover of a peaceful energy program” (ibid.) and has become a hero to his own people for his refusal to accept what Orwell called “the increasing helplessness of small countries against big ones” (“James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution” 1068).

When Ahmadinejad defeated the moderate Rafsanjani in 2005, one Iranian commented to The New Yorker’s Laura Secor that “Those in power have many serious struggles ahead. Thirty million Iranians didn’t vote for Ahmadinejad” (74). Now, it seems, the more Ahmadinejad stands up to the West, the fewer “serious struggles” he has with the acceptance of his own countrymen. In rallying the country around two great issues, national energy resources and Zionism, he has united his own country in a way similar to Hitler’s methods in Germany in the 1930s.

To defend his stance, Ahmadinejad makes the case that Israel, Pakistan, and India have nuclear programs. Of course, he would not be as quick to admit that these countries—unlike his own—never took over a US Embassy—an action in which he has been cited as a possible participant. The true question that we should be concerned with is whether Iran can be trusted to use nuclear technology safely. During the Cold War, the notion of “Mutually Assured Destruction” kept the United States and the Soviet Union from ever engaging in direct hostilities (Parrington); instead, the United States and the

Soviet Union engaged each other vicariously in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Sometimes, the engagements were not exactly vicarious. One wonders if a nuclear-capable Iran will lead us back to the days of mutually assured destruction, a potential conflict that manifests itself in the smaller, containable wars that Orwell foresaw in “You and the Atom Bomb” and depicted in Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Iranian procurement of nuclear technology may lead to another 1950s-style deterrence scenario between Shi’ite Islam and the West. The danger of a nuclear Iran rests not so much in the regime’s desire to procure and use nuclear missiles, but rather in the potential instability of the regime: No state is perfect; some are more imperfect than others. If Iran—or any other rogue state for that matter—develops nuclear arms, we may find ourselves back in the “eternal, horrible stability” (Hitchens 17 Mar. 06) of another cold war, giving us a “peace that is no peace” (Orwell “You and the Atom Bomb” 906).

Orwell did not have to see the end of the Second World War to foretell the terrible possibilities of the peace that would follow. As early as 1939, his character George Bowling stated, “I’m not frightened of the war, only of the after-war” and “when I say peace I don’t mean absence of war, I mean peace, a feeling in your guts. And it’s gone for ever if the rubber truncheon boys get hold of us” (Coming Up for Air 195). It is possible that if Islamic extremism prospers today, the rubber truncheons of the 1930s could be replaced by car bombs, hijacked airplanes, public beheadings, and the switching of women’s bare legs in public—or worse.

In addition to the potential instability of the regime, another reason to be wary of Iran is its constant celebration of martyrdom. During the Iran-Iraq war, Iran made effective use of “martyrs” in combating a technologically superior state. At some point, the cult of

the martyr can be turned against the state, however. This is something of which Orwell was acutely aware, and he explored it through the Party in Nineteen Eighty-Four.

O'Brien's Party goes beyond the desire to control people; rather, it desires to control their very thoughts—it desires to “make the brain perfect before we blow it out” (210). Orwell recognized that one's willingness to sacrifice himself in a fight against the state was a legitimate source of fear for those in power, and it is one that can easily be harnessed.

The state's fear of its own people is prevalent in several places today. Kanan Makiya details the Hussein family's paranoia, Armstrong and Eberhardt discuss the Kim regime's graft and fear of its own people, and Timperlake and Triplett discuss the Chinese Communist Party elite's fears of the common people. The descriptions are similar: “They know they are hated by the [. . .] people and retribution is certainly likely” (Timperlake and Triplett 79). Ahmadinejad's fixation on Zionism thus appears to be an act of self-preservation; he skillfully turns the martyr's eyes outside the country, whereas under Khatami, all eyes looked toward internal change. Unlike Orwell's Oceania, Iran's government has been able to cast martyrs as its heroes and not as its biggest threat. Ahmadinejad has vilified the West to great effect.

In Iraq and Afghanistan today, we learn the dangers of the self-sacrificing rebel every time that a suicide bomber performs his mission successfully. Orwell did not necessarily foresee suicide bombs in the Middle East, though. What he proposed were possibilities or probabilities—conclusions drawn from a trend he saw and extended beyond his own life expectancy into the arbitrary year 1984. Orwell is no Delphic oracle; his work simply shows us the dangers of tyranny and the human response to it.

Unlike Ahmadinejad, who appears to require religious zeal to cement his power, Orwell seems to have killed off religion in Nineteen Eighty-Four because he saw raw power and hatred as the new world religion. We considered Orwell's use of Winston Smith as Nietzsche's "last man" in the previous chapter, but we should consider here that Orwell not only was building on Nietzsche's idea of the end of history, but also on his assertion that God is dead. Orwell took the Marxist idea that religion is a means of controlling the masses and turned Big Brother into God: the head of state's status as God is the ultimate totalitarian triumph.

Orwell had seen Hitler and Stalin come close to becoming gods in their own right, and he showed us the potential of totalitarianism by allowing Big Brother to attain an omniscience and omnipresence that Stalin and Hitler only dreamed of. With respect to Iran, Islam's restriction against the veneration—and even the depiction—of a human being does not allow Ahmadinejad to attain the godlike status that Kim Jong Il has inherited from his father. What we have with Ahmadinejad is more of a John the Baptist figure: a voice in the desert and a prophet. Orwell certainly did not foresee the influence of religion in politics today, although he did claim that religious beliefs can be "objects of passionate nationalistic feeling" despite the fact that "their existence can be seriously questioned" ("Notes on Nationalism" 866).

Orwell's failure to engage with religion drew criticism from Evelyn Waugh, who took issue with Orwell's omission of God from Nineteen Eighty-Four. In a letter to the author dated 17 July 1949, Waugh wrote:

But what makes your version spurious to me is the disappearance of the Church. I wrote of you once that you seemed unaware of its existence

now when it is everywhere manifest. Disregard all the supernatural implications if you like, but you must admit its unique character as a social & historical institution. I believe it is inextinguishable, though of course it can be extinguished in a certain place for a certain time. Even that is rarer than you might think. The descendants of Xavier's converts in Japan kept their faith going for three hundred years and were found saying "Ave Marias" & "Pater Nosters" when the country was opened in the last century.

The "inextinguishable" belief in God of which Waugh wrote is indeed conspicuously absent in Orwell's works. The closest he gets is the proles' maintenance of an "inextinguishable" humanity, which Smith admires time and again in Nineteen Eighty-Four. Indeed, with the rise of Marxist Socialism and Communism in certain parts of the world after World War Two, there appeared to be a similar decline in interest in God in the West. In "Such, Such Were the Joys" Orwell wrote that "Religious belief [. . .] has largely vanished, dragging other kinds of nonsense after it" (1329). One could indeed say that by 2001 the developed world had largely been secularized, but when two jets roared into the Twin Towers on live international television on 11 September, God roared back onto the Western world's stage.

In this sense, the once-secularizing world has taken a turn that not even Orwell could have predicted. Yet, the Islamic fundamentalist struggle is essentially a struggle against a Western approach to international relations frequently associated with colonialism and imperialism. The nationalist feelings behind the pan-Islamic movement that contributed to the rise of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq in the 1960s now fuel Iranian nationalism in the

twenty-first century. The fable of Islamic unity and Arab brotherhood that props regimes up today is convenient for nationalistic purposes. Although Orwell discounted religion on the whole, he quite correctly saw it as a source of natural passion and therefore as a means to national unity. This much, at least, Orwell sees clearly in his “Notes on Nationalism”: “To name a few obvious examples, Jewry, Islam, Christendom, the Proletariat and the White Race are all of them the objects of passionate nationalistic feeling; but their existence can be seriously questioned, and there is no definition of any one of them that would be universally accepted” (866). This observation is particularly poignant in the Middle East today, where the Sunni and Shi’a sects are not only at war with each other but among themselves, as well.

Unlike patriotism, which is a simple “devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life,” nationalism is based on a similar belief that seeks to “force [it] upon other people” (866). Orwell had seen the British nationalism fueling imperialism when he was stationed in Burma, commenting, “The Indian Empire is a despotism—benevolent, no doubt, but still a despotism with theft as its final object” (Burmese Days 60). With respect to Islamic fundamentalism and its threat to our way of life, we must remember Orwell’s accusation that the old British despotism was “benevolent.” We cannot say the same of the revolutionary Islamic struggle as embodied in Al Qaeda’s and the Taliban’s approaches, which kill the innocent in order to defeat what they perceive to be godlessness or injustice.

Mortimer Adler wrote that “The modern culture will be achieved only when all the goodness of science can be praised without losing any of the goodness in philosophy and religion, only when the truths of philosophy and religion can be integrally retained

without losing any of the true advances in knowledge” (qtd. in Noyes 165). In complete contradistinction to Adler’s desire for the union of good science and religion, Orwell’s fearful comments on nationalism, the cult of personality, the telescreen, the atom bomb, and ersatz foods suggest that religion is irrelevant and that science is potentially harmful. The Iranian claim to seek nuclear technology for peaceful ends would not hold water for Orwell.

No one living in a post-9/11 world can make the case that religion is irrelevant. He may argue that it is harmful, but it is most certainly not irrelevant. Religion gave early societies rules and a sense of accountability that modern central governments have assumed relatively recently in human history. In this sense, religion appears to have lost its relevance, and perhaps that is what Orwell meant when he stated that he saw religion on the decline. When modern governments claim their foundation upon religion, however, God suddenly becomes important again.

Science gave us the atom bomb after it gave us central heating and the efficiencies of mechanization, and religion initially gave us rules based on common decency. Orwell never truly accepted the values of central heating, the atom bomb, or the church, though. He did not believe that religion was a prerequisite for the maintenance of decency, either. In fact, he saw the Catholic church as a hindrance to socialist progress: “if it is allowed to survive as a powerful organization, it will make the establishment of true socialism impossible, because its influence is and always must be against freedom of thought and speech, against human equality, and against any form of society tending to promote earthly happiness” (“Toward European Unity” 1245-46).

The variety of Islam that exists in Iran is certainly not the flavor of Islam preached by the Taliban and Al Qaeda, but as long as an Islamist regime exists in any country, we must know the potential directions of its growth. Although the Iranians have a democratic heritage, their current state is based on Ayatollah Khomeini's "*Velayat-e faghih*,¹ or 'rule of the Islamic jurist'" (Sciolino 60), which ushered in a new age of politics and religion. Under the Iranian Islamic system, the country becomes "property and children of the leaders" (Hitchens 17 Mar. 2006). The Iranian push to develop nuclear technology represents, in Orwell's view one may say, the worst possible potentials of religion and science: government control of the individual's mind *and* the means of massive destruction.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution was successful because it was initially a people's revolution that Orwell might have supported despite his distaste for religion. It may not have needed to occur, had Mossadegh's CIA-backed ousting in 1953 never happened, and I must add here that Mossadegh, with his move to nationalize Iranian oil, would certainly have gained Orwell's favor had he lived beyond 1950. At any rate, the successful 1979 revolution ousted the Shah, who wasted money and courted the secular West, angering liberals and conservatives, secular and the religious alike. What the people got shortly thereafter was a totalitarian regime that attempted to turn the clock back to the Middle Ages and refused to negotiate a treaty with a willing Iraq in the early 1980s because it saw the Iran-Iraq war as beneficial to its own power. Marjane Satrapi writes in Persepolis that the government of Iran "eventually admitted that the survival of the regime depended on the war [with Iraq]" (116). Today, the Ayatollah's regime is still in place, and it is on the road to being a nuclear power. Weapons of mass destruction are

¹ Sciolino prefers *faghih* to the more common *faquih*.

dangerous enough of themselves, but they are even more so in the hands of a government that will use them to keep itself in power despite a popular domestic desire to the contrary.

If Iran *should* develop nuclear arms, we may find ourselves back in the days of nuclear deterrence. Sidney Drell writes, “We label the nuclear standoff anticipated by Orwell as nuclear deterrence. We recognize that any nation initiating a nuclear war may be literally committing suicide” (34). What is troubling is that the Middle East is home to some who have no problem with committing suicide, given that it passes as jihad. When theocracies and lunatic tyrannies attempt to obtain nuclear arms, no one is safe.

Korea: The Last True Totalitarian State

With respect to dangerous and unstable governments, we face the irreligious as well as the religious today. While Iran represents the resurgence of the religious state, Korea represents the last of a dying breed: the godless Communist state. Kim Jong Il’s regime, like that of the advanced totalitarian system in Nineteen Eighty-Four seeks omnipotence. Charles Armstrong points out that in North Korea

[. . .] the state does not substitute for the working class, but rather for the exploiting class. The state then creates the working class, which is politically and economically dependent on the state and its officials. Coercion alone is not sufficient to maintain the authority of the state over a long period of time; industrialization, linked to the threat of military aggression from abroad, is a major rationale for the continued dominance of the state over society. (The North Korean Revolution: 1949-1950 137)

This image of Korea certainly sounds like Orwell's Oceania. Both societies use "siege mentality as a defensive focus of unity against the constant threat of imperialist subversion" (225). Both find stability in "a stable state of permanent crisis, an institutionalized, continuous emergency" (ibid.).

It does not take great imagination to understand why Orwell's work does not exist in North Korea. He appears to have foreseen the North Korean state's approach to information management when he wrote, "Indifference to objective truth is encouraged by the sealing-off of one part of the world from another, which makes it harder and harder to discover what is actually happening" ("Notes on Nationalism" 874). Composed before the actual formation of the Kim regime, Nineteen Eighty-Four serves as a sort of blueprint for the type of Stalinist totalitarianism that survives there.

Although one regime eschews religion while another embraces religion to its own advantage, North Korea and Iran do have a tie that binds them: hatred of the West and the perception that the West prospers at the expense of others. Orwell argued that the totalitarian state, of which North Korea is a textbook example, is "in effect a theocracy" because of its reliance on the infallibility of its leader, be he God or other ("The Prevention of Literature" 935). This mutual distrust of the West has made North Korea trading partners with its Axis counterpart, Iran. Timperlake and Triplett explain the elaborate system of trade among North Korea, Iran, China, and others that has resulted in the disturbing rise of missile programs in Asia: "The Iranian missile test-fired, known as the Shehab 3, seems to have been produced with assistance from China, North Korea, and Russia. It can reach all of the Middle East, making U.S. forces in the region vulnerable to a ballistic missile attack" (105). On 4-5 July 2006, North Korea fired several

Taepodong II missiles, proving to the world that North Korea, like Iran, can make the West as wary of it as it is of the West.

While Coalition forces have not discovered North Korean weapons in the Iran-Iraq-Afghanistan region to substantiate the collusion of North Korea with terrorist-friendly states, the known relationship between North Korea and Iran goes back at least as far as 1992, when on March 6 the United States sanctioned North Korea for “giving missile technology to Iran and Syria” (Eberstadt 87). At a minimum, this shows North Korea to have been indiscriminate in its sales of high-tech weaponry. In Orwell’s eyes, though, the two states are not only trading partners, but are also fairly well ideologically matched in their sense of seclusion and their “indifference to objective truth” (“Notes on Nationalism” 874).

Strangely enough, the weapons-related ties between North Korea and Iran intersect with the third member of the Axis of Evil: Iraq. Eberstadt reports that total North Korean arms exports generated “almost \$4 billion [. . .] principally to Iran for its war against Iraq” (106). Western support of Iraq most likely made it easier for North Korea to sell arms to Iraq’s foe, Iran. By the end of the Iran-Iraq War, which roughly coincided with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the stemming of Soviet aid to other Communist countries, North Korean arms exports dropped to around \$50 million (ibid.). We should recall that during the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq was importing a great portion of its arms and related supplies from the West. Thus, in a way, Western foreign policy has influenced the perpetuation of the North Korean regime.

In fact, the very existence of the two regimes on the Korean peninsula stems from the August 1945 US-Soviet partitioning of Korea along the thirty-eighth parallel, “Initially

envisioned as a convenient arrangement to expedite the processing of an impending Japanese surrender” (Eberstadt 25). A similar division into zones of influence was being made in Germany and Eastern Europe, as well. Orwell recognized that these demarcations were actually battle lines for what he was the first to define as “a permanent state of ‘cold war’” (“You and the Atom Bomb” 906). These lines remained in place between the East and the West, if by nothing else, then by their temporary inaction between the end of World War Two and the North Korean crossing of the 38th parallel in June 1950.

President Bush’s “Axis of Evil” label for Iran, Iraq, and North Korea attempts to justify armed intervention in three countries whose existence has been defined by the imperialism Orwell grew to hate while he was stationed in Burma in the 1920s. He would certainly not be surprised to learn that these “evil” regimes have made it a national priority to develop nuclear capabilities, for he clearly proposed that “really this is the likeliest development—that the surviving great nations make a tacit agreement never to use the atomic bomb against one another,” but rather “only use it, or the threat of it, against people who are unable to retaliate” (“You and the Atom Bomb” 905). The seeking of weapons of mass destruction by Iran, Iraq, and North Korea simply represents an attempt to establish a Cold War stalemate, “prolonging indefinitely a ‘peace that is no peace’” (907).

Orwell’s fear of the widespread proliferation of nuclear arms, which dates back to the mid-1940s, is very much alive today, and if the “Axis of Evil” is allowed to develop these technologies, then we might again find ourselves living under what Christopher Hitchens calls “the threat of peace” (17 Mar. 2006). As with Japan, Spain, Italy, and Germany in

the 1930s, when peace under tyrants is the alternative, war may in fact be the only option for ensuring a true, lasting peace, as doublespeak-ish as the notion may seem. As we look at the possibility of another war on the peninsula, we find that the Japanese—our former foes and longtime occupiers of Korea—are our greatest potential allies. We have, in a sense, made our bed together, and perhaps we shall have to sleep in it together, as well.

Iraq: Power Vacuum in the Wake of Big Brother's Demise

During their sessions in the Ministry of Love, O'Brien tells Winston Smith that "The command of the old despotisms was 'Thou shalt not.' The command of the totalitarians was 'Thou shalt.' Our command is 'Thou art'" (210-11). Thus, O'Brien and The Party recognize the state's power to craft the individual to its own liking. The Party's sole aim within its torture chambers is to break the man from his beliefs, and then to kill him before he can backslide. Dissidents must love Big Brother before they die, lest they inspire other dissidents.

This totalitarian government in Nineteen Eighty-Four gives us Orwell's vision of the possible metamorphosis of state power. Such power evolves from power for God's sake or power in the name of the greatest good—or even power for money's sake—to power for its own sake. What Nineteen Eighty-Four suggests is the possible power of totalitarianism if the free world does not stomp it out completely. O'Brien contrasts the methods of the Party with the Nazi and the Soviet Communist parties of the twentieth century:

The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in

their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means; it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. (217)

The Hussein regime in Iraq, like the Party's in Nineteen Eighty-four, operated in order to ensure its own power in perpetuity. Perhaps the analogy is trite, but the Ba'ath regime is not unlike the abusive husband who strikes his wife "for her own good." This notion is in keeping with O'Brien's philosophy of power, and it strikes home with respect to Ba'ath rule, as well. On the formation of the Ba'ath Party, Michel Aflaq wrote that "in this struggle we retain our love for all. When we are cruel to others, we know that our cruelty is in order to bring them back to their true selves, of which they are ignorant. Their potential will, which has not been clarified yet, is with us, even when their swords are drawn against us" (qtd. in Makiya's Republic of Fear 206). Quite literally for Saddam Hussein's party, "Love is hate."

This official, political hatred becomes possible when a party rises under the auspices of a grassroots movement. Such is the case with Hitler's brownshirts, Mussolini's blackshirts, the Ayatollah's mullahs, and any other party that claims popular support domestically, a common enemy abroad, and uses the fear of a fifth column to justify the operations of secret police. Writing in 1977, Saddam Hussein proclaimed his status as

the people's champion against imperialism: "We can assure our patriotic brothers, . . . they will not make an Allende of us" (qtd. in Makiya's Republic of Fear 8).

Hussein's regime, like Khomeini's in Iran, was founded on the appearance of popular support; it maintained itself through a balance between the constant fear of secret police and the terror of its public display of raw power. When Orwell considered the two prevalent visions of the future after the turn of the century, he wrote, "What we are moving towards at this moment is [less like Huxley's *Brave New World* and] something more like the Spanish Inquisition, and probably far worse, thanks to the radio and the secret police. There is very little chance of escaping it unless we can reinstate the belief in human brotherhood, without the need for a 'next world' to give it meaning" ("Notes on the Way" 259). Hussein, like Hitler and other dictators before him, recognized the need for "a politically motivated [secret] police" to give it "objective evidence" to use against enemies of the state, both internal and external (Makiya Republic of Fear 9).

As in Hitler's Nazi regime, Hussein's Ba'ath Party's "enemies" were often innocent members of the general population. As Hitler abused his own people, so did Hussein—the Kurds, in particular. In accordance with the 1975 Algiers accords with Iran, Hussein forcibly moved his Kurdish population to the south. Makiya explains that the Ba'athi treatment of the Kurds speaks volumes against the regime and its evil potential; if it can mistreat its own population with impunity, just what can it do to other sovereign states, given the right opportunity? Makiya writes, "The measure of a regime of terror is the victims of its peace, not the casualties of its wars" (Republic of Fear 24).

Makiya's books on Hussein's rule of Iraq are full of first-hand accounts of the cruelty of the Hussein regime, with its filthy prisons and ruthless secret police. Throughout

history, people have defended—or at least tolerated—such ruthless activities as necessities in the name of progress. Orwell’s description of the use of force against one’s own people strikes home when one reads about Hussein’s Iraq. The belief that “One must not protest against purges, deportations, secret police forces and so forth, because these are the price that has to be paid for progress” enabled Hussein to stay in power, even after the United States and its allies destroyed his army in 1991, and his own people were willing to revolt against him (“Catastrophic Gradualism” 923). Were he alive today, Orwell would know Hussein’s type at first sight, and although he would find Hussein’s crimes unforgivable, he would certainly not be surprised by them.

In 2003, the United States and Britain asserted in their invasion of Iraq that violence is, in fact, necessary for progress at times. I cannot imagine that Orwell would have found much fault with the invasion, though. Those who claim that the United States and Britain are keeping imperialism alive by securing their Middle Eastern interests with a foothold in Iraq would probably be categorized by Orwell as “the pansy Left,” and we would doubtless have a lively debate over the necessity for the invasion, and whether it reflects liberal democracy, imperialism, or nationalism.

There is no way to tell for sure how Orwell would have viewed our current presence in Iraq. I am completely aware that every charge I have leveled against the Axis in this chapter can be turned around on the United States, but I believe that the United States, as Orwell had said of Britain, maintains and guides itself by “the respect for constitutionalism and legality, the belief in ‘the law’ as something above the State and above the individual, something which is cruel and stupid, of course, but at any rate *incorruptible*” (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 298). I am *most certain* that this statement

does not apply in Iran, North Korea, and Saddam-era Iraq. Had the ousting of Hussein been Iraqi-driven and paid for, Orwell would certainly have applauded it, but the required long-term presence of non-Iraqis on Iraqi soil might well have been a sore point with him today. He might in fact have seen the current occupation of Iraq as a sort of toned-down Raj of the new millennium. What we can say for certain, though, is that in 1991 there existed a significant movement in Iraq that had the ability and the desire to do what became our dirty work in 2003. Our failure to rid the world of Saddam Hussein in 1991 is arguably the one of the greatest blunders of the century.

Makiya writes, “The major flaw in the American-led effort against [Hussein] is that the shock troops in the front lines are not Arabs,” and I believe he is right (Cruelty and Silence 15). We allowed for the continued existence of North Korea and Iraq when we had their leaders reeling in 1952 and 1991, respectively. By accepting “peace that is no peace” in the name of ending two wars, we created the possibility for continuations—such as that from 1918 to 1939 in Europe. Regardless of what Orwell would have thought of the state of the world now—who is right and who is wrong—perhaps we should reconsider the rallying cry of a Left that was once willing to fight: “Fascism means war.”

Chapter 6: “Cassandra” – Orwell as Prophet

I often struggle with my own thoughts over what John Rodden refers to as something “chiefly played by literary-political critics and intellectual journalists”: the “W[hat] W[ould] G[eorge] O[rwell] D[o] game” (229). With democratic movements suffering in south-central Asia, people starving and AIDS running rampant in Africa, drug cartels thriving in South America, totalitarianism surviving in North Korea, and nuclear proliferation becoming ever more possible worldwide, what indeed *would* George Orwell do—or, more important, what would he *say*? The question is intriguing—perhaps more so because we shall never have its answer. As I ponder the question, it occurs to me that the champion of democratic socialism was nearly silent in print regarding the twenty-first century’s greatest struggle against fascism, World War Two.

At the dawn of 1944, Orwell appeared to have given up on his steadfast belief that the war would allow the aristocracy to fail and the common working classes to revolt in the name of equality and self-preservation. American troops had joined the British in the Mediterranean in 1943 and were in England staging a massive assault on the continent; despite these triumphs over the Axis, Orwell commented wryly that the slipshod bomb shelters of 1942-43 were falling apart by January 1944 and that “It would amuse me if when the time came the higher-ups were unable to crush the populace because they had thoughtlessly provided them with thousands of machine-gun nests beforehand” (“As I Please 6” 519).

One wonders what happened to the fiery revolutionary who wrote “The Lion and the Unicorn” in early 1941. A look at 1944’s essays reveals a string of “As I Please” pieces that bear little relation to the war other than to speculate on the availability of paper and

its effect on publishing after the war. As Allied troops were storming Normandy, Orwell appears to have been chiefly concerned with Arthur Koestler's most recent work and other literary issues. He had almost sadly noted that in an imagined collection of world leaders,

there is no such thing as a person in a truly commanding position who is less than fifty years old. Secondly, they are nearly all undersized. A dictator taller than five feet six inches is a very great rarity. And thirdly, there is this almost general and sometimes fantastic ugliness. [. . .]. And opposite each [world leader], to make a contrast, [one would see] a photograph of an ordinary human being from the country concerned.

Opposite Hitler a young sailor from a German submarine, opposite Tojo a Japanese peasant of the old type – and so on. (“As I Please 6” 517)

As armies comprised of the common people arose to topple the little, ugly dictators, he bemoaned the fate of those same common people whom he viewed as specimens superior to their leaders. His writing showed a distrust of government heads, and many of his predictions were based on government failures.

In December 1944, during the Allied drive toward the German border, he reassessed his past comments on the war's possibilities. Having established that “we have seemingly won the war and lost the peace,” he looked back and claimed that “From all sides there is a chorus of ‘I told you so’, and complete shamelessness about past mistakes” (“London Letter to Partisan Review” [Dec. 1944], CEJL III.293, 295). We ourselves live in just such a time of “I told you so” criticism, which relies on the perfect 20/20 vision of hindsight. Orwell appears to explain his own pessimism of 1944 when he

adds, "People can foresee the future only when it coincides with their own wishes, and the most grossly obvious facts can be ignored when they are unwelcome. [. . .]. The most one can say is that people can be fairly good prophets when their wishes are realisable" (297).

By the end of the war, Orwell came to see that in several ways his predictions had been colored by his own desires for the future. Yet, his ability to see the "big picture" issues, such as the motives, timing, and political outcomes of the war was exceptional. Looking back over six decades later, many may view George Bowling's prediction in 1939 of war with Hitler in 1941 as prophecy. Of course, Americans should remember that by the time the United States entered World War Two in late 1941, the British had already been at war with Germany for a couple of years. Furthermore, the likelihood of England's war with Germany in the late 1930s was conventional wisdom for some. What Orwell proposed as future events were simply statements of what he saw to be inevitable from a leftist's perspective. His visions showed an acute understanding of human nature, government, and their combined flaws. There is no magic involved in Orwell's ability to "see" the future.

In "Looking Back on the Spanish War," Orwell wrote, "By [1936] one did not need to be a clairvoyant to foresee that war between Britain and Germany was coming; one could even foretell within a year or two when it would come" (446). He also stated in "The Lion and the Unicorn" that "After 1936 everyone with eyes in his head knew that war was coming" (319). Popular opinion failed to see the threat to England's peace that the Spanish Civil War posed; Orwell could see it plainly, and that motivated him to go to Spain in late 1936. After his experience in Spain, Orwell's essays predicted an

ineffective aristocratic response to fascism, and for this incorrect prediction of the aristocracy's performance, some have criticized him.

We seem to have granted Orwell prophet status because we recognize television, closed-circuit surveillance, and the Internet manifested in Nineteen Eighty-Four's telescreen. Modern technology's ability to empower the central state with Big Brother-like powers is an ever-increasing reality. Although Orwell correctly suggests the possibility for state powers to increase at the expense of the individual's rights, not much of what he said has actually come true today. The modern "blogger" is a perfect example of Orwell's "free intelligence" and is one of the ways that technology has enabled the common citizen with computer and Internet access to counter the power of the press, a power maligned by right and left alike.

Of course, the blogger is truly free only if the Internet is unregulated, and governments are continuously seeking to increase their control over this ethereal no-man's land. Perhaps, then, Orwell has not been proven completely wrong on such technologies; we have the network today, but not yet the Big Brother figure in control. Strangely enough, computer technology took some of its most dramatic leaps forward in the 1980s, and the computer's potential capabilities led to a revival of the term "Big Brother is watching you" at a very appropriate time mid-decade.

Orwell did get a few things right, however. He noted that after the Tehran Conference, "I personally did not believe that such good relations would last long; and as events have shown, I wasn't far wrong" ("Preface to the Ukrainian Version of Animal Farm" 1215). Animal Farm, which he presented as a fairy tale, probably did not convey the serious warning that Orwell wanted to impart to the free world with respect to the

Soviet leadership's betrayal of a people's revolution. The summit between pigs and humans that concludes the novel satirizes strange bedfellows created by the politics of the Tehran Conference. Apparently, not many people saw the connection; but the CIA, which funded the 1955 film adaptation of the novel, did (Rodden 212). The CIA changed the end of Animal Farm, rejecting the ultimate alliance of pigs and humans, for it suggests that neither Soviet socialism nor Western capitalism is favorable. Indeed, both for Orwell were undesirable, and his novel sought to show them as exploitative systems that reach the same end by different means.

Orwell's ending, which suggests collusion between pigs and humans for mutual profit at the expense of the people, did not serve Western interests and was thus quietly discarded for the feature film (Hitchens 17 Mar. 2006). Bernard Crick writes, "The final scene of Jones and his men dining with the Pigs, for instance, was not meant to show reconciliation but discord" (309). Crick cites Orwell's 1947 "Preface to the Ukrainian Edition of Animal Farm," which clarifies Orwell's skepticism over the durability of the Tehran Conference's agreements. Crick asserts that the Tehran and Yalta conferences essentially created the world that James Burnham had foreseen in The Managerial Revolution. In Burnham's work, about which Orwell had written in 1946, three main power blocs control the globe, maintaining an unstable peace and conducting an eternal string of short, limited wars for the purpose of retaining power among themselves and preventing alliances and uprisings. Orwell ultimately developed Burnham's notion into the nightmare world of Nineteen Eighty-Four (Crick 309).

As it turns out, Orwell's vision was close to reality with respect to the post-war political world. The peace forged by a common desire to defeat Nazism dissolved nearly

as soon as Germany fell to the Allies. It is a pity that Orwell did not live another year, for he would have seen the “cold” war go “hot” in Korea, and he certainly would have had something of substance to say. To a great extent, though, Orwell’s vision of continued world strife fell on deaf ears; people were tired of war and destruction by 1945 and were willing to turn their eyes from Eastern Europe, Korea, and China in the name of preserving a hard-won peace.

Animal Farm builds toward its version of the Tehran Conference by beginning with a Marxist revolution that eventually reforms itself into a state that exploits labor. Eventually, the use of the word “Comrade [. . .] was to be suppressed” on the farm after pigs had cemented their power (127). Additionally, the “very strange custom, whose origin was unknown, of marching every Sunday morning past a boar’s skull which was nailed to a post in the garden [. . .] was to be suppressed” (127). We jump from our seats at this. Could this be symbolic of the removal of Stalin’s body from the Kremlin in the early 1960s? I do not propose that Orwell was this sort of prophet. What he most probably meant with this passage was to show that the human animal—or the pig, as you’d have it—is a forgetful creature. First, he loses his recollection of why traditions exist, and then he gets rid of them altogether—or his government does it for him. The example of the boar’s skull’s removal illustrates the tendency for some revolutionary movements to forget the principles of the revolution itself. This, in fact, was where Trotsky and Stalin parted ways after the Russian revolution.

Some may be fixated on the Soviet regime when it comes to reading this novel of Orwell’s and looking for predictions as if his works were prophetic in the truest sense of the word. Was the USSR the target of Orwell’s satire? Most certainly, but as John

Rodden points out, “Orwell did not fault Marx as a prophet so much as he castigated those English leftists of the 1930s whose interpretations of European events since World War I were ‘so mechanistic’ that they ‘had failed to foresee dangers that were obvious to people who had never even heard the name of Marx’” (183).

As a necessary precaution in the avoidance of the worldwide spread in fascism, Orwell went so far during the Second World War as to advocate class-based revolution in England itself. He stated in “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius” that “It is only by revolution that the native genius of the English people can be set free. Revolution does not mean red flags and street fighting, it means a fundamental shift of power. Whether it happens with or without bloodshed is largely an accident of time and place [. . .]. What is wanted is a conscious open revolt by ordinary people against inefficiency, class privilege and the rule of the old” (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 323). He was ever the champion of the common man, and where he saw serious threats to the common man’s freedom, he saw war, revolution, or a combination of the two. His vision of the future is just that simple.

Orwell saw the 1940s not only as a period marked by the threat of global fascism, but as an opportunity for the lower classes to achieve equality through upheaval, be it peaceful or violent. As already noted, his character George Bowling—like the author himself—predicted war with fascism in Coming Up for Air (1939). In “The Lion and the Unicorn” (1941), Orwell agreed with Mussolini himself that “Between democracy and totalitarianism” we have “Two incompatible visions of life [that] are fighting one another” (345). The alternative to democracy, in Orwell’s mind, was a world ruled by the

goose-step, which “is simply an affirmation of naked power; contained in it, quite consciously and intentionally, is the vision of a boot crashing down on a face” (297).

Anyone who has read Nineteen Eighty-Four will immediately recognize these words as O’Brien’s in Room 101 of the Ministry of Love—but with the addition of the word “forever” at the end: “If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever” (Nineteen Eighty-Four 220). And so we know Orwell as a man who warned us of the rise of totalitarianism, and yet he never hid the fact that anyone with eyes could see it coming. In fact, his vision of the boot stamping on a human face comes directly from Jack London’s 1907 novel, The Iron Heel, in which the capitalist leader tells Ernest Everhard

We will grind you revolutionists down under our heel, and we shall walk upon your faces. The world is ours, we are its lords, and ours it shall remain. As for the host of labour, it has been in the dirt since history began, and I read history aright. And in the dirt it shall remain so long as I and mine and those that come after us have the power. There is the word. It is the king of words—Power. Not God, not Mammon, but Power. Pour it over your tongue till it tingles with it. Power. (63)

Orwell never claimed to be a prophet, and in fact he often restated the same warnings of like-minded men who came before him. The only thing prophetic about what he wrote is that it was based on genuine observation and understanding of men and their relation to power structures.

Because the public largely received Animal Farm as a lighthearted children’s story, Orwell may have begun to view himself as a sort of Cassandra; as Crick states, such a

reception may in fact have prompted him finally to write his own dystopian novel in the vein of Zamyatin or Huxley. He wanted to show the fearful potential of totalitarianism, and Nineteen Eighty-Four does this much more effectively than Animal Farm does.

Orwell paid close attention to the Soviet Union and recognized early—probably in Barcelona toward the end of his stay in Spain—that the Russian brand of communism was merely totalitarianism by another name; it used people as political pawns as long as they promoted the regime’s overall interests. He wrote in 1948 that the Soviet regime was “a dictatorship supposedly established for a limited purpose [that had] dug itself in, and Socialism [had then come] to be thought of as meaning concentration camps and secret police forces” (“Review of The Soul of Man under Socialism by Oscar Wilde” 1283).

Several biographers have made note of the fact that immediately after Animal Farm’s publication in 1945, Orwell went from bookstore to bookstore, moving the novel out of children’s sections. His frustration with the novel’s reception comes out in his preface to the Ukrainian version: “In such an atmosphere [as England] the man in the street has no real understanding of things like concentration camps, mass deportations, arrests without trial, press censorship, etc. Everything he reads about a country like the USSR is automatically translated into English terms, and he quite innocently accepts the lies of totalitarian propaganda” (1213). In this preface, we can actually see him as a Cassandra figure who claims, “it was of the utmost importance to me that people in western Europe see the Soviet régime for what it really was” (ibid.). His final novel, unlike his penultimate, was successful in scaring Western audiences because he deliberately set it in

England so that it would hit home with what he perceived to be an “it couldn’t happen here” public.

The betrayal of the Marxists and Anarchists in Spain in 1936-37 most probably planted the seed in Orwell’s mind for O’Brien, who in Nineteen Eighty-Four makes it clear to Winston Smith that The Party seeks to protect its power for power’s own sake and nothing more. In short, Orwell sought to assert that Soviet Communism was slavery, and because he saw it as such, he predicted that it could not endure:

But at any rate, the Russian regime will either democratize itself, or it will perish. The huge, invincible, everlasting slave empire of which Burnham appears to dream will not be established, or, if established, will not endure, because slavery is no longer a stable basis for human society. (“James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution” 1073)

As a “prophet,” Orwell also paints a fairly accurate picture of post-war England in “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius,”

It will not be doctrinaire, nor even logical. It will abolish the House of Lords, but quite probably will not abolish the Monarchy. It will leave anachronisms and loose ends everywhere, the judge in his ridiculous horsehair wig and the lion and the unicorn on the soldier’s cap-buttons. It will not set up any explicit class dictatorship. It will group itself round the old Labour Party and its mass following will be in the Trade Unions, but it will draw into it most of the middle class and many of the younger sons of the bourgeoisie [. . .]. It will crush any open revolt

promptly and cruelly, but it will interfere very little with the spoken and written word. (341)

Orwell warns us that “the time has come when one can predict the future in terms of an ‘either-or,’” and he proposes democracy or tyranny (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 342). Nineteen Eighty-Four makes it clear to us which is preferable, and democratic governments as they exist today, faulty as they may be, are still preferable to the alternatives that exist in Tehran, Pyongyang, Beijing, and Riyadh.

Orwell’s prediction of the demise of the House of Lords has not literally come true. However, it has recently come to my attention that an inherited title no longer grants one an automatic seat in the House of Lords; Orwell would call that a step in the right direction. He is also correct in saying that anachronisms and loose ends will endure, for although a man may no longer be born a lord or knight, England is rich with artists and musicians who have “earned” knighthoods. England has not “crushed any open revolt” lately, but “Bloody Sunday” (1972) and perhaps the Falklands campaign (1982) prove that the lion can still roar.

Not only did Orwell assert that the monarchy could survive only with a long reign—which it certainly has—but he also asserted that “Since the ’fifties every war in which England has engaged has started off with a series of disasters, after which the situation has been saved by people comparatively low in the social scale” (306). Truly, England’s successful wars from World War One forward have not been wars of imperialism and gain, but rather to assert the kingdom’s power by acting out of self-defense or on the behalf of others: the *common* interest.

The first Gulf War in 1991 was just such a war, and when I informed Christopher Hitchens that my follow-on assignment to West Point was to NORAD in Colorado Springs, he informed me that he had been in the facility in Cheyenne Mountain and was standing there with President George H.W. Bush and Prime Minister Thatcher in 1990 when they learned that Hussein had invaded Kuwait. Thatcher, feeling herself and her country ever-marginalized at the close of the twentieth century, turned to the President and told him that he could count on England. She had a glow about her as she said this, Hitchens said, as if she realized that the United Kingdom had regained its world relevance (17 Mar. 2006). Hussein's short-lived conquest of Kuwait was probably not the type of disaster that Orwell had in mind when he wrote "The Lion and the Unicorn," but it did provide a conservative Prime Minister and a long-reigning Queen with an opportunity to exercise the kingdom's might and rally the common people.

People seem to be naturally inclined to call Orwell a prophet because we believe we see his visions come true in a future he never lived to see. The same may be said of Nostradamus, though. If we search long enough and hard enough, we can see any "prophecy" fulfilled, but let us take a specific statement of Orwell's and *not* align it with a specific world event. Let us only look at him as a prophet of the human spirit, without a crystal ball. This is where Orwell is so good; he reads the human mind beyond man's economic or personal interests.

The US-led invasion of Iraq is not something that Orwell could have foreseen, but if we indulge ourselves in the "W.W.G.O.D. game," we can see the effort's most obvious faults. When Donald Rumsfeld said that Americans would be greeted in Iraq as liberators, he was so focused on Hussein that he overlooked the human disgust with

occupation, a disgust Orwell had learned first-hand in Burma. The indignities of foreign occupation, in fact, are the source of many of our problems in Iraq today—problems that led to Rumsfeld’s resignation in late 2006, and problems that led Orwell to leave the Indian Imperial Police. Orwell, unlike Rumsfeld in this instance, avoided wishful thinking at all costs, and instead focused his vision on the long-term human reaction to acts of governance or control.

Early in life Orwell developed a distrust of the money interest, which deeply affected his world view. In “Literature and Totalitarianism,” he argues that “the period of free capitalism is coming to an end and that one country after another is adopting a centralised economy that one can call Socialism or State Capitalism according as one prefers” (361). He is correct insomuch as governments are, more and more, intervening in the business of private individuals, but to say that free capitalism is dying is hyperbole. Where his argument hits home in “Literature and Totalitarianism” is with respect to totalitarian states:

The peculiarity of the totalitarian state is that though it controls thought, it doesn’t fix it. It sets up unquestionable dogmas, and it alters them from day to day. It needs the dogmas, because it needs absolute obedience from its subjects, but it can’t avoid the changes, which are dictated by the needs of power politics. It declares itself infallible, and at the same time it attacks the very concept of objective truth. (“Literature and Totalitarianism” 363)

Orwell saw that the modern tyrant uses the idea of revolution to cement his power. In Animal Farm, the pigs’ decision one day to remove the “white hoof and horn” from the

revolutionary green flag perplexes the other animals (127). If we pay attention to the incidents surrounding the change, we can see Orwell's point that political leadership often rewrites history in a way that makes its decisions acceptable to its constituency. In a similar vein, Saddam Hussein put "Allahu Akbar" between the stars on the Iraqi flag—not because he was devout, but because he wanted to appease his Shi'ite majority. Orwell knew that humans are capable of anything in the name of political expediency. This clarity of vision often seems prophetic to us. This observation gains more importance in Nineteen Eighty-Four's Ministry of Truth, where Winston Smith drops inconvenient scraps of history into the "memory hole."

Orwell knew that one day governments would be able to use science and technology in unheard-of ways to strengthen their grips on the populace. This is what made him good as a prophet; even if people seldom listened or took him seriously, he knew that power structures are propped up by nationalism, bigotry, and greed, and he refused to be optimistic about one man's power over another. Of his early influence, H.G. Wells, he said, "Up to 1914 [he] was in the main a true prophet. In physical details his vision of the new world has been fulfilled to a surprising extent," and yet he criticized Wells's inability to see the powers of "nationalism, religious bigotry and feudal loyalty" ("Wells, Hitler and the World State" 373). The open distrust of government power and technological advancements that he held is ever more popular today, and thus he retains a currency that his early influence, H.G. Wells, seems to have lost.

Chapter 7: “Generous Anger” – Orwell as Critic

But where's the Man, who Counsel *can* bestow,
 Still *pleas'd to teach*, and yet not *proud to know*?
 Unbiass'd, or by *Favour* or by *Spite*;
 Not *dully prepossesst*, nor *blindly right*;
 Tho' Learn'd, well-bred; and tho' well-bred, sincere;
 Modestly bold, and Humanly severe?
 Who to a *Friend* his Faults can freely show,
 And gladly praise the Merit of a *Foe*?
 Blest with a *Taste* exact, yet unconfi'd;
 A *Knowledge* both of *Books* and *Humankind*;
Gen'rous Converse; a *Soul* exempt from *Pride*;
 And *Love to Praise*, with *Reason* on his Side?

--Alexander Pope
 “An Essay on Criticism,” 631-42

In Burma in the 1920s, a young officer named Eric Blair “marched out of his bungalow, propped [John Middleton Murry’s Adelphi] against a tree, aimed his police carbine, and fired at it for target practice” (Shelden 98). Thus was a critic born. Of course, it would take a few years before Eric Blair would become George Orwell and gain renown for his writing and not his shooting, but he retained his passion for engaging with others’ ideas. His passion often bordered, as this scene illustrates, on anger—but Orwell’s anger was devoid of hatred. Throughout his career, Orwell took full advantage of the essay format to address the common citizen, much as the occasional essayist of the eighteenth century provided texts for the coffee shops, the “penny universities” of Europe. Like Pope’s Critick, Orwell was “Modestly bold, and Humanly severe,” and he admired the virtue of being unbiased in others, as well.

Years after his shooting Murry’s Adelphi in Burma, Orwell described Charles Dickens as “a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is *generously angry* – in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls” (“Charles Dickens”

185). One almost imagines Orwell as he wrote it, secretly wishing that one day people will think similarly of him. He believed that Dickens “voiced a code which was and on the whole still is believed in, even by people who violate it. It is difficult otherwise to explain why he could be both read by working people (a thing that has happened to no other novelist of his stature) and buried in Westminster Abbey” (185). Perhaps Orwell’s desire for an Anglican funeral—despite his lack of religion—indicated a secret desire one day to be buried at Westminster Abbey with Dickens and other English literary giants.

Appropriately enough, people today treat Orwell in the same way he says people treated Dickens in the twentieth century. He noted that Dickens “has been stolen by Marxists [. . .] and, above all, by Conservatives” (173). Orwell himself has been similarly appropriated over the years. Writing of Dickens, he asks us, “What is there to steal?” (173), to which our answer is easy: honesty, courage, and decency. We should consider for a moment Norman Podhoretz’s theft of Orwell for the new right in 1983: “I have no hesitation, therefore, in claiming Orwell for the neoconservative perspective on the East-West conflict” (“If Orwell Were Alive Today” 37). The problem with such claims is that they are frequently done for pure convenience and not out of genuine admiration: Podhoretz aligns pacifism and intellectualism with liberalism, as if to suggest that since Orwell was against pacifism and disliked intellectuals, he would have ultimately become a conservative. Whether one agrees with Podhoretz’s claim or not, it shows Orwell’s appeal to the educated and working classes alike to be, as is the case with Dickens, a testament to his ability to read the human character and respond to it honestly, without necessarily angering others.

“Generous,” as Orwell describes Dickens’s anger, indicates the maintenance of a certain grace—a combination of sympathy, empathy, and forgiveness. According to David Astor, Orwell’s pieces on tramping such as “The Spike” provide “a portrait of a man in whom limitless moral sympathy and outright physical disgust are uneasily contending” (qtd. in Taylor 110). Astor indicates that Orwell’s adventures into the lower-class areas reflect his attempt to reconcile his love of humanity with his class-imposed distaste for the lower classes. His willingness to admit and overcome his class bias is, truly, generous. Ironically enough, he credited his admirable intellectual honesty to one of the institutions that served to reinforce class biases, Eton. He once remarked to a woman in Burma who admired his sense of fairness, “This was the most important part of the education I received at Eton—this and the capacity to think for myself” (Meyers 47). It is this capacity that is so admirable in Dickens that inspired Orwell to write his famous essay on him.

“Charles Dickens” is an absolute favorite for anyone who has taken up Orwell on his own, and yet it is virtually unknown to those who have been forced to read him. The relatively widespread ignorance of Orwell beyond the classroom is unfortunate, for his work is peppered with nuggets well worth their mining, and his notion of Dickens’s “generous” anger is one of them. It lies within a piece dedicated to one who, like the author himself, “fights in the open and is not frightened [. . .] a free intelligence” (“Charles Dickens” 185). Richard Rees, writing in George Orwell: Fugitive from the Camp of Victory, gave Orwell similar praise, stating that he had “the voice of a man with a mind of his own, with something in his mind, and speaking his mind” (50), a sort of

“*disinterested* partisanship” (71). “Disinterested partisanship” may strike many of us as an oxymoron, but so also may “banal virtue.”

Orwell was certainly disturbed by biased partisanship, and his emphasis on plain prose and objective truth shows in his writing. He believed in the value of transparent language and asserted, “Good prose is like a windowpane” (“Why I Write” 1085). Christopher Hitchens suggests that Orwell’s “Good prose is like a windowpane” shows his debt to the Protestant Reformation and the English civil wars. Orwell’s preference for a clear windowpane reflects the “Puritan hatred of stained glass,” which not only glorifies saints but literally blocks the worshipper’s view of the heavens (10 Feb. 2007). The Reformation and Cromwell’s wars were populist movements intended to take power over knowledge out of the hands of church and government and give it directly to the common people. Putting the word of God into everyone’s hands became a direct fulfillment of Paul’s 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (KJV). If one can agree that glass in 1 Corinthians 13 is a metaphor for personal knowledge, Cromwell’s smashing of stained glass windows is surely a symbolic statement that goes beyond vandalism. Cromwell, like Orwell, wanted people to see the truth for themselves, free of the “smelly little orthodoxies” that threaten our souls (“Charles Dickens” 185). In Podhoretz’s words, Orwell saw that “clarity was a protection against deceit” (“If Orwell Were Alive Today” 31).

“Good prose [. . .] like a windowpane” indicates Orwell’s belief that religious orthodoxy—particularly Roman Catholic orthodoxy—is a threat to “the free mind” and “the autonomous individual,” and he believed that “The novel is practically a Protestant

form of art” (“Inside the Whale” 239). His novels, in fact, are all a form of protest—against the church, the empire, capitalism, and totalitarianism. In Nineteen Eighty-Four, the glass paperweight Winston Smith purchases from Mr. Charrington becomes a metaphorical world of freedom: he imagines himself within its light-filled dome, and he revels in its clarity. When he and Julia are arrested, it is the first thing to break, and an unmasked Mr. Charrington orders the immediate removal of its pieces. This shattering of clear glass is actually the beginning of the end for Winston Smith’s free intelligence. It is a sort of English Revolution in reverse: when the clear glass breaks, clarity and light are dispersed as the tyrant gains control.

Keep the Aspidistra Flying also uses clarity of vision as a metaphor for self-determination. The novel’s epigraph is an adaptation of 1 Corinthians 13 that substitutes “money” for “charity” and highlights Gordon Comstock’s blind, self-defeating fight against money. His ultimate surrender to the money-world and his return to the Protestant work ethic emphasizes how his cynical rejection of mainstream life—as reflected in the epigraph’s corruption of 1 Corinthians 13—was indeed seeing “through a glass, darkly.” It is interesting to note that verses 8-12 of 1 Corinthians 13, containing the “through a glass, darkly” passage, are actually omitted in the novel’s epigraph.

Orwell’s use of clear glass as a motif for clarity of thought, vision, and expression makes him a sort of twentieth century version of Thomas Paine, who in Hitchens’s words sought to “purify the language of political discourse” and champion “the protestant ethos, with its ideal of an unmediated relationship between mankind and the creator, requiring no priesthood or incense or stained glass” (Thomas Paine’s The Rights of Man: A Biography 89, 92). Orwell’s dislike for Catholicism—among other things—comes across

as if through a windowpane, but it does not come across hatefully. Let us consider some of the targets of Orwell's negative criticism.

Despite being an Old Etonian, Orwell never accepted Eton's class biases, and he never hesitated to attack the educated upper classes for which Eton stood. He lamented—in good humor, of course—that “If you consult any sporting manual or year book you will find many pages devoted to the hunting of the fox and the hare, but not a word about the hunting of the highbrow” (“Literature and the Left” 471). His likable character George Bowling places himself in the middle of two extremes—right where Orwell would likely have situated himself: “I'm not a fool, but I'm not a highbrow, either” (Coming Up for Air 186).

Like Bowling, Orwell felt the pain of balancing nostalgia for late Edwardian England with an awareness that the country had to change as it faced the worldwide rise of fascism. Like the ordinary English citizen of the Commonwealth period, who was caught between Catholicism and Puritanism, monarchy and oligarchy, Orwell saw himself trapped between the pastoral England of his youth and the modern world of chrome and glass, patrolled by men in black carrying rubber truncheons. His desire for an Episcopalian funeral seems unusual for a man who never stood on ceremony, yet we must recognize that Anglo-Catholicism flies the median path between Roman orthodoxy and Puritan practice. The Church of England is the common man's church: progressive, yet marked by tradition. When the existence of his homeland came under threat, Orwell did not hesitate to embrace its active defense, nor did he hesitate in attacking those whose loyalties to it were questionable.

In the first years of World War Two, Orwell continued his jabs at the landed class and the intelligentsia. As a Socialist, he saw the aristocracy as “an entirely functionless class, living on money that was invested they hardly knew where [. . .]. They were simply parasites, less useful to society than his fleas are to a dog” (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 306). He feared that the aristocracy, which controlled the armed forces, would not be able to prepare a viable defense of Britain in the face of Nazi aggression. This led him to propose a people’s revolution in “The Lion and the Unicorn” that never materialized because he had underestimated the aristocracy’s ability to respond to the Axis.

Of the educated elite, he had little good to say either about those who had sat idly by when Franco took Spain from the revolutionaries or about those who printed pro-Communist propaganda during the Spanish Civil War. In fact, he stated in “Why I Write” that the war in Spain and England’s reaction to it were a tipping point in his life: “The Spanish war and other events in 1936-37 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic Socialism” (1083).

The intelligentsia’s greatest sin—in Spain and later during World War Two—was its impotence: intellectuals were embarrassed by their Britishness: they were “sever[ed] from the common culture of their country,” and thus “England [was] perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals [were] ashamed of their own nationality” (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 311). Mere pages later, however, Orwell admitted that where Socialism was concerned, “Only the intellectuals, the least useful section of the middle class, gravitated towards the movement” (331). This indeed is generous anger—one’s willingness to point out others’ faults and equal willingness to grant their virtues. His

friend Arthur Koestler remarked “His uncompromising intellectual honesty [that] made him appear almost inhuman at times” (qtd. in Meyers 239-40).

Orwell also attacked what he called the “pansy left” (Taylor 4), which included “every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, ‘Nature Cure’ quack, pacifist and feminist in England” (The Road to Wigan Pier 174). He was not quite kind to pacifists, either. By the end of World War Two, however, he had grown to know and respect enough pacifists to relent. Even when he did attack one’s personal beliefs or statements, Dennis Collings noted his generosity in such cases: “The great thing about Eric was that he could disagree with you strongly, yet now allow it to affect his feelings towards you. He wanted you to see things his way, but if you didn’t there was no resentment” (qtd. in Shelden 142-43).

Orwell’s willingness to acknowledge his own biases when judging those of others is admirable, but there are some biases he never attempted to address. His hatred for the “pansy left” reflected not a lack of kindness but rather his disdain for pacifism, the impotence of the intelligentsia in the face of crisis, and a homophobia most probably based on the perceived weakness of homosexuals and their preferences’ betrayal of the natural order. He hated such weakness simply because weakness can put a tyrant in power. He criticized W.H. Auden’s homosexuality and his calling the killings in the Spanish Civil War “necessary murder,” stating, “Mr. Auden’s brand of amoralism is only possible if you are the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled” (“Inside the Whale” 237). Yet he praised Auden’s poem “Spain” as “one of the few decent things that have been written about the Spanish war” (236). He was able to address the art separately from the man: the judgment of one did not necessarily infect

that of the other. Even in the case of Ezra Pound's Bollingen Prize for Poetry, which we shall discuss later, he did not let his distaste for both the man *and* his art deny others the right to their own opinions.

Orwell's hatred for weakness does not imply a love for or worship of power, though. He was kind to Rudyard Kipling not because he was an advocate of empire, but rather because Kipling's works reflected a sense of decency despite glorifying the empire. Kipling proved that "It was still possible to be an imperialist and a gentleman," and that his "*personal* decency" was worthy of praise ("Rudyard Kipling" 39). Orwell felt a sort of kinship with Kipling, who had served in India, where his father had served, and near Burma, where he himself had served. What he objected to in the "pansy left" and the intelligentsia is therefore linked to his relatively kind view of Kipling, who lacked the Left's sense of embarrassment for one's own country and culture and who was willing to fight for his flag. Kipling thus became a useful counterexample for Orwell's view of the Left; he had particular fun with the MacSpaunday group, "singling out Auden as a 'gutless Kipling'" (Stansky and Abrams Orwell: The Transformation 19).

In "Looking Back on the Spanish War," Orwell asserted that no history is objective. He had attacked the leftist press in England between the Spanish Civil War and World War Two, but after looking back on his experience in Spain sometime around 1942, he concluded that we should not seek to promote our own versions of the truth. He insisted then that we should seek to keep alive "the idea that history [can] be truthfully written" ("Looking Back on the Spanish War" 441). In Homage to Catalonia, he wrote, "It is very difficult to write accurately about the Spanish war [. . .]. I warn everyone against my bias, and I warn everyone against my mistakes. Still, I have done my best to be honest"

(160). He insisted that one's struggles against his own loves and hatreds "is essentially a *moral* effort. It is a question first of all of discovering what one really is, what one's own feelings really are, and then of making allowance for the inevitable bias" ("Notes on Nationalism" 883-84). The realization that human beings were overlooking the basic idea of objective truth suggested to Orwell the possibility of a

nightmare world in which the Leader, or some ruling clique, controls not only the future but the past. If the leader says of such and such an event, "It never happened" – well, it never happened. If he says that two and two are five – well, two and two are five. This prospect frightens me much more than bombs – and after our experiences of the last few years that is not a frivolous statement. ("Looking Back on the Spanish War" 442)

One does well to remember that Orwell's editors place this essay somewhere in 1942, after the Blitz had destroyed parts of London and six years before his completion of Nineteen Eighty-Four. He had good reason to be angry with Germany, yet his anger at fascism was, like Dickens's anger, "generous." He wrote of Hitler, "I have reflected that I would certainly kill him if I could get within reach of him, but that I could feel no personal animosity. The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him" ("Review of Mein Kampf, by Adolf Hitler, unabridged translation" 251). He had the rare gift of being able to conceive of the public and private man as two separate entities. These are not the words of a ranting leftist, but of a man who has done his homework and has something of substance to say about his enemy. He was honest without being mean-

spirited. The ability to address the vices of an undoubtedly terrible person without necessarily hating him is truly *generous*.

Like Dickens, Orwell could see his nation's shortcomings but did not necessarily seek to provide solutions to them. Of Dickens, he says, "He attacks the law, parliamentary government, the educational system and so forth, without ever clearly suggesting what he would put in their places" ("Charles Dickens" 138). His criticism is not exactly practical, either—in this sense he was rather like Dickens, whom he described as one "always pointing to a change of spirit rather than a change of structures" (149). As the Second World War expanded in scope, Orwell recognized that its outcome had permanent implications for the world order; there would be no simple peace treaties and cessation of hostilities—nations would be ruined and governments toppled. He became concerned, like Dickens, with the structure of society, or rather "the shape of society" ("Charles Dickens" 183). When he wrote "Charles Dickens," he could not withhold his admiration for Dickens's "native generosity" (183). Dickens's favoring of the "underdog" (184) also would have been particularly important to readers at the time of Orwell's writing.¹ He recognized that Dickens's favoring of the downtrodden "acts as a kind of anchor and nearly always keeps him where he belongs" (*ibid.*). Orwell himself was equally well anchored.

Whether or not Orwell *liked* his country, he certainly *loved* it. He clarified this by making the very important distinction between patriotism and nationalism. Patriotism, simply defined in "The Lion and the Unicorn," is "national loyalty" (291), whereas nationalism is a movement, often one that goes beyond political geography and is

¹ "Charles Dickens" appeared on 11 March 1940. The British Expeditionary Force was evacuated from Dunkirk fewer than three months later, and the Blitz began that September.

“inseparable from the desire for power” (“Notes on Nationalism” 866). During World War Two he had to establish that his country, “‘the nation’, ‘England’, ‘Britain’” was a single entity at war with German *National* Socialism, and yet despite England’s sense of unity in the face of Nazism, he challenged the notion that “45 million souls could somehow be treated as a unit” (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 299). Whereas the German totalitarian state was a single nation unified under Hitler, he saw his own country simply as one united by “an all-important English trait: the respect for constitutionalism and legality, the belief in ‘the law’ as something above the State and above the individual, something which is cruel and stupid, of course, but at any rate *incorruptible*” (298). The English national pride was not the Nazi blind arrogance of national superiority but rather the simple love of one’s home: England’s stand against Germany was the stand of the rule of law against the rule of tyrants.

In The Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell attacked the “European of bourgeois upbringing” who was frequently the nucleus of a nationalistic movement (127). He noted that even though the bourgeois could renounce his class privilege, he would still believe what he was told respecting his own superiority, such as the notion that “The lower classes smell” (ibid.). In word and deed, he directly attacked this stereotype and its foundation in the upper classes’ education. While Huxley’s class-based operant conditioning that keeps the classes separate in Brave New World focused on the power of class snobbery, Orwell chose to glorify the working classes as the hope of humanity. In Nineteen Eighty-Four, for example, Winston Smith notes of the proles:

They were governed by private loyalties which they did not question.

What mattered were individual relationships, and a completely helpless

gesture, an embrace, a tear, a word spoken to a dying man, could have value in itself. The proles, it suddenly occurred to him, had remained in this condition. They were not loyal to a party or a country or an idea, they were loyal to one another. For the first time in his life he did not despise the proles or think of them merely as an inert force which would one day spring to life and regenerate the world. The proles had stayed human.

They had not become hardened inside. (136)

Nineteen Eighty-Four's Party, like the Nazi Party, was purely nationalist and made its people "hardened inside." The German aircraft over London, manned by "highly civilized human beings [. . .] trying to kill me," was piloted by a similarly *hardened* man "serving his country, which has the power to absolve him from evil" ("The Lion and the Unicorn" 291). The reason for Orwell's criticism of nationalism lies with his distrust of the power of governments in general, a power Dickens similarly distrusted. This, then, is what made him so relatively kind to Hitler while he was so ruthless about nationalism; a "generous anger" enables one to hate the sin but not the sinner.

Having identified the difference between patriotism and nationalism, Orwell was able to praise in Dickens what he saw as the absence of "vulgar nationalism" that leads inevitably to "arrogance" and "xenophobia" ("Charles Dickens" 154-55). Dickens's lack of vulgar nationalism lent him the "real largeness of mind" that Orwell shared.

Notwithstanding the hatred he had for the Nazi regime, he managed to be fair even to Hitler, whose face he described as "a pathetic, doglike face, the face of a man suffering under intolerable wrongs" ("Review of Mein Kampf" 251).

Although he recognized the human side of a man bent on the destruction of England, Orwell saw also Hitler's appeal to the German people. He revisited the faults of pacifists in his review of Mein Kampf in stating that "The Socialist who finds his children playing with soldiers is usually upset, but he is never able to think of a substitute for the tin soldiers; tin pacifists somehow won't do" (ibid.). Orwell recognized the human impulse to worship power, which few others did, and he accused the intelligentsia of an equally bad opposite stance: pacifism that results in "severance from the common culture of the country" ("The Lion and the Unicorn" 311).

As a child, I—like the child of the Socialist whom Orwell mentions in his "Review of Mein Kampf"—played with toy soldiers. Yet, despite this potential display of power worship, I myself never became a fascist. However, I must acknowledge Orwell's correctness in his assessment of human nature: fascism benefits from a human need for unity and purpose that nationalism easily fulfills. He saw Hitler's nationalism as an easy answer to the longing of the German people for a common purpose and struggle:

Hitler, because in his own joyless mind he feels it with exceptional strength, knows that human beings don't only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth-control and, in general, common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags and loyalty parades. (251)

Orwell knew that the impulse to worship power is universal, but he clearly stated, "A modern nation cannot afford either [pure patriotism or pure intelligence]. Patriotism and intelligence will have to come together again" ("The Lion and the Unicorn" 312). He saw that Germany was being led to war by a man who knew the human heart and its

desire for order and purpose. Eighteen months after he reviewed Mein Kampf for New English Weekly, in September 1941's "The Art of Donald McGill," he wrote:

the high sentiments always win in the end, leaders who offer blood, toil, tears and sweat always get more out of their followers than those who offer safety and a good time. When it comes to the pinch, human beings are heroic. Women face childbirth and the scrubbing brush, revolutionaries keep their mouths shut in the torture chamber, battleships go down with their guns still firing when their decks are awash. It is only that the other element in man, the lazy, cowardly, debt-bilking adulterer who is inside all of us, can never be suppressed altogether and needs a hearing occasionally. (383)

Orwell knew well before 1942 that pacifism had a price. He made it clear in his indictment of Henry Miller's wartime political detachment, "Inside the Whale." He also made it clear in his review of Mein Kampf. In "Looking Back on the Spanish War" he wrote, "we believe half-instinctively that evil always defeats itself in the long run. Pacifism, for instance, is founded largely on this belief. [. . .] But why should it?" (442). In this essay, the author asks us to see that we must not necessarily hate our enemies, but *we must certainly* destroy them. One sees the genesis of Winston Smith and the tyranny of the Party as the heirs of 1930s-era totalitarianism in this essay, as well:

Against that phantasmagoric shifting world in which black may be white tomorrow and yesterday's weather can be changed by decree, there are in reality only two safeguards. One is that however much you deny the truth, the truth goes on existing, as it were, behind your back, and you

consequently can't violate it in ways that impair military efficiency. The other is that so long as some parts of the earth remain unconquered, the liberal tradition can be kept alive.² (ibid.)

Note the imperative for the preservation of the liberal tradition and the idea that the truth exists independent of human thought and power. He shows us the death of the liberal tradition and independent truth in Nineteen Eighty-Four, which was really a simple development of something he had warned us of in 1941:

the time has come when one can predict the future in terms of an 'either/or'. Either we turn this war into a revolutionary war [. . .] or we lose it, and much more besides. Quite soon it will be possible to say definitely that our feet are set upon one path or the other. But at any rate it is certain that with our present social structure we cannot win. Our real forces, physical, moral or intellectual, cannot be mobilized. ("The Lion and the Unicorn" 342)

Orwell's answer to Hitler was in mobilizing Britain through Socialism, an equalizing force that he thought had the ability to "bring patriotism and intelligence into partnership" (332).

What Orwell always retained, the balance that made his generosity possible, was his consistent attempt to remain objective. His criticism is even-handed; he agrees with Alfred Noyes that "the intelligentsia are more infected by totalitarian ideas than the common people, and are partly to blame for the mess we are now in" ("Review of The Edge of the Abyss by Alfred Noyes" 550). He is also quick to point out that "the

² Unconquered parts of the earth that serve as havens for the liberal tradition figure prominently in Brave New World, We, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Fahrenheit 451, and other dystopian novels.

intellectuals whom [Noyes] *does* approve of are only very doubtfully on the side of angels. One, of course, is Carlyle, who was one of the founders of the modern worship of power and success, and who applauded the third German war of aggression as vociferously as Pound did the fifth” (551).

Noyes appeared to be of a mind with Orwell when he said that “The English speaking peoples hitherto have always been able to distinguish between love of country, and State-worship,” yet he disagrees with Noyes in his critical treatment of certain individuals (The Edge of the Abyss 9). Noyes ruthlessly attacked Pound as “a charlatan now broadcasting against us from Italy” (82). Orwell agreed with Noyes that “His broadcasts were disgusting” but resisted the temptation to let that feeling taint his criticism (“A Prize for Ezra Pound” 1362). The even-handed critic Orwell simply wrote, “I think the Bollingen Foundation were quite right to award Pound [their poetry] prize, if they believed his poems to be the best of the year, but I think also that one ought to keep Pound’s career in memory and not feel that his ideas are made respectable by the mere fact of winning a literary prize” (“A Prize for Ezra Pound” 1362).

To be able to concede the merits of one’s adversary whether or not he personally likes him is a mark of a truly generous critic. Writing of Salvador Dali, Orwell suggested the critical necessity for one to be able to hold the man separate from his art: “One ought to be able to hold in one’s head simultaneously the two facts that Dali is a good draughtsman and a disgusting human being” (“Benefit of Clergy: Some Notes on Salvador Dali” 656). This essential fairness—one’s critical ability to think differently of an artist than he does his art—is corrupted in Nineteen Eighty-Four when a Party that will brook no criticism creates “doublethink,” requiring that one be able simultaneously to

hold two contradicting ideas if the state orders him to. Orwell wanted to show us how being closed-minded, mean-spirited, and ungenerous can ruin us. Generous anger and personal decency became his yin and yang, and he strove at all times to maintain their balance. People remember Orwell largely as a novelist and satirist rather than as an essayist, and though he died too soon to reap the material benefits of Nineteen Eighty-Four, it is fitting that he made his mark on the literary world through that novel, the “product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual” (“Inside the Whale” 239). His final two novels speak out against a totalitarian world that was incubating in the 1930s, when Blair became Orwell and during a time of which he noted, “No decade in the past hundred and fifty years has been so barren of imaginative prose” (“Inside the Whale” 239).

In 1943, Alfred Noyes stated his concern over the virtual disappearance of what Orwell called a “free intelligence.” Independent thinking had certainly been lacking in the totalitarian groupthink of the 1930s, and it took a war to bring it back. Noyes recounts the absence of “the intelligentsia of the ‘literary world’” at the funeral of Rudyard Kipling, a man whom Orwell admired: “the Abbey was packed from end to end with men: men who had done things; men who had built ships and governed countries; men with minds of their own” (The Edge of the Abyss 101-2). Orwell was just such a man, and it would have been just as appropriate had he, like Kipling, been “laid to rest by the side of Dickens” (101). He said that Dickens’s burial in Westminster was a “species of theft” (“Charles Dickens” 135). Perhaps his *not* joining Dickens and Kipling in Westminster Abbey is, as well (“Charles Dickens” 135).

Conclusion: “What Next?”

In the course of researching and writing this project, a lot about the world has changed: an Iranian hardliner has ousted a reformist, embarked on a love-hate relationship with his own people, and exploited his hate-hate relationships with Israel and the United States as an attack on Western influence in the Middle East; the Democratic Party has assumed a majority in both houses of the US Congress; Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has resigned; Saddam Hussein has been tried, sentenced, and hanged by his own people; North Korea, Iran, India, and China have been openly testing ballistic missiles; North Korea has tested its nuclear capabilities underground; the US is developing and exporting its anti-missile capabilities; Russia is sending anti-missile systems to Iran, breaking a Clinton-era agreement (“Russia Sends Anti-US Missile Defense to Iran”); Fidel Castro is at death’s door; and Hugo Chavez is making himself a socialist demigod in Venezuela.

Indeed, it has been hard to decide when and where to draw my conclusions: every time I pick up a newspaper or turn on the telescreen, I can hear Orwell speaking to me. His ideas live on in anyone who dares to speak his own mind freely. Nick Cohen of The Observer states this feeling well: “Orwell gives you an attitude rather than an ideology. When you want to write a piece you know your editor will hate and your readers will hate, Orwell is on your side” (13 Feb. 2007). Many of the events outlined above are tied together, and one can make the necessary connections if he has the time, patience, and interest to start peeling the onion. But this would be a project without end, and it is best in the hands of a prophet or a polemicist with more endurance than I.

Orwell was just such a man: he once wrote to Brenda Salkeld, “This age makes me so

sick that sometimes I am almost impelled to stop at a corner and start calling down curses from Heaven like Jeremiah or Ezra [. . .]” (CEJL 1. 140). Although he never called himself a prophet, in the words of V.S. Pritchett, he “prided himself on seeing through the rackets, and on conveying the impression of living without the solace or even the need of a single illusion” (“The Passing Traveller”). Pritchett’s piece also calls Orwell a saint, but Orwell rejected sainthood because he saw the idea of sainthood to be in opposition with one’s retention of his essential humanity, his existence among the common:

The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one *is* sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty, that one does not push asceticism to the point where it makes friendly intercourse impossible, and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one’s love upon other human individuals. No doubt alcohol, tobacco and so forth are things that a saint must avoid, but sainthood is also a thing that human beings must avoid. (“Reflections on Gandhi” 1353)

Every age needs an Orwell to counterbalance its liars and self-promoters, to reject sainthood, to champion the common people.

One hears frequent references to Orwell “rolling in his grave,” and I often wonder what he would say to statements such as President Bush’s: “I just want you to know that, when we talk about war, we’re really talking about peace” (“Remarks by the President on Homeownership”). In fairness to the President, I know exactly what he meant by this statement in its context. All educated people should. But like Orwell, I also know that

words can be weapons, and some people's triggers are too loose. Free societies rely on the power of individuals to employ words responsibly and correct those who do not. That is a duty for the media, for the intelligentsia Orwell so liked to attack, and for the *common* citizen who, unfortunately these days, instead appears to be too caught up buying lottery tickets and watching "reality TV." Orwell had hoped that the common people would become more involved in their own fates, as portrayed by Smith's hope for the proles in Nineteen Eighty-Four.

We should not be too quick to overestimate Orwell's admiration for the common people, though. His account of Hardcastle's repeated beatings at St. Cyprian's in "Such, Such Were the Joys" shows how the common people's ignorance was often detestable and a threat to common freedoms. The lower classes more than occasionally frustrated him, and his diaries give further evidence. In a pub in 1936, he felt compelled to announce the recent news, "The German army has crossed the Rhine," to which he heard a patron murmur "Parley-voo"¹ ("War-time Diary" 479). He often felt that in dealing with the lower classes and their blatant disregard for what was going on around them, one found himself "kicking against an impenetrable wall of stupidity" (ibid. 480).

Notwithstanding their "stupidity," Orwell still saw the common classes as those who would resist the corruptions of dystopian society. The critical elements of the dystopias popularized by Wells, Huxley, Orwell, and Bradbury begin with Plato's The Republic: government control of education, eradication of the arts, and state control over reproduction, to name a few. Plato suggests an eventual evolution of state leadership

¹ Orwell's surprised announcement perfectly fit the meter of the popular World War One song, "Mademoiselle from Armentieres," whose refrain was "Hinky, dinky, parley-voo." His distaste for this common bastardization of French also appears in Keep the Aspidistra Flying, in which two prostitutes hear Comstock and Ravelston speaking French and one exclaims, "Parley voo Francey!"

from representative government to tyranny. This is a popular theme for writers who propose that today people are forfeiting individual freedoms in the name of security under the state.

Plato's Republic proposes that a tyrant uses wars or the threats thereof to keep his people dependent on him, and in the absence of war, the people "may be impoverished by payment of taxes, and thus compelled to devote themselves to their daily wants and therefore less likely to conspire against him" (n. pag.). Such a scheme works not only under capitalism but also under socialism. Consider Venezuela, where Hugo Chavez promises steep taxes in a massive program of socialist equalization. One could say that although Chavez is not warlike, he is capable of using socialist taxation to enslave his people. This sounds paranoid, but we must remember that he has also proposed declaring himself head spiritual leader of a state religion in a bid to "manipulate the religious message into a purely nationalistic one of which he was the lone star" (Morris). At the end of January 2007 he was given the power to rule by decree in order to remake Venezuela's economy, further expanding his power over the people ("Chavez gets power").

The ingredients for totalitarianism are present in Venezuela today, and this situation screams for commentary. Orwell had said that fascists of the 1940s gained power under the guise of socialism. Some would argue that communism and socialism have been disproven and that Orwell no longer applies. I, however, would say that we need Orwell today because in figures such as Hugo Chavez we have more of the same: a tax-happy, nationalistic president who also wants to be a high priest who rules by decree. Venezuelan high school teacher Luis Gonzalez said, "We're headed toward a

dictatorship, disguised as a democracy,” and Vice President Jorge Rodriguez says, “Dictatorship is what there used to be. We want to impose the dictatorship of a true democracy” (“Chavez gets power”). You did not read that incorrectly; he really said it: “impose the dictatorship of a true democracy.”

Bush’s “when we talk about war, we’re really talking about peace” is, in my opinion, a classic Bushism: the mouth moves faster than the brain. Rodriguez’s comment above, however, represents outright Newspeak. Thankfully, Venezuelan oppositionists such as Luis Gonzalez still have the freedom to say what they think. But how long will it be before calling Chavez “El Loco” (which, according to Jonathan Morris, is a popular nickname for Chavez) is a jailable offense? When will Chavez lay the cornerstone of the Ministry of Truth? Perhaps never—but then again, perhaps soon. One wonders what the Vatican—which lays spiritual claim to 90% of Venezuelans—will do if Chavez follows through on his proposal to become the high priest of his own national religion. Orwell had seen Catholicism and fascism go hand-in-hand in Spain, and he would surely watch with interest to see if the Vatican would speak for the common people—if only to protect its own influence over them—against Chavez’s totalitarian-leaning proposal.

Orwell argued for democracy because it promises a voice to the common man, and that is who he stood for. We cannot forget this, for it is what makes him relevant to our age. His final novel, Nineteen Eighty-Four, gives us a glimpse of what he thought the world, uncorrected by the power of the masses, could become. Although he was no prophet, he saw options and presented us with two: the triumph of common men through the democratic rule of the proles or the enslavement and impotence of Winston Smith and the victory of O’Brien’s tyranny. His work suggests that we have a choice, and if we

hazard it to be made for us because of our silence, cowardice, or complacency, we will lose everything. If, perchance, the O'Briens win, this world will not be worth saving.

Orwell could not accurately predict today's socioeconomic, technological, and political conditions, of course. We are interconnected today in ways that people 50 years ago would not have believed: economically, genetically, linguistically, and electronically, to name a few. One wonders whether politics are in fact getting "dirtier," or whether we simply can see the details more clearly because we are interconnected and information is so much easier to share. Today, the idea of Middle Eastern "democracy" hangs in the balance in Iraq and a strange form of free-market capitalism is on the rise in China. Orwell could not have foreseen these things, but he knew that excessive wealth and power lead to corruption, and corruption leads to war. Only common decency can save us from these things.

Jeffrey Meyers writes that Nineteen Eighty-Four shows us "a totalitarian state in which religion has been replaced by the cult of an omnipotent leader" (294). Orwell told Charles Curran that the question Nineteen Eighty-Four engaged was "Can we get men to behave decently to each other if they no longer believe in God?" (ibid.). Our problem today is not so much men's inability to act decently because they do not believe in God, but rather because in some cases they *do...a lot*. An analysis of the current struggle between fundamentalist Islam and Western liberalism could easily lead to a faulty parallel between Cromwell's protestant revolution in England and Islamic rule in Afghanistan. After all, how different is Cromwell's destruction of stained glass in churches from the Taliban's destruction of the ancient Buddha statues in Afghanistan? It is quite a bit different, actually.

Cromwell's revolution in 1640s England was a development of the Protestant Reformation initiated by Martin Luther in 1517. The usurping of military power from the Crown, creating the New Model Army—a *people's* army—in England, was part of a struggle to make truth available to the common man. The power of the priesthood, which historically has sought to protect its own power by prohibiting vernacular translations or public versions of holy books and rites, came under direct attack under Cromwell. His destruction of the stained glass in churches was an ideological statement: the common people no longer needed saints and intercessors—the Book was sufficient unto itself, in the Puritan's mind.

The insistence that all of life's answers may be found in a single, protected, approved text is a hallmark of many types of fundamentalism. Emmanuel Goldstein's book The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism was a guarded secret in Nineteen Eighty-Four, like the Latin Vulgate and hardline Islam's injunction against women's reading of the Koran. Winston Smith's possession of Goldstein's book represents the common man's attempt to learn for himself, his attempt to join the "Protestant martyrs and militants, from William Tyndale to John Bunyan, who had insisted on a plain English bible [sic] and denied the right of a sly priesthood to conduct its business only in the arcane tongue of Latin" (Hitchens Thomas Paine 89).

As we have discussed, Orwell was a direct intellectual heir of the Protestant Reformation: he saw no reason why anyone should have to have someone else do his thinking for him. The things he saw happening around him then are still happening now: censorship, political correctness, lies, deception, obfuscation, and graft. He knew that

one of the first ways to prevent corruption and promote freedom is to ensure a “vigorous literature”:

The thing that politicians are seemingly unable to understand is that you cannot produce a vigorous literature by terrorizing everyone into conformity. A writer’s inventive faculties will not work unless he is allowed to say approximately what he feels. You can destroy spontaneity and produce a literature which is orthodox but feeble, or you can let people say what they choose and take the risk that some of them will utter heresies. There is no way out of that dilemma so long as books have to be written by individuals. (“As I Please 68” 1159)

In this piece, he was writing in 1947 about Andrei Zhdanov’s purging of writers in Yugoslavia, but he may as well have been discussing a fatwa on Salman Rushdie:

The purpose of literature is to glorify the Soviet Union; surely that must be obvious to everyone? But instead of carrying out their plain duty, these misguided writers keep straying away from the paths of propaganda, producing non-political works, and even, in the case of Zoschenko, allowing a satirical note to creep into their writings. It is all very painful and bewildering. (“As I Please 68” 1158)

Today’s mullah, like yesterday’s political commissar, believes only that there is a place for literature when it serves the regime.

In Reading Lolita in Tehran, Azar Nafisi defended literature before her students, some of whom were Islamic hardliners, by saying, “A great novel heightens your senses and sensitivity to the complexities of life and of individuals, and prevents you from the self-

righteousness that sees morality in fixed formulas about good and evil” (133). Orwell similarly stated, “literature is an attempt to influence the views of one’s contemporaries by recording experience” (“The Prevention of Literature” 937). Although Nafisi could not stay in Iran under its highly restrictive conditions, one trusts her words will influence the future leadership of a country that desperately needs reform and can serve as an example to its entire region.

The Middle East needs its Martin Luther as soon as possible: someone who will stand up to fundamentalist orthodoxy and rebuild the faith without first destroying it altogether. In Iran, a youthful population—its common people—tries to educate and open itself to the West despite strict Islamic control of the government and education. It is hard to imagine a group of young people risking their freedom in order to read and discuss Nabokov, Austen, or James, but that is exactly what is happening behind closed doors in the Islamic Republic. If there is a Luther in Tehran today, he or she is reading forbidden books (among which, ironically, Orwell’s own works lie). The struggle in this clash of civilizations shall be decided on whether or not such books, and the ideas, knowledge, and basic freedoms they represent, will be available to the common people. That, at least, is what Orwell would say.

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