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British Fascism in the 1930s in Life and Literature

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A Thesis

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Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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By

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## ABSTRACT

Political and economic turmoil in 1930s Britain gave rise to a home-grown fascist movement led by the controversial Oswald Mosley. Literature of this period by Joseph O'Neill and Rex Warner mirrored the internal nature of the British fascist movement by depicting fascist-like societies embedded under or entrenched within the English countryside. Their metaphors of fascism rising as a solution to fear and disorder conjure the threat of fascism that was rising in Europe in that period. The metaphors are made more particularly relevant by the fact that the forces of Italian, German, and British fascism were not invasions from without, but growths from within. Furthermore, the recipe of severe political and economic downturn combined with the rise of a charismatic group leading their distressed people toward fascism is still relevant today in Greece and other European countries.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The inter-war period (1918-1939) was a tumultuous time in British politics and culture. Unemployment and financial hardship ran rampant as the New York stock market crash crippled Britain's economy as well, and as foreign competition and outsourcing undercut Britain's staple industries. A nation that was once a leader in the export trade and on the international market was now a financial shadow of its former self. These problems, combined with the cultural shock felt throughout Europe following WWI, drew many people to question whether the old and long-established order was sufficient to deal with modern problems. In the eyes of many, Parliament and the old tradition of British politics had failed. With the ascension of Hitler in Germany, fascism was like a specter looming over the British people. Some feared it, believing it to be the end of individuality and of all that was still good about the old order. Others, though, believed that fascism was the answer to all of the nation's problems – a movement of efficiency, action, vitality, and youth that would breathe new life into British politics and bring the people back into ascendancy on an international scale.

The inter-war period was marked by disillusionment. The populace came to see the old heroes as shallow profit-seekers. Even Lloyd George, who was regarded after WWI as “the man who won the war,” felt public and Parliamentary opinion turn on him as an amoral profit-seeker for his selling of honorary titles, efforts to appease Germany,

and the cutting of government expenditure despite his efforts to draft social reforms in education and housing (Malcolm and Pearce 219-221). It was a period of dogged loyalty to old ways even in the face of new and ever-evolving problems that demanded new methods of solving them. Philip Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1929 to 1931, was not particularly effective for this very reason. Just as Britain had restored the pound to the gold standard in 1925, the 1929 American stock market crash hit European financial centers hard. This blow to the British economy rendered it unstable, and Snowden stubbornly ignored all advice to remove the gold standard, devalue the pound, and adopt protectionist policies. Instead, Snowden followed a more conservative and traditional policy of raising taxes and cutting government expenses. The direct result of this was a surge in unemployment until rates reached twenty-three percent in 1931 (Malcolm and Pearce 266).

The unemployment problem was fueled not only by ineffective government policies, but by the death and decline of Britain's staple industries, such as textiles and ship building. After 1920, unemployment never dropped below one million for the whole of the inter-war years. To bankers, the economy and world trade dominance that Britain enjoyed before WWI appeared as a "blissful golden age before the fall" (348-353). If employment levels in the past had experienced cyclical ups and downs, that hope was removed with the slow dying of Britain's main industries. It was a time of little hope for the average worker (348-353).

During this time of uncertainty, Oswald Mosley, the charismatic and controversial leader of the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s, came forward to present himself as the answer to these dilemmas. Born in 1896 to an old aristocratic family, he served in WWI and returned home determined to make his country a better place for workers and for other returning veterans. He began his career as a young maverick MP, raising his banner for Parliamentary reforms and an end to unemployment. His ideas however were not well received by most of the other MPs who dismissed them as impractical, mostly because they cut against the grain of the old, long-established ways of doing things. When the Conservative Party threatened to expel him, he left the Party and won back his seat as an Independent. It was not long before he left the Independents as well and joined Labour.

Finding no home for his New Deal-esque ideas, the ambitious and egotistical Mosley resigned from Parliament, hoping to take the younger and more able MPs with him to start the New Party and revolutionize British government. However, only a handful came with him, and his New Party was a failure. While he had hoped to revolutionize the government using the strength of his ideas and his personal popularity, he did not count on the possibility that his sunshine supporters would be unwilling to sacrifice their governmental and industrial alliances. In one notable case, the keynote speaker at the inauguration of his Party refused to come. Mosley, very ill, had himself carried to the man's house on a stretcher; the man told Mosley that he was afraid of losing his trade union job by openly supporting Mosley (Mosley ML 283).

Ultimately, it was the early whiffs of fascism in his New Party philosophy that drove away his few followers. His call for a powerful central executive stank of totalitarianism and dictatorship, and his youth movement, Nupa, was not only militaristic, but was openly modeled on Nazism. Nupa was a collection of young men parading in black uniforms and gathering at barracks to train in boxing. Even after the end of the New Party, Mosley never abandoned the black uniforms and the marching until later public demonstration laws forced him to do so. According to Mosley and his remaining followers, the original New Party members had defected in a misguided attempt to be more unified with the working class, and the Mosleyites blamed the defectors for the failure of the New Party (Chesterton 104). However, some of them openly stated that they had left because Mosley was too ambivalent on unemployment, too imperialistic regarding India and the dominions, and too militaristic in his designs for Nupa (Worley 54). As for the non-intellectual elements of the New Party, Worley notes that: "Far from rallying the 'best' elements to its cause, the New Party drew to its ranks the disaffected, the defeated and the disengaged" (168). Even if this was true of many or even most New Party members, John Strachey and Allan Young, who had followed Mosley out of Parliament, were his chief support in this endeavor and abandoned him primarily because of their fear of the fascism into which his socialism was transforming before their eyes. According to Worley, Mosley found no place for Marxism in his attempt to "recast the 'soul of England,'" and the Bolshevik trappings of class war were "anathema to him" (30). While Mosley admired the planned economy of the Soviet state, he disliked its



methods and preferred the controlled capitalism of the United States, which at the time more closely resembled his own definition of socialism (30).

After the failure of the New Party, Mosley began the British Union of Fascists. The BUF came into being in 1932, after unsuccessful, albeit only halfhearted, attempts to join with existing Fascist groups in Britain. In forming and organizing Nupa, Mosley had begun his study of Nazism. His study of Nazi technique was meant to inform his transition from New Party to BUF (Worley 82). Furthermore, Mosley's attraction to Fascism was influenced by his own worldview and self-image: "Mosley regarded himself as a leader, and he found in Fascism a corporate vision that tallied with his own wartime experience and the quasi-feudal memories of his childhood" (71). Mosley and his new fascist supporters held him up as the nation's new hero, fighting against "the strongest conspiracy of vested powers in the world" (Chesterton 113, 155). The fascist system, they argued, was not extreme, but merely a logical answer to Britain's problems and a practical way to improve the lives of its citizens (Chesterton 113, 155).

If Mosley's first mistake was to assume that his personal popularity would be enough to break up and re-form Parliament, his second was to adopt a stance of anti-Semitism. Even though adding anti-Semitism to his platform brought him some supporters, it alienated many other potential supporters who agreed with his ideas and sentiments, but were turned off by his racism – which grew until it was too theatrically and ideologically extreme for the tastes of many conservatives, who were closer to

Mosley on the political spectrum than were his detractors on the Left. While at first he gained some support among the unemployed by railing against first-generation “aliens” who took jobs from British people, at a later stage of his anti-Semitic development, he described all Jews as “aliens,” even if they had been born in Britain and their families had established themselves there as British citizens. What began as a familiar appeal to the unemployed by establishing job-seeking immigrants as scapegoats evolved into an anti-Semitism that appealed to the lowest common denominator. In his “Britain First” speech (1939), he attributed all of society’s ills to the open-door immigration policy and to the cultural influence of Jews in the entertainment industry (41).

Even though he blamed some of the nation’s unemployment on immigrants and Jews, he placed most of the blame on Parliament. Every financial or economic move Parliament made, according to Mosley, was a conspiracy against the British people to increase the profits of bankers and foreign (Jewish, of course) financiers. Many of his views, in fact, contradicted each other. Brewer wrote that,

This conflict between reason and abuse was the basic contradiction of the BUF. Within it were contained intellectual utopias for a Corporate State in Britain joined by racial abuse; reasoned economic argument among genuine reformers was matched by anti-Semitism; a desire to rid the sick, needy and impoverished of their burden was joined by a desire to rid Britain of “aliens” (4).

If his proclaimed goal was to bring peace and prosperity to the British people, his paramilitary displays and marches through Jewish neighborhoods shouting anti-Semitic slogans portrayed a darker and more violent aim. One of his former followers recollected

that the BUF was always playing for attention and spectacle, going “in for the gimmicky stuff,” and using violence at meetings to build a bond between members (39-40).

Despite any respect Mosley garnered among some for his actual policies regardless of his theatricality, BUF rhetoric after 1934 took a turn for the sensational, inflammatory, and anti-Semitic. Mosley seemed to transform himself from a disillusioned idealist with concrete economic policies to the leader of a violence-prone organization promoting racism, imperialism, and jingoistic patriotism. Mosley’s arguments came to rely less on measured logic and more on verbal abuse flung at his opponents. His propaganda would refer to opponents as “she-men and he-women,” and he accused those who disagreed with his message of merely misinterpreting it and turning it into “the English beauty of a Shakespearian play translated into Esperanto and acted by stuttering Levantine Jews” (Chesterton 46, 115). Eventually his regular *Action* articles seemed geared to enflame his readers with anger rather than provoke them to thought. He adopted offensive language toward more groups than just Communists and Jews, as we see in his article “None Shall Stuff While Others Starve,” (1936) where he admonishes the wealthy, the foreign, and the non-white for displaying luxury while British people were living in poverty:

Nothing can stop the disgusting spectacle of bemused sots swilling and guzzling to the strains of a highly paid American-negro band while British folk starve in hovels except a new movement of national renaissance backed by the wills and conscience of an awakened nation (9).

It seemed that the list of people Mosley disapproved of only grew longer with the passage of time.

The violence Mosley's movement attracted came in the form of fist fights between young communists and young fascists at his great outdoor meetings, which Mosley entirely blamed on the communists. He claimed vehemently that he and his movement were innocent victims, despite his group's military-style uniforms and copious use of brass knuckles. The violence attracted by his movement was more or less bookended by two main confrontations – the Olympia meeting in 1934 and the Battle of Cable Street in 1936. The Olympia Hall meeting occurred shortly into the existence of the BUF, and brought the BUF much criticism, as onlookers felt that the Blackshirts were unnecessarily violent with intruding communist protesters. It was this meeting that lost the BUF much of its popular press support. The fallout from the Olympia meeting was what prompted Lord Rothermere, Mosley's greatest media ally, to stop his coverage of Mosley's meetings in his newspaper *The Daily Mail*. The Battle of Cable Street was marked by a Jewish and communist counter-protest against Mosley's major march through London's East End to celebrate the organization's anniversary and to protest the presence of Jews there. The result was much violence, and, while some have argued that the Jewish and communist backlash against the BUF did nothing to staunch the flow of fascist sentiment, it was remembered as the day that London Jews stood up to fascist bullying. Cable Street also marked the beginning of the end for the BUF, as it caused the British public to see the organization as a threat to public safety. This led to the passage

of the Public Order Act of 1936, which outlawed the use of political uniforms (McCloud 693).

This blow to BUF custom and image, coupled with the BUF's internal corruption, infighting, and financial problems, led to the evaporation of most of Mosley's political and financial support. Mosley seemed practically blind to the problems his organization faced, and he blamed the BUF's lack of success at the polls on the fact that the nation had a temporary boom and that unemployment in Britain never equaled that of Germany. He believed to the end that, had Britain endured a greater crisis, he would have become the leader of a fascist Britain. He even dreamed of an entire Europe united under fascist rule (Mosley ML 278-292).

World War II, the event that Mosley vehemently opposed before it was even a concrete possibility, proved in the end the final downfall of the BUF. Mosley protested years before the fact that Jews "were attempting to engineer a 'war of revenge' against Germany" (Tilles 46) Some were sympathetic to this position, and had real misgivings about Britain's involvement in another major war (46). Mosley's *Action* articles focused on little else during this period, and he dedicated them to criticizing the government's alliance with the Soviet Union, its failure to ally itself with Germany and Italy, its failure to focus on national defense, and, of course, the supposed Jewish-Communist war conspiracy. Mosley's arguments against the war eventually devolved into vapid rhetoric and name-calling. In articles such as "The Democrats' Harlequinade," (1936) his main

arguments consisted of spotlighting Jews in leadership positions (9). This seemed to be an end in itself, as if he expected his readers to oppose such figures as Maxim Litvinov simply because he had called him a Jew. He began to rely on *ad populum* phrases such as “everyone knows that...” and “even a child could understand that...” He argued in an article on Lloyd George that “Labour today is not only a Party of war but a Party of defeat, which seeks struggle with Germany, Italy, and Japan, while denying the nation sufficient arms to fight a Portugal” (Mosley DH 9). Mosley’s arguments relied on setting up his opponents as straw men and then easily blowing them over. Every Jewish person was an enemy of the State. Every MP was a careerist and an enemy of the people.

By 1939, Mosley’s anti-war *Action* articles reached a fever pitch as he lambasted the government for going to war at the behest of Jewish arms manufacturers and Jewish interests seeking revenge against Hitler for his maltreatment of Jews. He held that the British people unanimously wanted peace, and that only “International Finance” was driving the government to consider war. He argued in 1940 in “Is the Government Mad?” that to go to war with Germany – a country that had been stockpiling supplies as if in preparation for a siege – would irresponsibly deprive Britain of resources at a time when poverty was still a significant presence (5). One article in particular by Alexander Raven Thomson, one of Mosley’s propagandists, might be almost sickly amusing to the modern reader. “The Human Side of Hitlerism” (1933) recounts a trip Thomson took to a real life concentration camp:

The political prisoners are housed in army huts, sleeping in double tiered army beds, everything very clean and tidy. The men themselves were occupied in excavating a new open air swimming bath, and all looked very fit and well, as if the out-of-doors work agreed with them. None were bandaged or showed signs of bruising or ill-treatment...(1)

Ultimately, the British government was not impressed with Mosley's cronies and their take on "the human side of Hitlerism" with its concentration camp open air swimming baths. In 1940, after the outbreak of World War II, Mosley was incarcerated under Regulation 18b for having possible connections with Hitler and was detained throughout the war. McCloud feels that Mosley's incarceration during WWII dealt the killing blow to the British Fascists (688). Indeed, after Mosley – along with other leaders in the Party and his wife Diana – was imprisoned, the BUF dissipated and would never again reform itself.

Mosley was indeed a political sensation, however unsuccessful he may have been in his attempts to create a British fascist nation. His activities as the British fascist leader garnered the attention of Parliament and the British people. He was a political celebrity for most of his career, and his name and activities were known to many. Thus, not being one confined to obscurity, his philosophy, especially in light of the political tumult occurring in Italy, Germany, and Spain, was an object of curiosity, scorn, and fear. It was a philosophy that was satirized in some contemporary literature.

Dystopia and katabasis were highly appropriate media for this kind of satire. Michael Thurston argues that katabasis – the journey into the underworld – was a frequent tool for social critique in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The journey into the underworld

beneath a character's home society is particularly apt for exploring the darker side of a society, as the underworld is itself a symbol for the dark and unseen side of the world. The world underneath a society is both separate from the society, which allows for outside observation, and connected to the society, which allows the reader to connect the problems of the underworld with the problems of the overworld. It can even be argued that the underworld that reveals the darker elements of a culture is, in fact, a rendition of the culture itself with all the niceties of the surface stripped away (55-71).

Dystopias, defined by Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash as "histories of the present," can be a powerful medium for social critique, especially when combined with an underworld journey. While a utopia is an idealized vision of a future society that, like a dystopia, can make present social problems more clear, a dystopia is not the opposite of a utopia but rather a utopia that has gone awry. A dystopia is not an unplanned or nonexistent society, which would be a more accurate description of the opposite of a utopia, but a utopia that was supposed to solve its nation's problems, but instead came only to serve a certain segment of the population or not to serve its population in any positive way (1-2).

Dystopian literature sprang up during the inter-war and World War II environments in the writings of such authors as George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and Katharine Burdekin. Orwell's *1984* is arguably the most famous of these, along with Huxley's *Brave New World*. Both of these works explore the degradation of society in



different ways – Huxley’s focusing on the decadent, pleasure-seeking, and youth-oriented elements of society becoming dominant, and Orwell’s focusing on the development of a nightmarish totalitarian regime based on Communism. In *Swastika Night* Burdekin imagined a futuristic world in which Nazism won the war, and Germany came to rule the world in a warlike, Teutonic, and feudalistic style.

For the purposes of exploring the threat of fascism, however, these works are not necessarily apt. Even though the BUF wished to purge the nation of its pleasure-seeking decadence and replace those values with a more Spartan and athletic code of values, this was a secondary goal rather than a primary. While Huxley presents a world that satirizes the vapid social culture of the disillusioned inter-war period, he does not advance a critique of a new fascist society. Orwell’s world of *1984* is indeed totalitarian enough to bear resemblance to a fully empowered fascist society, his vision was one of a Communist state rather than a fascist one. Burdekin’s dystopia did feature the rise and rule of a fascist state, but it was one that imagined a return to a more pastoral and feudalistic way of life. *Swastika Night* spends a great deal of time on the plight of women in this new dystopian future – it is a future in which women are half starved and kept in herds like cattle. They are considered subhuman and are only allowed to live for the purposes of breeding. It is a society that focuses on the ultra-masculine element of a fascist society, but none of fascism’s other key components.

However, two novels of the time that have since been resigned to obscurity both capture the essential elements of a fascist society and critique them in a dystopia. *Land Under England* by Joseph O'Neill and *The Aerodrome* by Rex Warner simultaneously depict the average citizen's attraction to and repulsion from the authoritarian ideology of totalitarianism. O'Neill's novel has the added element of katabasis to inform its social critique. The main characters of the novels (Anthony in O'Neill and Roy in Warner) seek out fascism as an alternative to a disordered life centered on work and emotion, yet both protagonists come to see totalitarianism as a negation of humanity.

Joseph O'Neill (1886-1953) was a little-known novelist and education minister in Ireland, whose novel *Land Under England* (1935) portrayed an old Roman-style civilization far beneath the earth's surface under Hadrian's wall. In his few writings outside of his novels, he compared contemporary education systems to those of the old Roman Empire, and argued that they were designed to train young people to conform to society and to serve the needs of the State – much like a fascist system. Indeed, the underground society he portrays in *Land Under England* is similar to the domestic fascist movement then springing up in England – the British Union of Fascists.

Rex Warner (1905-1986), a novelist and academic, was a harsh critic of his own time. He observed that his contemporaries had lost many of their old values, including belief in God, scientific scrutiny, and the value of the individual. However, he also sympathized with his contemporaries, noting that the loss of these values was the result

of disillusionment. He shared their belief that the old order might not have been sufficient to deal with the problems of a new era. He believed that a system like fascism would likely emerge to replace it. In his essay "On Freedom of Expression," Rex Warner speculated on what a conversation between Roman poets Horace and Virgil would look like, particularly in their declining years and in the context of the old Republic giving way to the new Empire. This is the political scenario he saw in the 1940s, as he wrote that whatever political order came next would have to include a planned economy and a system based on efficiency (150-165). Yet, he was afraid of fascism as the logical replacement of the old democracy. He painted a picture of a fascist leader emerging like a tragic hero to lead the people out of the old democracy, but one who fails to deliver them a system that solves all of their problems or improves their current situation. In his novel *The Aerodrome* (1941), he presented an allegory of fascism vs. democracy which highlighted all the strengths and weaknesses of both systems and favored a return to the old democracy, despite all of its faults and inefficiencies.

Both of these novels – particularly *The Aerodrome* – resemble some of the tenets of Italian Futurism, an art movement with ties to the political world and fascism in particular. It was a movement that praised the advance of technology, masculinity, and nationalism to create a glorious new future. It was a movement so similar in its basic tenets to fascism that it had political ties to Mussolini's fascist movement and later on attempted to be the official art movement of the established fascist state (Thompson 256-259). Filippo Tomaso Marinetti, the movement's founder, used his paintings and his

writings to describe an expedition to “the promised Land of the Future in terms of a Shamanic journey, complete with a descent into the underworld” (Berghaus 50). In *Land Under England*, Anthony journeys into the underworld and finds the fascist Land of the Future, but it is dark and nightmarish. It is an inversion of Marinetti’s more positive katabasis that reveals a spiritual journey into the advanced state of the future.

Perhaps the most striking similarity between Futurism and *The Aerodrome* is the focus on aviation. Futurist artists were fascinated with aviation, and often depicted aircraft rising up from the earth, just like the aircraft in Warner’s novel. The Futurists’ fascination with aviation was “a logical extension of the foundational Futurist ideas of speed, virility, and the unity of man and machine” (Braun 269). In fact, aviation was a symbol the fascist state in Italy often used as a kind of propaganda to encourage a sense of invincibility in the populace. This was done to gear up the people for war, which the Futurists embraced as the world’s hygiene (229). In a way, the vision of the aircraft rising from the earth was a fascist symbol of the superior people mightily rising up into the glorious future.

The problems Britain encountered after the First World War were apparent to all, and they spanned cultural, economic, and political boundaries. Fascism rose up as a solution to these problems in Italy, Germany, and Spain, becoming a force to be reckoned with. Fascism was embraced as the answer by some, and shunned and feared as the end of the old and the sacred by others. In England, the greatest fear of fascism was not of an

outside invasion by a foreign power, but of the internal growth of fascism within its own people. This is reflected in the symbolism of the novels *Land Under England* and *The Aerodrome*. In *Land Under England*, the threat comes from underneath the very soil of the nation. In *The Aerodrome*, the threat comes from a presumably friendly power blended into the nearby landscape. However, in both novels, the protagonist experiences the fullness of the fascist power, and comes home to the old way, despite all of its faults and shortcomings – just as the British people did when faced with the choice between a crumbling and outdated government and a cold, efficient system of totalitarianism. This study of power and freedom is important for understanding the extremes to which order can manifest itself in government and the human soul, and demonstrates that this is an important and ongoing conversation in our world.

Yet, despite fascism's rise in Europe as the purported solution to its problems, a concrete definition of fascism is slippery, so much so that some scholars such as Stein Larsen contend that it is impossible to put forth such a definition. In fact, he argues that any attempts to define fascism should be fluid rather than absolute, and should only be in the interests of creating pedagogical tools for study and discussion because the firm classification of fascism is futile (14-15). Stanley Payne acknowledges the difficulty in classification, but makes the attempt nonetheless. Payne notes that the very name "fascism" defies classification, as it simply refers to the Roman fasces symbol representing strength through unity. He also points out that many people have used the word "fascism" interchangeably with "brutal," "repressive," and "dictatorial," but if

fascism by definition is a union promoting dictatorial brutality, then the name could apply to many movements, including Communism, that are not the same as fascism (3).

Fascist groups in various countries often differed from one another in their philosophies, which led some people to argue that fascism has no coherent or guiding principles. It is true that fascism, unlike movements like Communism, has no uniform and guiding manifesto. For instance, some fascist movements were anti-Semitic, like National Socialism and the BUF in its later stages, and others, like the Italian movement, were not anti-Semitic. And, while all fascist movements gravitated toward economic issues, not all embraced the Italian corporate state. National Socialism in particular rejected that model due to its inherent pluralism. Some fascist movements espoused expansionist and imperialist politics, and others did not. Some openly called for war, while others appreciated military values but did not make plans for war (11).

These differences lead Robert Paxton to argue that fascism is not so much a clearly definable entity, but an amalgam of political philosophies bonded together by common goals or enemies, and is better described as “a network of relationships than a fixed essence” (207). Paxton cites the fact fascist movements have drawn membership from citizens of various classes and backgrounds and cultural differences among countries with fascist movements as reasons for the elusive nature of fascist definition (210-215).

However, all fascist movements shared some attributes, such as a focus on youth and the ultra-masculine, praise of violence and a military ethos, a party militia, a vision of the nation governed by only one party, ultra-nationalism, the glorification of a single leader marked by authoritarianism and a cult of personality, and emphasis on public spectacles such as visual symbols, meetings, and marches. The combination of all of these elements, Payne argues, creates the foundation for a fascist movement if the movement's leaders should choose to so identify it (13-14).

Paxton goes farther by attempting to identify fascism in a single sentence:

Fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal constraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion. (218)

Paxton also outlines nine of what he terms "mobilizing passions," which bring a fascist movement to life in a nation. These include: a sense of overwhelming crisis, the subordination of the individual to a primary group, a belief that this group is a victim and that this justifies any retaliatory action, fear of the group's decline at the hands of liberalism and individualism, desire for a stronger group integration either through consent of violence, need for a single dominating male leader, belief that this leader's instincts are stronger than reason, the exaltation of violence and will, the right of the group to dominate any other groups or individuals without restraint under a kind of Social Darwinism (219-220).

While Paxton captures many elements of fascist movements, the elusive nature of a fascist definition emerges in that some of his descriptions would not be entirely accurate to describe the BUF or all other fascist movements. For example, while it is true that fascism tends to exalt the masculine and to embrace a single male leader, the Front National movement in France, which is a nationalist movement that has been described as fascist, is currently led by Marine Le Pen, a woman. Paxton, on the other hand, argues that the leader of a fascist movement is necessarily a man. Furthermore, Paxton argues that a fascist movement abandons democratic principles, but Mosley hoped to win Parliament by a democratic vote. Mosley was also against the stripping away of individual rights and felt that, as long as an individual's actions posed no threat to the State, he was free to do as he pleased. And, while Paxton is correct that a fascist movement strives for internal cleansing, not all seem interested in external expansion. Mosley hoped to one day be allies with other fascist nations, but he was against war – World War II in particular – and had no plans for imperialistic expansion. Mosley's "socialistic imperialism" called for the internal cleansing aspect of Paxton's formula instead of outward expansion. Mosley hoped to apply the British concept of imperialism inwardly to take control of the nation's problems.

An interesting aspect of fascism is that it is easily recognizable and identifiable when it occurs, but an academic or political definition of the ideology is highly elusive. While most fascist movements share many of the same characteristics, the movements do not share all of the same characteristics, but rather a varying combination. It seems that



the movements that are most successful are those that combine the elements that will best resonate with their own countries and cultures. The Italian movement and National Socialism succeeded because they combined those elements of fascism that best aligned with their own populations' dispositions. The failure of the BUF, on the other hand, can in part be attributed to the fact that its unique combination of fascist characteristics was not comprised of the ones that appealed to the greatest number of Britons.

Mosley's anti-Semitism appealed to a zealous minority of Britons, but repulsed the majority. Mosley's nationalism appealed to the British sense of national pride, but it was mitigated by his inclusion of the fasces symbol and his promotion of the Italian corporate state – both of these measures were considered un-English. The people appreciated his appeal to traditional values, but Mosley's party militia made them nervous. Later on, he found support in his opposition to Britain's entry into World War II, but his violence against Jews in London's East End and Communist protestors at his meetings gained him no traction.

Ultimately, Paxton's definition and his list of motivating passions for a fascist movement are accurate, as long as we remain cognizant that each nation and culture has varying needs and problems, as well as values and goals. While economic problems tend to be the primary catalyst for mobilizing budding fascist movements, every nation and people require a different movement to rally them. The successful fascist leader understands the subtleties of his own culture and which fascist principles to apply to the

movement, and the unsuccessful fascist leader – like Mosley – is unable to see past his own ego, and will attempt to force his people to fit the mold of the fascist movement he envisions. This is why fascism is so difficult to describe – it is a movement that draws from a common pool of varying elements to create a nationalist and paramilitary movement designed to meet the needs of its home country. It also differs from other movements such as Communism and even capitalism, in that instead of arising as a new and a better society that is united under a canonical manifesto envisioned by a philosopher or set of philosophers, fascism arises as an urgent answer to an immediate problem, and each instance of its rising is unique to the nation and its particular problem.

That being said, fascism can still be identified when it is observed. Its unifying principles include paramilitarism, nationalism (which includes an aversion to immigration and a belief that one's own race or nationality is superior to others), and the idea that the individual must be subservient to the State. While fascist groups have included various additional elements from Paxton's list to their own movements in a kind of ideological cafeteria, a fascist movement can most clearly be identified as a nationalist, militaristic, and dictatorial movement that arises in response to a crisis and presents itself as the only solution to said crisis.

## CHAPTER TWO: LAND UNDER ENGLAND

At the time Joseph O'Neill wrote his now little-known novel *Land Under England* in 1935, Mosley's BUF had reached its peak of popularity and membership. The novel centers on the life of its narrator, Anthony Julian, whose English family can trace its Roman origin back to the building of Hadrian's Wall. In fact, the Julians live in the English countryside next to the wall, complete with a pond bearing their name at the wall's base. Anthony's father, whose first name we never learn, is a romantic and captivating figure. Anthony describes him as tall, dark, and handsome with charisma and a flair for enticing people to do his bidding. Anthony's mother is a lesser character in the novel who is mostly disregarded by Anthony's father and not fully appreciated by Anthony himself until the end of the novel.

The Julians live modestly on an old family income so that Anthony's father, unburdened by the need to work, can spend all of his time searching Hadrian's Wall for a secret entrance which he believes will lead to an underground civilization of Romans who, many hundreds of years ago, were rumored to have fled underground near Julian's Pond. As a child, Anthony is enraptured with his father and his all-consuming desire to find the lost Roman civilization. Anthony is very close to his father and idolizes him, which is

why, many years later when Anthony has grown up, he follows his father down the secret tunnel into the bowels of the earth. The strong emphasis on the Roman origin of the Julian family is reminiscent of Mosley's repeated arguments for the Roman origins of Britain. Mosley often made such arguments when critics argued that his use of the Italian Fascist symbol, the Fasces, was too foreign for the British people to identify with it. He claimed that the symbol hearkened back to ancient Britain when it was ruled by Rome:

The symbol was brought to Britain by our Roman ancestors, who were here for four centuries and their stock remained forever. The Fasces were the symbol of the Roman Empire. What more fitting than that they should be used by the Empire which succeeded and surpassed the Roman Empire?" (GB 3-4).

The Fasces were a bundle of sticks tied together – symbolizing strength through unity and weakness in disunity – with an axe blade attached. Mosley often referred to the axe as what would cut “away the dead and rotten wood of the past” (GB 10-11). Interestingly enough, the Julian family is both British and strongly Roman. Anthony's father bases his entire identity on the fact that the Julians are of Roman stock and that their sole mission is to find the ancient Roman civilization under the earth. While Mosley's idea of the modern Fascist movement was a fusion of the two great Empires – Roman and British – the Julian family is itself a fusion of British and Roman. Thus, the Julians, like the fasces, exemplify Mosley's ideal.

However, when Anthony finds this civilization, far from exuding the glory and grandeur of Rome as he and his father had always dreamed, he finds a slave-state of automatons who have psychically surrendered their individualities to a few “Masters of

Knowledge.” Their society makes for a solid Fascist allegory, as the Master of Knowledge who communicates with Anthony specifically tells him that their society is one in which the interests of the individual have been subsumed by those of the State. However, they assure him that since the State operates in the interest of the individual, it is not a real sacrifice to lose one’s identity in the name of the State.

Mosley held the exact same beliefs regarding the individual and the State. The specific system Mosley proposed was the Corporate State, borrowed from Mussolini. His vision was of a State that overrode the individual, but that ultimately served the individual’s interests. When his opponents protested that Mosley’s system subjugated the individual to the State, the BUF countered, just like the Master of Knowledge, that the welfare of the State and the welfare of the individual were one and the same, as it was the State’s role to ensure and to dictate the proper course of life for every citizen (Chesterton 155). The BUF answer to the question of whether or not the individual should have freedoms was ambiguous, however. Mosley felt that an individual’s rights must not be allowed to interfere with the interests of the larger community or the State, but that other Fascist nations were wrong to deny their citizens individual freedoms. Mosley even felt that Fascism could grant Britain more individual freedom than the current democracy, which he thought denied British people individual freedoms by attempting to stop his meetings (293). When Chesterton wrote party propaganda, he agreed with Mosley, but he introduced something of a gray area to the question by arguing that “the greatest effort should be made to ‘condition’ individuals, so that they no longer desire to pursue

antisocial activities” (155-156). In *The Greater Britain* (1932) Mosley summed up his idea of dictatorship with the unattributed quotation: “All within the State none outside the State; none against the State” (27).

While Mosley himself was an advocate for increased personal freedoms in his proposed system, this mostly referred to recreational freedoms such as an end to restrictions on pub hours. He made it clear, though, that these individual freedoms were not to interfere with the operation of the State. It is also interesting that Chesterton, his head of propaganda, was in favor of conditioning individuals so that they would cease to act against the interest of the State. Clearly the idea of exercising a certain control over the minds and behavior of the populace was not foreign to the BUF’s rhetoric or propaganda. Perhaps the strongest parallel between *Land Under England’s* automaton society and the BUF in particular is the novel’s recurring theme of the enemy within. The automaton society is not a force invading from without, but a society that exists underneath the placid English countryside. Anthony himself understands, as the automatons attempt to absorb him, that his own fears and weaknesses are the only factors that will spell his downfall. Toward the end of the novel Anthony has the same realizations about his father, who, he muses, was always like the automatons underneath the charm of his personality. In the same way, the BUF was not a hostile invading force, but a force of Britain’s own people inside its own borders. The strong parallel reads like a response to Mosley and the BUF. A mass of uniform bodies rising up out of the land

itself to transform the nation with the ubiquitous threat of force is O'Neill's version of the BUF.

In the beginning of the novel, we meet Anthony's father, who seems much like Oswald Mosley. Mosley was over six feet tall, with dark hair and eyes coupled with aristocratic good looks, much like Anthony's father, who "was over six feet in height, and had a very handsome, rather aquiline face, with eyes of a brown that was almost black, and curly black hair that fell crisply over a fine forehead with very delicate modeling" (11). It is significant that O'Neill does not go to this length to describe any other character, aside from perhaps a cursory description of Anthony's mother and of her brother, John Sackett.

Mosley often used his charm and good looks to seduce women, and, although Anthony's father is too absorbed in his dream to be a womanizer, Anthony posits that "it was no wonder that my mother fell in love with him. Women found him at all times most attractive, and, for the matter of that, so did men" (11). However, Anthony also describes his father as being selfish and self-absorbed, much like the toweringly egotistical Mosley: "...like many attractive men, he was incapable of thinking of others" (12).

Oswald Mosley's son Nicholas paints a similar picture of his father in his memoir. He writes that Mosley (nicknamed Tom by friends and family) attracted many people to his home socially, and was attractive to others: The house at Denham was filling at weekends with people from the more exotic and enlightened figures of the 'perpetual night-club world' ... Tom [Oswald] was the attraction...they caught the glow of his company...Tom came and went like (as a French journalist put it) 'the young Alcibiades...

trailing after him many entangled hearts, many sarcasms, and a few confidences.’ (N. Mosley 98)

Nicholas Mosley writes that Oswald moved in an upper class world in which he needed to deny himself nothing. He had many mistresses, parties, and vacations overseas with the aim of fulfilling his own desires and pleasures without much thought to the needs of those around him.

Aside from these more external parallels, both Anthony’s father and Mosley were defined by their war experience. Mosley and his supporters would recall his war experience as that which stripped away easy generalities and molded him into the man who would lead the British Fascist movement. Anthony’s father undergoes a similar transformation in the same war – WWI. Anthony reminisces that his father joined the army in WWI because he linked the conflict in his mind with ancient Gaul requesting Rome’s aid against the invading Teutonic tribes (15). Anthony’s father is very successful in the war, and he is highly decorated, rising through the ranks until he returns home a colonel. However, despite his success in the army and his romantic motivations for joining, he returns home to Anthony and his mother a changed man. Anthony describes him as cold and distant – stripped completely of his jovial personality (17).

When Anthony’s father returns to Julian’s Pond, he spurns all human connection and is focused only on his goal of reaching the subterranean world. While Mosley did not spurn his social connections or familial attachments, by his own account he returned focused on a single goal: the rejuvenation of his country. Mosley himself was educated at



Winchester and went on to the Sandhurst military academy, from which he graduated as a cavalry officer. At the outbreak of WWI, he was eager to fight for his country but eventually realized that this was not a war in which the cavalry was to play a major role. Like Anthony's father, Mosley desired to be an active participant in the war. When the newly emerging Royal Air Force, then known as the Royal Flying Corps, sought volunteer flight observers on reconnaissance missions, Mosley left his cavalry unit for this opportunity to be closer to the front lines. He eventually learned to fly himself, although a bad landing caused him to sustain a serious injury to one of his legs. After becoming a pilot, he was recalled to his cavalry regiment, as it was then engaged in the more modern trench warfare. Mosley served in the trenches until his leg injury relegated him to office duties for the remainder of the war (Mosley 70). While Mosley's military career was not rife with the constant action and the unbelievable successes of Anthony's father's, both careers were marked by both men's strong desires to be at the center of the action, as well as by later changes in both of their attitudes. After the war, Mosley felt that he could help his countrymen with the economic and unemployment problems facing the nation. At age twenty-two, he became the youngest Member of Parliament, and he served in the Harrow constituency for the Conservative Party. Mosley suggested in his autobiography that, had he not witnessed the horrors of war firsthand, he might not have emerged from them ready to fight for his country and for its peace (72).

Eventually, Anthony's father discovers a way into the lower world and disappears. Anthony is devastated, and spends the next several years trying to find the

lower world so he can find his father. One day, by accident, Anthony falls through a hidden trapdoor on the wall and begins his descent. But Anthony has not been in the lower world for long before he begins to fear the darkness and look for a way to escape from it (49). The darkness begins to seem both physically and metaphorically unending. When Anthony comes to believe that there is no escape from the darkness, he feels that he has reached the worst of his journey: “I was in the worst plight in which I had found myself since my entrance into this world, rushing along blindly on a dim sea, of whose limits or bounds I could see nothing, under a lightless gloom, along a shore whose darkness might cover anything” (75). The never-ending and ever-present darkness with which Anthony must grapple is reminiscent of the darkness of war and poverty that blighted the British political landscape during the decade in which this novel was written. Indeed, the post WWI political world in which Mosley battled was one with social problems that were not necessarily new. As early as 1905 writers and politicians noted the highly uneven distribution of wealth, marked poverty, malnutrition, increasing class tensions, and slum housing (Pearce 186-187). Despite the coalition government’s best efforts to end unemployment and revive the economy, the “Hungry Thirties” lived up to their name in the industrial areas in northern England where unemployment rates reached as high as seventy percent (268-269).

In *Land Under England*, Anthony continues to journey through the never-ending darkness until he finally discovers other people. He is filled with triumph and relief until he realizes that these people seem scarcely aware of his presence. In fact, they are

automatons who move “with the regularity of machines” (81). In this case, it is Anthony who has a Mosleyesque experience, as Mosley entered his battle with Britain’s darkness with the expectation that Parliament would be willing to fight alongside him. During this period, a metaphorical darkness surrounded democratic society. The social reverberations of WWI, combined with the rise of Hitler and Mussolini, created an uncertain future for European democracy. While Mosley was not the ideological enemy of Hitler or Mussolini, he was determined to find a solution to the social problems existing in Britain after WWI. By Mosley’s account, instead of being able to depend upon his fellow MPs to support his attempts to create solutions to the social problems threatening Britain, they proved to be a group of career politicians who were unwilling or unable to adapt to change. As the automatons of the novel spend the next couple of days transporting Anthony to their main city on a ship across their large Central Sea, he begins to see them as the willing victims of a totalitarian solution to the problem of darkness. Anthony spends this time fighting off the ship commander’s attempts to enter his mind. The automatons communicate telepathically, read each other’s thoughts, and control their citizens’ minds. He comes to the conclusions that their mind control is only effective on those who are either willing or afraid, and that their society is “more hideous than the lowest form of savagery” (86-87). Here O’Neill seems to be imagining a society of cowering, unthinking masses ruled by an ethos of brute force and unquestioning obedience.

Anthony learns much more about the automaton society when he meets a Master of Knowledge in their main city. When the Master attempts to enter Anthony's mind, as the ship commander had, Anthony violently recoils and psychically strikes out at the Master. This kind of rebellion is unknown to the automatons, and the Master asks Anthony why he fought back. Anthony replies that his mind is his own, and that he should be free to grant or deny permission to anyone seeking to enter it. The Master's response is simple, yet ominous, "Free?" (98). The Master of Knowledge either does not know or does not understand the meaning of the word. For Mosley, the meanings of words were often pliable to his will, and he would change the definition of words to suit his purpose and his message. For many, the aftertastes of dictatorship and absolute power remained after hearing BUF propaganda. When opponents leveled the word "dictator" at Mosley as an insult, he made no attempt to deny that this was his aim. He attempted instead to redefine the word, claiming that he did not wish to inflict tyranny upon the people; he only wanted them to entrust him with the power to change the nation for the better on their behalf (GB 20-21). He felt that the only way anything would ever be done was if the party or government in power were given absolute power (23).

His further attempts to redefine the word "dictatorship" included defining his brand of "dictatorship" as one *for* the people, rather than *against* the people. Fascism was to endow the government with enough power to be effective against the nation's problems. He wrote that "to represent this as dictatorship against the will of the people is, of course, a childish travesty of the facts" (10). He concluded that "Fascism, in fact, is not

tyranny, but leadership with the consent of the Nation along the path of action which it has long desired to travel” (71). Not only did Mosley redefine “dictatorship,” he redefined political freedom in *Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered* as economic freedom, and insisted that this was not available under the current democracy. It would, of course, be made available to the British people under Fascism (5-6).

His redefinition of inconvenient words did not simply extend to “dictator.” He also redefined “free speech.” In response to criticisms that Fascism would curtail free speech, Mosley argued in an *Action* article entitled “Fascism and Free Speech” of October 24, 1936 that free speech did not really exist in Britain because, without the backing of the Press and/or a political party, an ordinary citizen had no possibility of seeing any action come of his words or opinions. Mosley promised the ordinary person this power through his corporate system. His principal argument remained that free speech and political power were one and the same. Likewise, free speech is not something that exists in the automaton society, as the automatons do not even speak, but merely receive commands telepathically and then carry them out. However, the automatons have what Mosley promised the common people: political power through submission to the State. The common automatons are empowered as a group, because they receive the protection of the group from outside enemies as well as from the darkness. If, as Mosley would have the people believe, free speech and political power are synonymous, then the automatons are, in fact, free. This kind of argument was neither convincing to Anthony nor to the majority of the British people, but it is an argument the

Master of Knowledge will use throughout the novel, claiming that the automatons have more happiness than a person like Anthony, who is not absorbed into their State.

As Anthony speaks again to the Master, he asks permission to see his father. The Master replies that no person in their society is allowed to travel to any place or see another person unless such an action is necessary to their work for the State. He adds that Anthony has no purpose that is recognizable to their State, and that if they were to give him such a purpose by assimilating him, it would likely not involve contact with the man who was once his father (115). Furthermore, the Master continues to assert that, even if Anthony were allowed to see his father, his father would not wish to return. He explains that Anthony's father is happy now in the service of the State. Anthony argues with the Master, asking him if those men the State had robbed of their minds could truly be happy. The Master coolly replies that the masses had "little minds" which they did not require for their work. He explains that their society has "taken all the little minds and little emotions" and combined them into one deep love for the common good. Therefore, he argues, those whose minds have been taken from them have the most joy of all (116-117).

From these conversations we learn that the State discovers each person's talents and aptitudes, and places him in the position suitable to his abilities. The individual's purpose, thoughts, and emotions are in the service of the State. This is also how Mosley would have organized the British version of the Italian Corporate State. Mosley wished to

organize his corporate state, not by geographical region like the current democracy, but by industrial occupation. He proposed a government divided into corporations with each corporation representing an industry. Even housewives would have their own corporation to represent women, children, and the home. Mosley felt that governmental decisions regarding industry should be made by people who actually understood the industry:

A skilled engineer engaged in an intricate mechanical process would quickly send about their business a talkative committee of people totally ignorant of engineering problems who, after a brief general debate sought to instruct him in his business. (FQA 168)

In his signature “Britain First” speech he expressed a vision of a classless meritocracy in which rewards and positions were granted only on the basis of talent and service, and where every interest would be subordinated to the State (3). In *The Greater Britain* he compared his ideal of the Corporate State to the human body:

Every part fulfills its function as a member of the whole, performing its separate task, and yet, by performing it, contributing to the welfare of the whole. The whole body is generally directed by the central driving brain of government without which no body and system of society can operate (26-27).

While Mosley’s chief focus was reform in Britain, his plans for the Corporate State were a bit more ambitious than his isolationism and nationalism let on: “Corporate organization in Britain will lead inevitably to the development of a Corporate Empire, which will be the mightiest material and moral force the world has yet seen” (7). While Mosley’s nationalism and arguments for an insulated society originally suggested that he strove only to fix his broken country, quotations such as this one define his later goal as

one more akin to world domination. This is also something we begin to see of the automaton society as the novel unfolds. What begins as the domination of the individual becomes an ambition to dominate the world. Later on in the novel we see that these aspirations are not entirely absent from the automaton society.

As Anthony and the Master continue conversing, the Master explains to Anthony some of the origin of the underground State. He relates that the kind of life lived above ground was impossible underground in the darkness, as a focus on lives of small loves and small pleasures could not give them solace from their fear of the darkness. Failing to adapt to life as it was underground, many “died or went mad” (118). Eventually the survivors are saved by the first Master of Knowledge, who proposed the automaton State (118). G.W. Russell, editor of *The Irish Statesman* when O’Neill was contributing to the paper, would have corroborated this kind of thinking. Russell purported to believe, like the Greeks, that the purpose of the State is to give its citizens “the good life.” This seems to have also been the purpose of the automaton State – to give its citizens the best life possible in the conditions under which they were living. However, the automatons also did what Russell feared would occur in the “ideal State.” By setting the State above the individual, the automatons actively destroyed the human elements of the individual, and thus rendered the individual incapable of appreciating “the good life.” (3) For the English, democracy represented the present culmination of their long political tradition. It united the people as an overarching political tradition, yet still allowed them to maintain their individuality within the system.



On the surface, the goal of establishing an over-arching State seems to be what the automatons tried to accomplish. They have focused all their energies directed inward on the development of their own society. This is similar to Mosley's proposed policies from his first election into Parliament, when he pursued a policy of separatism combined with what he termed "socialistic imperialism." His concept of socialistic imperialism involved the interior, rather than the exterior, development of the Empire. Instead of going forth into the world and claiming new lands, the Empire should claim for itself a solution to its many economic problems and lay hold of "the good life which its latent wealth made possible" (ML 91). Mosley's socialistic imperialism was an authoritative domestic policy designed to eradicate the nation's economic problems through socialistic methods (ML 91).

To a significant number of British people, Mosley's views appeared to be solutions to their struggles, and were feasible and well-advised. Likewise, as Anthony continues to travel through the automaton society and to learn of their struggles and solutions, he begins to empathize with the automatons and with the deprivations they have suffered in the lower earth. The Master reads his thoughts and says,

You are growing wise – you are beginning to understand. When it has sunk into your mind, you will know that from the greatest misfortune that has befallen men we have reached to greatest happiness to which man has attained. (119)

After migrating into the lower earth, the automatons (before they were automatons) soon realized that they had lost everything. Indeed, everything that made them human before –

intimacies, relationships with others, and the individual's quest for significance – were actually their enemy in the darkness. However, the Master of Knowledge argues that out of this defeat came the true solution to the darkness. This is similar to Mosley's rhetoric after the crushing defeat of his New Party in 1931. The automatons migrated to the lower earth with the hope of creating a new society, only to face defeat and despair. Mosley broke from Parliament hoping to take with him an army of disaffected MPs and create a revolution of British politics. Instead, he experienced a harsh jolt of reality when the stark truth that his supposed allies valued their ties to the more powerful mainstream above their personal loyalties to him. However, Mosley argued that this defeat was what made him realize that the solution all along was fascism.

What Mosley created from his defeat was the basis of his plan for a Fascist Britain. The solution, according to Chesterton, was to re-invent the movement as something unlike any traditional party: "What was needed [Mosley] now realized with intense conviction, was a great new movement of new men and new methods – a surging, passionate movement, not of Party wrangling and expediency-mongering, but of spiritual rebirth" (108). This kind of new-life-out-of-the-ashes rhetoric was soon to dominate Mosley's new movement which incorporated his long-developed fascism as he founded the British Union of Fascists. While Mosley insisted that he would have this "spiritual rebirth" come to power through the willing consent of the British people, he always insinuated the threat of force.

In a similar spirit, the Master of Knowledge warns Anthony that the automatons have the power to force his mind to join them. While they would prefer his voluntary submission, which makes the “cure” more “perfect,” he adds that Anthony’s mind can be taken by force (120-121). Mosley’s approach to spreading his message to the British people had a strikingly similar element of an explicit request for the people’s free consent coupled with an implicit threat of the use of violent force. On the surface, Mosley vehemently swore that his plans for coming to power involved the winning of a majority in Parliament through the people’s willing consent. However, he simultaneously intimidated the people with garish paramilitary displays. Mosley claimed that these displays, which included black military uniforms, marching, drilling, and parading, were only for self-defense against Communist agitators at his public meetings. However, most agreed that the display itself was unnecessary even if his claims of the need for defense were true. In fact, his military displays seemed to attract violence and to intimidate spectators and bystanders. The implication was that, while Mosley openly asked for the people to vote his party into Parliament legally, he could take their consent by force if he so chose and create a military dictatorship.

Even though Mosley’s disillusionment with the Parliamentary system was shared by many people in the 1920s and 1930s, he could not seem to keep the violence away from his public meetings. This created an aura of violence around his entire movement (Worley 18). Communist groups would often organize attacks on his meetings, actions that constituted part of Mosley’s decision to form Nupa, a youth movement, as a

corollary to the New Party. Nupa had a militaristic appearance and employed Whitechapel boxing champion Ted “Kid” Lewis to teach young men how to fight and defend Mosley’s meetings. This move was highly controversial and would prove to be the infancy of the Blackshirts. In 1931, Mosley mentioned to Harold Nicholson that he wished to model Nupa after the German SS, and Nupa barracks were often decorated with pictures of Hitler (157-158). Nupa was the embodiment of Mosley’s oft-touted call for a “renaissance of manhood.” It was centered around athletics and militaristic practices, and membership was strictly male. Worley writes that “the masculinity embodied within the New Movement formed the basis of a recognizable proto-fascist culture inside the New Party” (Worley 142-143). Mosley never denied the fact that he was modelling his youth movement on Hitler’s.

The aura of violence and implication of force in Mosley’s movement first culminated in June of 1934 at Mosley’s Olympia Hall meeting, which erupted into brutal violence. Communists infiltrated the meeting in order to disrupt it, and Blackshirt stewards beat the hecklers badly and ejected them from the hall. Even though the Communists undoubtedly started the disruption, the violent reaction of BUF stewards frightened people: “For the public, Olympia symbolized fascist violence and, afterwards, Hitler’s ‘Night of the Long Knives’ hardened anti-BUF sentiment” (Mitchell 19). The bad publicity led Lord Rothermere, owner of *The Daily Mail*, to withdraw his Press support for Mosley. The loss of mainstream press support struck the BUF a major blow, and membership plummeted from 50,000 to 5,000 by October 1935 (19). Authors of

editorials written after the event felt that the Blackshirts had responded with more violence than was necessary, sparking the debates surrounding political uniforms that would later lead up to the Public Order Act of 1936 – another blow to the BUF.

Both Mosley's threat of violence and actual violence inspired resistance against his movement. It is tempting to speculate that, had the British people and Parliament not been offended by Mosley's inherent threat of violence, they would not have been so disposed to fight against him. Likewise, the idea that the automatons can absorb Anthony against his will steels him against them. Anthony responds to the threat of violence with revulsion. While he had been somewhat open, and even at times sympathetic to the automatons' cause earlier, he becomes firmly opposed to them after they threaten telepathically to force his mind over to their cause.

Even though Anthony's very nature recoils from the society, he does not see it as entirely undesirable. In fact, he muses that the very silence of their world "made the life of men on earth seem a noisy heap of selfishness and absurdities and vulgarities, without manners or meaning" (138). When Anthony meets a male teacher in the automatons' schools, whose job it is to train future teachers, he explains to Anthony that the automatons are not without emotion. Rather, their emotions are critical to giving them strength against the darkness. The automatons' society merely teaches the people how to channel their emotions from self-centered and disorderly aims to the communal aim of surviving together as a society. The teacher continues to assert that this kind of complete

unity is the only way human beings can face despair and disaster. When human beings live in dissonance, they will necessarily come into conflict with each other (150-151).

In this way the automatons have ended war and internal conflicts. Their communal aim becomes one of peace and of caring for the well-being of members of their own society. Far and away, Mosley's proposed policy goals were designed to improve the quality of life for the average citizen. He thought of himself as a crusader for solutions that were right for his country – a young man with fresh new ideas battling against old men of stale convictions. O'Neill's Master of Knowledge describes the individual outside the automaton system much the way Mosley often described other MPs. When Anthony tries to argue for the significance of the individual with the Master, the Master responds:

We could not allow the continued existence of our people to be jeopardized and destroyed for the sake of the petty significance of individuals, each trying to express his own importance, as our fathers did... If you remain as you are, you will always be a prey to fear and loss, baffled and beaten by your own insignificance. (152-153)

This resonates with what Mosley had to say of British Parliament. Among Mosley's many criticisms of Parliament, one was that it was made up of a passel of individuals – each individual trying to appease his own financial backers, each trying to achieve for himself individual career goals, none interested in affecting change through unity. Each individual MP, like each individual in the pre-automaton society, was focused so much on his own importance and significance, that he sacrificed the good of the whole in the pursuit of such gains. Mosley thus developed a maverick attitude toward Parliament.

In his autobiography, Mosley wrote of his admiration for Charles Parnell, and how he had entered politics at a relatively young age only to find an ineffective government of older men who were not fit to solve the problems of their nation (ML 20). Early on, Mosley split with the leading political figures of the day. He saw Asquith and Balfour as admirable men, but thought they had personalities and political approaches appropriate to a time of peace and plenty rather than to Britain's current political situation (ML 96). In a similar vein, the Master of Knowledge argues that the way of life lived above the surface was not fit for facing the challenge of the darkness below earth's surface. Mosley believed that Parliament ruined potential heroes of the nation and transformed the best-intentioned of them into ineffective career politicians just like all the rest. In the estimation of the Master of Knowledge and Mosley, those who live the individualistic and emotionally-driven life of surface-dwellers and Parliamentarians who care only for the advancement of careers that benefit them individually are both incapable of dealing with threats. In the case of the Master, this threat is the darkness, and according to Mosley, this threat is unemployment.

The Master holds that the solution is to rid the underground society of individuals, and Mosley's solution was to rid the government of careerist politicians by means of a fascist takeover. Both Mosley and the Master hope to transform a gaggle of self-interested individuals into a unified mass which they believe will be better equipped to conquer the obstacles of their societies. Freedom, these leaders believe, is a relative term. Individual freedom undermines the strength of unity, whereas unity involves the

sacrifice of individual freedom in exchange for a more abstract freedom from societal ills. This, they argue, is true freedom. Individual freedom, on the other hand, is a false freedom because the individual, while enjoying his freedom of choice, will never be free of the societal problems that plague his life. One significant theme of his political career was the notion that the old and ineffective try to bar the success of the young and talented because they are jealous, and that this is a great barrier to the nation's success (ML 135). This resonates with the Master's claim that defeat lay in the differing goals of a mass of aspiring individuals. The young and the talented, in Mosley's eyes, were "baffled and beaten" by their insignificance in comparison to the older, more established politicians. At the same time, those older politicians who would block the progress of the young and talented failed to establish success in giving the nation what it needed, because they were too preoccupied with their individual careers to join together and solve the nation's problems. Mosley overlooked the fact that MacDonald's coalition government actually made some progress toward solving some of the nation's problems, but his rhetoric, much like the Master's, is infused with the belief that no other way than his was capable of solving anybody's problems.

In 1931 Mosley suggested four proposals for the reconstruction of Parliament. The first was a General Powers Bill, which would give "the government of the day wide powers of action, by order, in relation to the economic problem" (ML 266). This bill would go into effect if unchallenged by a substantial number of voters. The second was the creation of a cabinet of no more than five members "charged with the unemployment



and general economic problem” (267). This cabinet would wield substantial power to carry out its policies. The third was the provision that, while Parliament would give up most of its power to the cabinet, it would retain its power over taxation and supply. It would also retain its right to vote on the budget. The final proposal was mainly a summation of the force of his argument, which would echo throughout his political life:

We start from the premise that action is desirable; our opponents start from the premise that action is undesirable. There can be no reconciliation between these two opinions. All who believe that rapid and drastic action by government is necessary must first face the necessity for a fundamental revision of Parliament, whatever their opinions upon the nature of the action to be taken. (ML 266-268)

This accurately echoes the battle cry of the automaton State. In the darkness, the automatons, before they are automatons, recognize that immediate action is necessary to save themselves. This is a great turning point in their history, which is seized upon by the first Master of Knowledge, who leads the people to the conclusion that they must sacrifice their identities in the service of the State.

Mosley did not always explicitly indicate that he wanted a totalitarian government, and he contested to the last that the Cabinet was only meant to increase efficiency and foster action, as the five members would have no portfolio and would be free to enact any and all needed changes. This would be an improvement, he argued, over the current system in which action was bogged down by talk and inefficiency – that it was a system that was too encumbered with detail to be effective. Even though he proclaimed that the only difference between his proposed system and the one in existence

was that his would work while the other did not, his opponents widely accused him of attempting to set himself up as a dictator (NP 46-48). Mosley countered that the current government did not carry out the people's will, was only a vehicle for rich people's careers, and made no attempt to fulfill campaign promises. Therefore, it was not truly democratic (NP 45). The Master of Knowledge would certainly have agreed with Mosley's sentiment that the goals of the individual impeded the proper execution of the people's will and the people's betterment.

Since Anthony does not wish to join the automaton society after their first attempts to persuade him, they hope that he will come round after an extensive tour of their society. However, Anthony finds that, while the automatons have discovered mind control and telepathy, they have not advanced in science or technology in any way and are "feeble and imitative" (94). While Mosley placed prominent emphasis on science and technological advance when proposing his new society, the charge of being imitative was often leveled against him. Many people felt that he had not proposed to improve on anything, but was merely borrowing what already existed in other countries. When Mosley proposed his five-member Cabinet, the press wasted little time dubbing Mosley "The English Hitler" (Brown 145). While the idea of the Cabinet made some nervous, others found it occasion to joke:

Wits at the time said that this directorate would consist of (1) Sir Oswald Mosley, (2) the late Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster [Mosley's title while in Parliament], (3) Comrade Mosley, (4) Tom Mosley (his name

among his Labour friends), and (5) the member of Parliament for Smethwick. (545)

Lady Houston wrote that she agreed with his policies, but that she – and other British people – resented his foreign influences and his eventually unabashed use of the word “dictator”: “English people do not like the word Dictator...they shy at the word, and for Sir Oswald Mosley to pose as such is a mistake” (*Lord Rothermere is Right* 1934).

Mosley’s platform itself carried potential appeal to Labour, with its emphasis on ending unemployment, and to Conservatives with its isolationist policy. However, he lost the Labour vote by appearing totalitarian and anti-Communist, and he lost the Conservative vote by emulating the Germans and Italians and thereby offending the Conservative sense of tradition. He made all uncomfortable simultaneously by being militaristic, and, later, anti-Semitic. One writer, in a review of *The Greater Britain*, asked of Mosley, “How can it be that such brilliance of idea can be allied to such error in psychology?” (Melville 629).

In the end, Mosley’s appearance of being un-British did his movement almost as much harm as the public displays and implicit threats of violence. This is also something that Anthony counts against the automatons – not so much that they are un-British as that they seem to be incapable of developing anything that is new or unique to themselves. He finds that they merely imitate old technologies rather than develop new ones. From the beginning of his time in their society, Anthony recognizes their mind control abilities as a more sophisticated form of already-existing hypnosis techniques. This, coupled with his

marked lack of admiration for the technology they borrowed from the past and never sought to improve upon, is much like the British people's complaint that Mosley's political system was merely German and Italian fascism, recycled into a British package. Neither Mosley nor the automatons have presented anything new or original – only an offering of other sources nominally updated to suit their current needs.

One book review of *Land Under England* from the *Times*, which appeared in 1935 shortly after the novel's publication, classed the novel as a satire on Nazism (Troy 248). It is interesting that reviewers compared the automatons of *Land Under England* to Nazis, given that Mosley drew heavily from Nazism, especially in his youth movement. The automatons are not compared to Mosley separately, but to the greater movement which he imitated. What is ironic about Mosley's movement is that he and his followers compared themselves to the fascists of Germany and Italy, while at the same time presenting themselves as a genuinely British movement. From 1932 on, Mosley and his propagandists encouraged much comparison between pre-Fascism Italy and Germany and Democratic Britain. Chesterton argued that Britain was in the same state of chaos and disarray as Italy and Germany before the respective takeovers of Mussolini and Hitler (113). In *The Greater Britain* Mosley denied, however, that his British brand of Fascism would be tyrannical like the Fascism of Italy and Germany because their brands of Fascism came to power when their nations were in the grip of collapse. Mosley hoped that Britain would have the good sense to adopt Fascism *before* the nation reached the point of collapse (13-14). This was a thin and weak attempt on Mosley's part to separate

himself from the people's fear of totalitarianism. It often seemed that Mosley was more adverse to the people's fear of totalitarianism than he was to totalitarianism itself, since totalitarianism was a system he wished to adopt, but he knew that the people's fear of it would lead them to reject it.

Mosley's militaristic theatricality, coupled with the comparisons between his movement and Fascism in Italy and Germany soured many British people against him and his ideas. C.F. Melville wrote in his review of *The Greater Britain* – Mosley's Fascist manifesto – that

It is much to be feared, therefore, that Mosley's constructive economic and political ideas may fail to obtain the appreciation they merit because of the resentment or amusement (or both) which the average Britisher will feel towards the theatricality of his organization of black-shirted youth. (629)

Mosley managed to alienate many of those who agreed with his policies with his reliance on foreign influences and his egotistical theatricality. This approach offended their traditional sensibilities.

One anonymous writer in *Spectator* in 1934 was not only unimpressed with Mosley's political doctrines, but thoroughly resented the foreign influences:

Sir Oswald fails rather conspicuously to gauge the preference of the British people for its own traditions when he borrows the name of his movement and the garb of his followers from Italy and his own personal pose from Signor Mussolini. (910)

He continues to argue that the many generations of civilized British political movements have done just fine without violence and military uniforms, and he sees no reason for

Mosley to bring his foreign ways onto English soil (910-911). Skidelsky wrote that, of all the charges leveled against the BUF, the most damaging “was that it was ‘un-English’” (300). The English were proud of their rich political traditions, and defensive of them being changed or shaken. Catlin wrote,

By clothing his supporters in black shirts and by calling his policy Fascist, he has raised the question whether a movement so obviously reminiscent of Italy and Germany can appeal to the British, with their proud and highly distinctive political tradition. (546)

Worley wrote that “If Mosley’s perspective and the basis for his policies were cultivated at home, then his plan of action drew largely from foreign precedents” (82). Mosley’s own supporters celebrated these foreign precedents at the dawn of the BUF with the “Greyshirt Anthem” written in 1932: “First the German and Italian / One will win, the other’s won / Shout the grey clad young battalion / Britons do what they have done” (83). Mosley was simultaneously proud of the fascist legacy of other nations, and desirous that the British people should see his movement as thoroughly British.

Despite all this, Mosley scathingly replied to anyone who suggested that either he or the BUF were not thoroughly British. In a BUF pamphlet he responded sharply to those who criticized his movement for its foreign influences, writing that These gibes at foreign symbols do not come very well from Socialists, who got their creed from nineteenth-century Germany, from Liberals, who borrowed their faith from eighteenth-century France, or from Conservatives, who picked up their principles from the Stone Age International! (10)

He went on to criticize Communists for accusing his movement of reliance on foreign precedents while copying Russia:

Our opponents, who spend their time in slavish imitation of crude experiments in the most barbarous country in Europe, have yet to learn that Fascism in Britain does not require foreign models and will do things in a British way in consonance with our traditions. (51)

In spite of Mosley's most vehement protestations, the majority of British people associated the BUF with Fascist atrocities in other nations. As Catlin wrote: "Behind his undoubtedly eloquent appeals Englishmen visualize the concentration camp. They are alarmed by Mosley's technique of spectacular display..." (546). As much as Mosley would have liked for the people to focus on his platforms rather than on his theatricality and his foreign precedents, he was unable to so shift their focus.

Another interesting parallel between the automaton society and Mosley's movement is the role of women. As the automatons show Anthony around their society, he notes that there are no women to be found out and about in regular work (108). Likewise, some who viewed Mosley's movement wondered where the women were. Nupa only accepted male membership, and it often seemed that despite having some female members, there was a noticeable lack of women in both the organization of the movement's leadership and in the general rank and file. Indeed, If Mosley was looking to foster a "renaissance of manhood," he sent mixed messages to Britain's women, promising them the opportunity to pursue an industrial or political career if they so chose with equal pay for equal work, but he proclaimed in no uncertain terms that a woman's physicality did not allow her both to pursue a career and be a mother, and that, given the choice between the two, a woman should choose to be a mother (Mosley 49-50).

We see yet another parallel in industrial organization. Once Anthony's tours of the schools are over, the automatons take him on a tour of their industrial areas. Anthony feels tired and overwhelmed at this stage of his journey and has fewer observations of the automatons' industries. What he does notice, however, is that each major industry is completely segregated into its own area, and every industry even has its own sleeping and eating quarters for the workers. Their industry is entirely organized by the separation of trades, which are clearly defined and never intermingle (165-166). Anthony notes a contradiction in the automatons in that their work has become the whole of their identities and the very meaning of their lives, and yet they seem completely disassociated from everything around them, including their work itself (172).

This is, in fact, how Mosley planned to organize industry in society. He wished to establish a separation of powers between every industry, so that they might have separate representation in Parliament and separate governance. He felt that dividing Parliamentary districts by geographical area did not maximize the people's areas of expertise. He felt that those in the coal trade were best qualified to vote on matters relating to the coal industry, and likewise in other professions. Through these proposals, Mosley laid out plans for the reorganization of both Parliament and the economy. While he did not openly espouse the concept of the planned economy until later, the seeds of his planned economy were well-planted in the Mosley Memorandum (1930), *A National Policy* (1931), his Resignation Speech (1930), and "Revolution by Reason" (1925). In *A National Policy*, he proposed the creation of commodity boards for every major commodity Britain produced



or traded. This would later become the basis for his idea of a British Corporate State, and it was modeled on the Dyestuffs Act, which operated on the principle that those who produce the commodity and those who consume the commodity should agree on any matter of policy concerning the commodity. He believed the two sides would inevitably clash, as the consumers would argue for lower prices and higher quality, and the producers would argue for any course of action that would further their own profit. However, because the two sides would eventually have to agree in order to accomplish anything, their policy decisions would necessarily be fair and equitable for all (20-21). Mosley was confident that this would create an economic system that would stand the test of time.

Despite the automatons' confidence in the lasting power of their civilization, O'Neill wrote in *The Irish Statesman* that great empires of one language cannot long survive. O'Neill argued that diversity of language keeps a culture vital, and that if all people are forced into a standardized one-language mold, their culture will eventually die (Should We Let Irish Die? II 490). He continues in another article on the same topic that great empires

shape those who speak its language into one mould, and it does this whether it is democratic or not, because it tends to produce sameness of speech, custom, and view point...[A great empire] is a harmful thing in so far as it tends to standardize humanity and to submerge individuality and variety in a uniform mass. ("Should We Let Irish Die? II" 489)

As an Irishman, O'Neill took an Irish stance on this criticism of imperialism and totalitarianism. These concerns were ones that he had for his own country. He felt that

only a cross-fertilization via exchange with other cultures and languages could keep a culture alive. He worried that Ireland had no mode of such cultural exchange, as it was surrounded by nothing but English-speaking cultures. He thought there was a real threat of Ireland's culture being engulfed in "standardization and sameness" (Opening of the Dykes 648).

From these writings we see that the automaton society is not only predictive of a plausible future outcome of fascism, but to O'Neill's own fears for the future of Ireland. Although O'Neill directly applied his anti-totalitarian sentiment in this instance to the future of his own country's culture, it is still relevant to the international, as well as domestic, problem of emerging fascism, as well as a dark description of his own automaton society in *Land Under England*. The automatons began by being united under a single language. They evolved to have no language at all, but only a common telepathic bond. Their minds and their culture are stagnant, with no input or output. This has led to the death of their growth as a society. They are doomed forever to be in one state: never to develop their culture, language, or technology. Their society exists only for self-preservation. O'Neill's focus on language stagnation as the death of a society's growth is particularly relevant in the case of the automaton society. Not only is their language stagnant, they no longer even use language as we know it. If O'Neill believed that the death of a language was the death of a culture, then the automatons are a paragon of a dead culture.

Anthony's tour of the automaton society begins in the schools, and O'Neill, as an educator himself, places great emphasis on Anthony's tour of the schools in particular. The schools are where Anthony sees women for the first time, as teachers for the small children. He quickly realizes that these teachers not only discourage, but actively destroy the vitality of childhood in their students (132). This destruction of vitality is the very foundation of the automaton society. O'Neill placed the entire responsibility for passing down a society's values and ideals in the hands of educators. What a society taught in its schools, he argued, was representative of the values of its culture. He felt that this was necessary to the survival of any society, and was "the means by which the community exists, maintains its standard of living, and carries on its processes of evolution towards a deeper and more complex life" (*The Origins of Education* 105). O'Neill judged that the purpose of a German and even an American education was to bring children into a mindset best adapted to serving the State (*The Origins of Education* 105).

It is interesting that O'Neill saw these qualities in the education systems of contemporary societies, one of which was to become a fascist state not long after the publication of his education articles in *The Irish Statesman*. For O'Neill, education was the root of all of society's values. In an automaton education, young automatons are quickly indoctrinated into the idea of the State, and the vigor of their childhoods, in which they would discover their individualities, is

crushed. Thus the automaton society perpetuates itself through schools as its cultural birthplace. As Anthony continues to move through the city, he feels “influences” pressing on his mind that make him afraid. He is not sure if these are psychic influences from the automatons or whether it is his own fear of the dark and the unknown (110). In the schools he also feels the subtle psychic influences of the teachers and nearby automatons, who make him feel as though he is in a state of crisis and that their system is his only salvation:

...I began to feel a profound conviction that they alone, and the system they stood for, could save me from the thing that threatened me...But I was receiving something else from them also – something deeper than knowledge – some emanation of encouragement and protection as if they were impregnating me with their belief, their intense belief, that in their system and in it alone I could find safety. (133)

He begins to understand their origins and even to sympathize with them. He feels some of the fear that drove their entire nation mad (155).

Immediately before Anthony is lulled into their belief system, he forces himself to realize that the automatons are the ones creating the fear in him: “They were creating phantoms of fear, mere phantoms” (134, 156). It is as if the automatons create in Anthony’s mind the disease, and then present themselves and their society as the cure (134, 156). Anthony sees that once the automatons took this course, their system began to function less for protection from the fear of destruction and more for its own sake (157). In his further tours of the schools, Anthony muses on their calm solution to their previous panic: “Their calm was for me no longer a sinister symbol of their power, but a warning

as to the depths of flight into which panic can drive the mind of man” (161). When Anthony was first wandering the depths of the underworld, he was terrified of the darkness. This terror was Anthony’s crippling weakness – a weakness that was wholly absent in the automatons. Anthony saw the automatons’ calm, placed opposite his terror, as a strength in them. However, as soon as Anthony realized that the automatons willingly perpetuated their own fear in order then to supply the cure, he saw that their calm was not a strength, but a warning.

This crisis motivation is not exclusive to the fictional world of Joseph O’Neill’s novel. One article in *The Irish Statesman* warns against governments that have existed during and for emergencies:

Now a government which comes out strong only in emergencies will be tempted to create and maintain a state of chronic emergency as Napoleon had to create a state of chronic war, or as the doctor who could cure fits and nothing else began his treatments always by trying to induce epilepsy. (GBS 8)

Another writer for *The Irish Statesman* noted that in Italy the only force that gave power to the fascist movement was “economic chaos and political feebleness” (Russell 3).

O’Neill compares this mentality to that of the ancient Romans, whom the automatons emulate. He argues that the Romans built and maintained power because they “measured themselves up against circumstance,” and therefore “overwhelmed the more naïve vitality of less ‘reserving’ peoples” (Education as Fusion 232).

This was the same strategy employed by Mosley and the BUF. Mosley's constant trope was that the nation was on the verge of total destruction, and that he and his movement provided the only possible salvation for the country. The foundation of Mosley's platform was one of urgency. He wanted the British people to believe that if they did not support his policies, the nation would die and the British way of life would never again be restored. It seems this was more than a political gimmick, and that Mosley himself believed that without his immediate appointment to a position in Britain granting him something very close to, if not actually, absolute power, the nation would die (ML 265). In John Brewer's cross-sectional study of fifteen former BUF members, the crisis motive stands out clearly as a major factor in their decision to join the organization. Every one of the former members studied "felt that Britain was in a state of economic and cultural crisis and that the crisis could only be resolved through modern-day heroism and self-sacrifice" (17). The member quoted believed that Fascism was the only entity that contained these attributes and could save Britain (31). Mosley wrote in *Blackshirt Policy* that "We Fascists believe that nothing short of a new civilization can meet the present situation" (11).

The crisis motivation was not the only enticement the BUF offered. In fact the BUF made promises to nearly every group of British people imaginable, becoming "an indiscriminate hotch potch of promises made to all sections of the community. It offered to every person their heart's desire" (Brewer 10). To workers it promised higher wages, to the housewife a new house, work to those leaving school, early retirements and

pensions to the elderly, and milk to the children (10). Despite the BUF's attempt at mass appeal, it appealed the most to youth of all social classes hoping to use their manhood to save the nation (Worley 75). Mosley held "a genuine conviction that old forms of life, social and personal, were dying, and that some new type of society and of human being had to emerge if there was to be hope for humanity" (N. Mosley 255). He also believed that he had sacrificed his own happiness to save his country. He wrote that after the war he could have relaxed and lived on his fortune for the rest of his life. However, he chose to "insist on saving people who were bent on drowning" (ML 72).

While there may have been some truth to Mosley's unflattering view of Parliament, his attitude was destined to bring him ever closer to the political fringes. At one point his father-in-law, Lord Curzon, warned him not to isolate himself politically. However, Mosley's self-image as the lone hero of a failing nation continued to assert itself:

Although my instinct would have been to agree with his advice, fate confronted me with the dilemma of becoming a comfortable colleague in a journey to disaster or a lone challenger to a political world which was bringing ruin to my country. (ML 116)

It would seem that the crisis motivation was not only convincing to many of his followers, but also to Mosley himself. Just as the automatons and the Master of Knowledge held the absolute belief that their people were destined for destruction unless they adopted a totalitarian form of government, so this belief was held by members of Mosley's movement on every level – including by Mosley himself.

After Anthony rejects the automatons upon completion of his tour of their society, they send him out into the darkness alone so that he can experience for himself their fear of it. They offer him enough food and water to survive, but warn him that without the peace their society can offer him, his personality will disintegrate in the fear and the loneliness (184). Anthony wanders through the darkness for a long but indeterminate amount of time. He nearly loses his mind on several occasions as he attempts to find his father and search for a way back to the surface. Eventually he steals a boat and tries to cross the Central Sea to find a way out. The automatons catch him and take him to the Master of Knowledge, who realizes that Anthony will still not join their society. However, he reads Anthony's thoughts and is concerned that if he releases Anthony back to the surface without allowing him to try to bring his father back with him, Anthony will return with more men and attempt to take his father back by force. In the face of this concern, the Master finally agrees to let Anthony see his father. In exchange, Anthony agrees that, if his father will not break with the automatons and come back with him, Anthony will leave their world and never return.

It becomes apparent that the automaton society may pose a threat to upper earth society when Anthony finally meets his father. Anthony learns that there is not only no chance of his father accompanying him to the surface, but that his father has been completely indoctrinated into automaton society. In fact, Anthony's father unleashes a virulent psychic attack on Anthony. Anthony realizes during his father's psychic attack that his father recognizes Anthony's technical knowledge of modern machines and



munitions – Anthony is an engineer – and hopes to steal his knowledge and use it to lead the automatons back to the surface to take over the upper earth by conquest. Anthony believes his father’s goal is feasible because the fascist groups would be tempted to join the automatons: “...if a Fascist or Nazi section of [England’s] own citizens made common cause with the underearth invaders, because of the similarity of their doctrines, nobody could tell what might happen” (245). They would also have the element of surprise:

...nobody could suspect that, under the green earth of England, an outcast offspring of its own people, that had bred inward in the fearsome human swamp into which it had been driven, was gathering itself for a spring into the upper world again, under the urge of a madman who combined the evil of the light and the darkness. (244-245)

But the enemy is not just under the earth’s surface. The enemy also exists inside of Anthony’s father. While Anthony’s father is absorbed into the automaton society, he is still somewhat different from them. The difference, however, does not bode well for Anthony. While the automatons feel one standard emotion, love of the State, Anthony’s father feels two: love of the State and hatred of its enemies. Anthony’s father sees his son as an enemy of the State and that is why he assaults his mind.

Before Anthony’s father has a chance to kill him or steal away his consciousness, the automatons stop him. Because their system is designed to protect human life, they do not allow others to die needlessly. As Anthony recovers, he begins to wonder if he has really lost his father to the automatons. He recollects the occasion when his lively and happy father had come back from the war a changed and deadened man. He feels that the

man claimed by the automatons was not his father at all, but an imposter who took over his father's real personality when it died in the shock and trauma of the war (250).

All of this points to another layer of the *Land Under England* story: its emphasis on the enemy within. Marijane Osborne argues that C.S. Lewis drew on O'Neill's *Land Under England* as inspiration for his subterranean novels *The Silver Chair* and *Perelandra*. She points out that O'Neill's dystopia differs from Orwell's future dystopia in *1984* because it is not about a future or foreign threat, but rather about an "alternate society secretly existing under contemporary England" (116). She further argues that Lewis, at least, read *Land Under England* as an allegory of totalitarianism, since he compares it, along with *Brave New World* and *The Aerodrome*, to his anti-totalitarian poem *Dymer* (116). It is interesting that the *Land Under England* society is viewed as an alternate society under England, rather than as a separate society altogether. This is much like the BUF, which was an alternate "society" of a sort within the society of England. The novel is in many ways an allegory of British fascism and a satire of Nazism at the same time. Nazism represents the bigger picture, and was the more successful of the two movements, which is why many reviewers pointed to Nazism as the theme of the novel. However, the specificity of O'Neill's society within a society points closer to home. The two interpretations are reconcilable in that Mosley strongly modelled his movement on Nazism.

It is important to note that O'Neill's hollow earth narrative, which centers around an alternate society under the earth, is different from other hollow earth narratives such as *At the Earth's Core* by Edgar Rice Burroughs and *Journey to the Center of the Earth* by Jules Verne. O'Neill's underground society is not altogether far from the surface, and its culture is based upon an ancient earth society. The alternate society O'Neill presents has the same cultural roots as modern society above ground, and therefore posits itself as a sort of inverse version of above-ground society.

However, the below-ground society presented by Burroughs is intentionally one that is absolutely nothing like above-ground society. In fact, David, the protagonist from above ground, commits major social faux pas as a result of his cultural ignorance in below-ground society. His ignorance of this society's customs is a topic of repeated discussion in the narrative. David is a stranger who must re-learn cultural customs and acceptable behaviors. Furthermore, the world Burroughs creates below ground requires a very long journey to discover. He and his friend, Abner Perry, reach this strange land after many hours – perhaps even days – of boring through the earth's crust in a drilling machine. In *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, professor Lidenbrock and his nephew Axel do not discover or explore any kind of human society. Rather, they briefly encounter an ape-like primitive man, but avoid contact with him for fear he may be hostile. This novel is more about exploring the geological features of the interior of the earth, than about exploring alternate human societies.

*Land Under England* is somewhat unique among hollow earth narratives in the nature of the alternate society which Anthony discovers. While there is some discussion in this novel of the strange flora and fauna he encounters during his descent, the novel is more about the human society underneath the earth, which is not staggeringly far from the surface and which bears the same cultural roots as our own culture above ground. This is a society in which Anthony does not long wish to linger, one that has decided it does not want Anthony to remain or ever to return.

After Anthony recovers and agrees never to return to the lower world, the automatons equip him and allow him to leave. However, Anthony's father follows him, stalking him like a predator, hoping to catch him and steal his consciousness. As Anthony climbs higher and tries to evade his father, he muses on his father's personality. He realizes that, under his father's boyish charm there had always been something of the man who now pursues him. His father, Anthony remembers, was always cold and merciless, with only intimacies and charming ways prominent on the surface. The only change that the war and the automatons had effected was to remove his father's outer charm and lay bare his true personality. Anthony makes a distinction between his father and his mother, however. He notes that when his mother struggled with her husband, the struggle stripped away many of her outer qualities, yet she remained "deep and full." O'Neill holds Anthony's mother up as an example opposite his father, to show that different types of personalities are at play. Anthony's mother is "deep and full," a person who is not predisposed to succumb to the automatons. However, Anthony's father is a

shallow, empty person who is susceptible prey to the automatons. In some small way, we have hope from this. Those who are like Anthony's father are likely to join an automaton society, but people like his mother are more prone to resist an automaton-esque society by virtue of strength of personality (266-267). This implies that whether or not a fascist society will overtake Britain depends on the strength of the citizens. If the citizens prove shallow, empty, and willing to allow totalitarianism to fill the voids in their minds, then fascism will win. If, however, the character of Britain proves strong and full, totalitarianism will not succeed.

Anthony reflects on why his father has disobeyed the automatons' orders by pursuing him, and he realizes that his father was never truly absorbed. Rather, his father was the kind of man who absorbed others – the kind of man who made others want to be absorbed by him. In his own language, Anthony believes that his father would even have mentally absorbed the automatons themselves if they had had anything to offer him (268). In an interesting parallel to actual life, Nicholas Mosley, Oswald Mosley's son, held similar beliefs about his own father. While Nicholas Mosley's depiction of his father in his memoir is not entirely unfavorable, he does seem to see his father as an attractive sort of man who drew people to him and absorbed them. Oswald, it seems, believed he could have whatever he wanted from people:

[Oswald] had the crazy belief that he could get away with almost anything – adoring wife, passionate mistress, goodness knows what else – keep everyone happy when he wanted them to be happy and avoid them when he wanted to get away. (N. Mosley 255)

Anthony similarly describes his father and the automatons as being of the same nature. Both are self-centered individuals who manipulate the feelings of others in ways that suit them in the moment, but their interactions with others carry no depth. These men, in a sense, are not emotionally real. They are hollow in their egotism. He concludes that both must have blood sacrifices to fill their empty souls “like the frog, to make themselves big” (270-271). He uses this metaphor to indicate that such people, having no depth of emotion or personality of their own, must fill themselves with the servile natures of others. In Anthony’s father’s case, such blood sacrifices include Anthony’s mother, and even Anthony as a small child. In Mosley’s case, they would include wives, mistresses, and even his BUF followers. In order to recreate themselves as beings that appear to have substance, they must fill themselves with the substance of others, which they gain by making themselves dominant over others.

We see more evidence that Mosley was an all-absorbing leader for some in Brewer’s interviews with his former followers, particularly in examinations of the group’s violent tendencies. In addition to pleading self-defense, Mosley would sometimes claim that he could not control his Blackshirts in a fight. Brewer expresses skepticism toward this position given the loyalty shown to Mosley by his followers, who described him as

A dynamic leader who could inspire men to feats of heroism...A giant in a pygmy world. This completely fearless man was a leader beyond compare. A man among men. Oswald Mosley would leave Christ standing at first base. (34)

It does seem strange indeed, as Brewer points out, that Mosley could not control men in whom he commanded such a great deal of loyalty. It would seem that Mosley, like Anthony's father, was a man who stood above others. In fact, this is also literally true in both cases, as Mosley was a tall man over six feet, and Anthony describes his father as being head and shoulders above the automatons. Both stand out from the general crowd, and both are capable of inspiring absolute loyalty in others. They both share the greatest flaw, however, in that they use their abilities to manipulate other people and to take from them whatever it is that they desire from them.

While the enemy is under the earth as well as inside Anthony's father, the enemy is also somewhat within Anthony. It is Anthony's own fear that nearly betrays him to the automatons. Anthony realizes early on that he must steel himself against the automatons, because his own fear of the darkness and empathy for the automatons' cause could be his undoing. However, even more than this Anthony fears the enemy within his own society on the surface. When Anthony is on his way back to the surface, his first thought when he realizes that his father is still after him is that fascist groups will join with the automatons. He imagines the headlines as the automatons invade: "'Invasion of England from Below' – 'Attack of Underground Robots' – 'Fascists gone over to the Invaders'" (261).

Indeed, Anthony's fears on this matter are not entirely unfounded. Although Mosley placed strong emphasis on domestic matters, he still had a larger dream of

eventual world domination. Mosley argued in his “Britain First” speech that Hitler could not have been motivated by world domination, as only an insane person would want such a thing; Hitler was too good a statesman to be insane; therefore, Hitler did not want world domination. But Mosley had long since abandoned logic. In an article entitled “War or Peace?” Mosley argued that Britain should unite with Germany and Italy “in the great bulwark of European civilization against the disruptive Soviet barbarism” (9). Ultimately, he wrote, his vision was that of a “League of National States, united in universal Fascism” (9). In “Peace with Germany” he wrote that Britain should pursue peace with Hitler and Germany, as any possible conflict with Germany would not only not be in the best interests of Britain, but would be engineered by France and the British Parliament to frame Germany as an aggressor.

In *Fascism for the Million* Mosley underscored the urgency of solving the nation’s financial problems, only this time on the grounds that until Britain solved its internal financial problems, it would not be a good example to other nations. Once Britain solved its economic problems, “the time will be ripe for the British Empire, a Fascist Grand Council for Europe and for the other Continents, until the whole world is under Fascist rule” (66). Mosley would often return to his dream of uniting the world under Fascism. He disagreed with Lloyd George’s alliance-making with the Soviet Union and his alienation of Germany and Italy. He felt that world peace could only be secured through a league of Fascist nations in Europe (Mosley on Lloyd George 9).



*Land Under England* is a multi-layered fascist allegory, but what makes this novel different from other dystopias, as Osborne pointed out, is that instead of focusing on a foreign or future dystopia, the dystopia takes the form of an enemy within. The enemy is within the earth, literally because it is beneath the crust of the earth. The enemy is also within upper earth society, because fascist elements within society are deemed likely to join the automatons. The enemy is within Anthony's father, because we can see from Anthony's musings that the foundations for joining, and even becoming an integral member of, automaton society were always part of Anthony's father's personality. The enemy is even within Anthony himself, because it is Anthony's own fear and weakness that open him up to invasion by the automatons. Likewise, Mosley's BUF was not a future or a foreign threat, but one that arose within English society itself. Anthony Storr, in his introduction to the 1985 reprint of the novel, also describes the story as multi-layered. It can be read simultaneously as the story of a young man and his father, and as a political allegory. As a political allegory, it warns us "that the seduction of an ideal 'system' can only lead to the death of human individuality" (1).

In his forward to the novel, Russell compares humanity's lingering tendency to abnegate itself before a leader to ancient deity-worship and argues that this has been a prominent feature of all societies throughout history. However, he argues that "it is only in our own time that we find a whole nation swearing blind allegiance to a leader who demands such devotion." He goes on to mention Hitler as an example (6).

Contemporaries of O'Neill clearly saw *Land Under England* as both politically and

culturally relevant. Fascism raises its head significantly in the novel's recurring themes of complete self-sacrifice to an all-powerful leader.

Nearly all reviewers of the novel gave at least a passing nod to fascism or totalitarianism in general when they discussed O'Neill's themes. In a 1935 review of the novel, Malcolm Crowley notes the contemporary departure from the optimistic Victorian style to dystopian literary futures, which he believed were the embodied fears the ruling classes felt toward the many threats to their dominance and their old way of life. O'Neill wrote the novel in an age that introduced new forms of the State, including communism and fascism. Both of these systems were heralded by their followers as the ideal society. In his musings on the novel, Crowley describes the fact that the automatons are happy in their society and believe it to be ideal as the narrative's "crowning horror" (51). Indeed, the notion that a person of the inter-war period could willingly endorse a new form of government, believing it to be the perfect and ideal vehicle of his happiness, and yet enslaved by it, was entirely possible. Crowley identifies the novel as a fascist parable, but concludes that, while the automatons are embodiments of fears inside the English mind, narratives of this nature ultimately describe the real world in which the authors live (51). In another 1935 review, William Troy calls out the specificity of O'Neill's allegory, and he argues that, in Dante-esque fashion, O'Neill has assigned Oswald Mosley a place in Hell. Troy writes that the references to fascism are far too obvious to be worth debating, and states that the theme of the novel is the struggle of the individual to choose between the loneliness of his individuality and the sacrifice of individuality on the altar of society

(248). V.S. Pritchett, another 1935 reviewer, felt that the novel's primary weakness was that its fascist references were too explicit (222).

Anthony echoes Crowley's sentiment that the narrative is a depiction of the outside world when he describes the automaton society as culturally similar, in some ways, to his own in England. He even goes so far as to muse that his previous judgments of the automaton society may have been overly harsh:

Even on earth, under the influence of overwhelming defeat and the panic and hysteria that it brings, nations have been known to hand themselves over to the hypnotic suggestion of their leaders, and, under that hypnotic subjection, to take courses that are abhorrent to the normal instincts of humanity... Those leaders below have merely done to an extreme degree, proportioned to their great need, what similar leaders have done in a small way on earth. (176)

This is part of Anthony's recurring empathy with the automatons. Anthony understands and recognizes the automatons as fellow human beings who have reacted to the world around them in the same way as others of his own people have reacted to theirs. In fact, it is clear that Anthony would not fear the automatons' invasion of the surface if he did not believe that there were those of his own people who would join them.

During the time the novel was written, Italy and Germany posed the greatest foreign fascist threats. However, these are not the forces that Anthony fears will join the automatons should they choose to attack the upper surface. Indeed, they would have to travel some distance in order to reach England and join the invasion. The allies Anthony feared for the automatons were homegrown British fascists. Indeed, the sinister

suggestion that hangs above Anthony's journey through the underground world is that perhaps someday the darkness on the upper earth will be so great that the panic will drive upper earth dwellers to a similar solution. The very organization of the automaton society according to the Corporate State posed by Mosley places Anthony's worst fears squarely in the time period in which the novel was written: the 1930s marked by hunger, unemployment, and emerging home-grown fascism.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE AERODROME

At the heart of Rex Warner's 1941 novel *The Aerodrome* is a central conflict between a village and a nearby aerodrome. The village life is rural and pastoral, defined by personal relationships but lacking stability in inter-personal relationships, loyalty, and will to action. The aerodrome is right at the edge of the village, cleverly camouflaged so that it is invisible and unnoticeable to those who are not explicitly aware of its presence. Indeed, even those who are explicitly aware of its presence often do not pay it much thought – at least in the beginning of the novel. The aerodrome is much the opposite of the village. Rather than placing emphasis on interpersonal relationships, the aerodrome demands that its recruits spurn their familial associations, marriage, and the prospect of having children. However, the aerodrome compensates for the village's deficiencies by supplying in large measure the logic, efficiency, and vision the village lacks. In many ways it is analogous to O'Neill's automaton society.

It is apparent to both the informed reader and the critic that the village bears a resemblance to old-order democracy in the British inter-war period, and that the aerodrome represents domestic fascism. Much like the village, the British democratic government of the 1930s faced the popular charge of ineffectiveness and stagnation in the face of seemingly insurmountable economic and political challenges.

The aerodrome, on the other hand, is much of what Mosley boasted of the BUF – a “renaissance of manhood,” an agent of action and efficiency. The fact that the aerodrome is so much a part of the landscape, camouflaged so that it is indistinguishable from the country itself, and the fact that the village is nearly powerless to stop the aerodrome’s power grab, classes *The Aerodrome* as Warner’s cautionary tale of domestic, rather than foreign, fascism taking control of the old democratic way of life. While the aerodrome is not hidden beneath the earth, it is hidden much like O’Neill’s automaton society: it is a nearby threat that is not easily seen.

The novel tells this story through the eyes of its narrator, Roy. While Roy has believed all his life that he is the son of the village Rector and his wife, on Roy’s twenty-first birthday the Rector tells Roy that he and his wife are not his parents, and that they found him on the roadside and raised him as their own. This is the first of many disillusioning experiences Roy encounters as soon as he comes of age. That same night, after he comes home drunk from the pub, he witnesses the Rector praying and confessing that he had killed his best friend Antony, who was going to marry the Rector’s wife and receive the assignment for the village parish.

Later on, Roy falls in love with Bess, the landlord’s daughter, and marries her secretly. After the fact, he discovers from Bess’s mother that not only is the Rector actually his father, but that he is also Bess’s father. According to Bess’s mother, the Rector lied to Roy when he denied paternity of him because Roy was conceived out of

wedlock. The Rector, apparently, wished to protect his wife from scandal if this fact were ever discovered. However, the Rector also had an ongoing affair with the landlord's wife, which produced Bess. Not only does Roy discover that his doubtfully legitimate marriage to Bess is incestuous, but on the same day he discovers Bess in bed with his friend, a Flight-Lieutenant from the Aerodrome.

At this time, Roy is called up to report for duty at the aerodrome because he had signed up to join the Air Force at Bess's insistence before he discovered her infidelity and the incestuous nature of their relationship. At the aerodrome, Roy is inculcated into an entirely new set of values. He is ordered to spurn his familial relationships – such as they are – to develop friendships only with other men, to use women sexually without ever allowing them to gain power over him, to reject the idea of marriage and children, and to forsake outer world values such as ownership of property.

Not long before Roy joins the Air Force, the Air Vice-Marshal announces that the Air Force is acquiring village land and taking over the area. The Flight-Lieutenant becomes the new Rector after accidentally killing the old Rector. As Roy is indoctrinated into the ideals of the Air Force, the Flight-Lieutenant begins to sympathize with the ideals of the village. We see this when both young men become involved with the same woman: Eustasia. Eustasia is the wife of an aerodrome mathematician. The Flight-Lieutenant becomes emotionally involved with her, just as Roy was emotionally involved

with Bess. However, Roy dispassionately displaces the Flight-Lieutenant as Eustasia's lover and effects a role reversal.

The Flight-Lieutenant's defection to the village mentality comes to fruition when Roy, who has quickly risen through the ranks to become the Air Vice-Marshal's personal assistant, and the Air Vice-Marshal visit the village church while the Flight-Lieutenant delivers a sermon. The Flight-Lieutenant, out of uniform and dressed in a cassock, tells the congregation that they were better off before the Air Force took over the village. The Air Vice-Marshal arrests him, and shoots the Squire's sister when she attempts to resist on behalf of the Flight-Lieutenant. The Flight-Lieutenant is then demoted to a mechanic position at the aerodrome.

Around the same time, Roy reveals to the Air Vice-Marshal that Eustasia, who is now in love with Roy, is pregnant. This puts Roy in violation of Air Force policy forbidding an airman from fathering a child. The Air Vice-Marshal coolly advises Roy to influence Eustasia to end the pregnancy, and reveals to Roy that he plans to establish Air Force control over the entire country as a kind of military dictatorship. The Flight-Lieutenant, who now wishes to leave the Air Force, and Eustasia, who wishes to keep Roy's baby, attempt to escape from the aerodrome, but they are both killed in the attempt. Roy seems convinced that the Air Vice-Marshal had ordered the pursuers to kill them. Roy informs the Air Vice-Marshal that he also no longer wishes to be in the Air Force, and that he no longer believes in its ideals. The Air Vice-Marshal becomes angry and



makes it clear that Roy, knowing all he does about the Air Vice-Marshal's plan to take over the country, must die if he chooses to leave.

At this point the Rector's wife and the Air Vice-Marshal's friend Dr. Faulkner arrive and reveal that the Air Vice-Marshal is Antony, the man the Rector believed he had killed, and that Antony is actually Roy's father by the Rector's wife. Antony was also the father of the Flight-Lieutenant by the Squire's sister. They beg Antony to spare Roy's life. Antony seems unmoved by their pleas, and orders that all of them be locked in the office until he returns from a meeting with other leaders regarding the Air Force takeover. However, Antony's plane crashes, killing him and all of his top commanders. Roy recalls earlier having seen the Flight-Lieutenant working on the wing of that same airplane. Thus, the Air Force takeover is averted and the village returns to some degree of normalcy. Roy returns to the village and marries Bess, who now knows she is not Roy's sister and has repented of her prior infidelity.

The triumph in this novel belongs to the old order represented by the village, but the picture Warner paints of the village is not always a flattering one. Members of the village adhere superficially to an established religious and moral code that is supposed to dictate their lives and decisions, but the villagers are inveterate hypocrites in their private lives. They ignore conventions of honesty and fidelity and seem content to drink and philander their lives away when they are not engaged in monotonous labor. It seems that the author, rather than pontificating on the evils of sex or alcoholism, is making a point

about the inability of inter-war people to commit to the morals to which they publically subscribe.

When we meet Roy at the beginning of the novel, he is a young man who has just come of age, and who, in the course of his more innocent childhood and adolescence, has only known the honesty and fidelity to which the villagers pay lip service. Now, as a young man, he is introduced to the much more complex realities of village life. He is almost representative of England in a sort of childhood innocence until the outbreak of the First World War, which jolted the world into a new and much more complicated reality. When the Rector tells Roy that he is not his father, this is only the beginning of the upheaval of his perception of the village value system. This particular revelation leads Roy to ask, “Is not the fiction that has been firmly believed as good as true” (19)? This question reveals much about the character of the village. While truth itself is in short supply, the villagers are willing to behave as though their chosen fictions can serve as the truth. In this case, Roy even seems to feel as though the revelation of the truth was an unnecessary wound – that the truth itself did not change his practical life. In this light, one wonders why the lie was even told to begin with.

To complicate matters, the “truth” which the Rector reveals to Roy is seen later to be only a partial truth. The Rector is truthful that he is not Roy’s father, but he is untruthful when he tells Roy that the Rector’s wife is not his mother, and that the Rector and his wife found Roy abandoned as a baby on the road. It is as if the villagers hope to

be able to change reality through dishonesty, in order to meet their immediate needs. This creates an ever-shifting, changeable, and unreliable order in the village. The people of the village believe that they should outwardly fit a mold of religious morality, regardless of whether their personal lives actually fit this mold, thus creating an atmosphere of untruth and hypocrisy.

Another scene that demonstrates the unreliable nature of the village mindset occurs in a drinking tent at the agricultural show shortly before the Rector is killed. As Roy drinks with his friends, he and the other patrons of the tent hear the wailing of a village drunk. It is unclear whether his cries are those of sincere regret or whether he is simply seeking attention. In a fit of tears, he cries:

Oh Mother, I see you in your poor little cottage, poking the fire, ah, thinking of your wandering son. I thank God you cannot see him. Among the burning globes, in the din of degradation, mother, of a gin hell he is to be beheld. A gaol-bird, mother, a broken reed: and the woman at his side is not his wedded wife. (61)

The others in the tent are amused by the man's sad story, and buy him drinks.

Accordingly, "pleased with the success of his performance, [he] volunteered a comic song" (61).

It suggests much about the attitude of the village that this man's story, which does not appear to be untrue, is not regarded with any gravity by any of the listeners or even by the drunk man himself. The tale of this society's shameful wanderings from its own roots and traditional morality is told by a drunken fool for the entertainment of others.

Indeed, this drunken fool is a personification of the village, shifting from mournfulness to jocularly in an instant – a polarity that belies a lack of commitment to any goal or idea. After Roy has been in the Air Force for a while, he muses on this lack of stability and commitment: “I was disgusted and frightened by the contrast between their quick anger, their sudden levity, and the undeviating precision and resolution of the Air Vice-Marshall” (103). It is clear that the people of the village are incapable of even committing to one emotion for a short term.

As Roy continues his career in the Air Force, he sees these flaws more and more in the village. He muses that “[t]hey had no sense of direction, I saw, no confidence, no initiative...” (199). He sees the goals of the villagers as shallow and superficial. They spend their brief and insignificant lives in “the acquisition of money or foodstuffs” (224). It is irrelevant, he notes, whether they are happy or not, because either way their lives are “abject and pointless” (224). He resents organizations outside the Air Force as incapable of achieving great ideas or of submitting to discipline: “they were aimless and...their power was accidental” (224).

The culture of the village is easily comparable to the morally unstable culture of Europe in the post-WWI era. In his introduction to the novel, Anthony Burgess recalls the Air Vice-Marshall’s account of the village as being marked by “confusion, deception, rankling hatred, low aims, indecision” (3). Burgess notes that “thinking of the dishonest decade which World War II brought to an end, we have to agree with him” (3). Warner

himself had much to say of the character of the inter-war period. He wrote in “The Cult of Power” that

They believed in nothing, and their minds had no points of reference except the most obvious – food, sex, display, ‘success.’ If, behind all this, there was any dominant philosophy, it was the old philosophy of the critical revolution, now completely victorious, but by a kind of Pyrrhic victory, for it had lost most of its vitality. Scientific toleration was becoming intellectual laziness, free thought and free love had lost their nouns, rationalism, having overthrown religious dogma, was now, in some bewilderment, chasing its own tail. The battle was won, yet how dreary, bleak and forbidding was the conquered field. (21)

He also noted that this attitude was fueled by “the bitterest disappointment and disillusion” (20).

We don’t necessarily see disappointment and disillusion among the people of the village. There has been no catastrophic event that has changed the village’s way of life, and things seem to have always been the way that they are. The only change that has taken place in anyone’s recent memory is the establishment of the aerodrome on the outskirts of the village. This is something the villagers are not pleased about, but they tolerate it and go on about their daily business. However, their attitude of careless irresponsibility fits Warner’s description of the inter-war era perfectly. In fact, the culture of the village could even be considered more reprehensible because no collective tragedy like that of the First World War changed the nature of the village. Rather, the nature of the village is unchanging in its moral pettiness. Although the novel itself betrays no date for its setting, it is a mold, a snapshot of inter-War culture held up and examined in its essence, with no explanation or excuse for its behavior.

In addition to moral ambivalence and hypocrisy, the village betrays an ignorance of government and a lack of meaningful participation in it when the Squire learns that the Air Force is going to seize his land and take over the village. His attitude toward the government is one of mistrust and ignorance. Even as a landowning citizen, he plays no role in government and feels he is a slave to its whims. He laments to Roy that

“[i]t seems...that some lawyer fellows have got some sort of a law passed...It's quite well known that the Government understand nothing of these things. Things for some time have been going from bad to worse. Of course, we must obey the law.” (78)

The Squire here seems to have an attitude typical of the inter-war period toward government. In his eyes, the government's decline is inevitable and the village is merely collateral damage.

A cynical lack of involvement in any meaningful changes that could be brought about by government seems to have marked inter-war Britain. In 1928 and 1929, Lloyd George's Liberals in Parliament sought out the nation's best and brightest in an ambitious attempt to research and solve the nation's most pressing problems. They presented the Green Book as an answer to agricultural problems, the Yellow Book on industrial failure, and the Orange Book on unemployment. These solutions proffered by the Liberals contained massive public works proposals and far-flung future planning. Despite these efforts, the Liberals were gravely disappointed in the 1929 election. It would seem that “[t]he great British public preferred the boring message” (Malcolm and Stewart 226).

Oswald Mosley came up against the same sorts of obstacles as a starry-eyed young Parliamentarian. He also proposed many such sweeping changes in an attempt to resurrect the nation's economy. However, when the Labour government rejected Mosley's unemployment proposals, he chose to resign from the party. Mosley delivered a stirring resignation speech that gave pause even to those who disagreed with his politics. In this speech he reiterated a need for a public works program to eliminate unemployment. He expounded upon what he viewed as the fallacy of regaining dominance in the export trade, and also on the gross inefficiency of Parliamentarians. In his 1931 resignation speech he wedded his developing ideas of centralized executive government to the urgency of restoring a dying Empire to health: "What I fear much more than a sudden crisis is a long, slow crumbling through the years until we sink to the level of a Spain, a gradual paralysis beneath which all the vigour and energy of this country will succumb" (RS 15). Although Mosley's resignation speech stirred up some positive reactions to him and his message for a short time, the ideals the speech contained failed to take a permanent hold. This speech promised to eliminate not only the nation's problems, but also the current government's inefficiency in dealing with them. Yet, the people seemed uninterested in making efforts to save themselves.

Warner wrote in "May 1945" that these sorts of sentiments, coupled with a reduced valuation of the individual brought about by disbelief in God, made the people vulnerable to ideologies such as fascism (172). Just as the cynical apathy of British inter-war voters opened them up to threats such as fascism, the villagers' cynical apathy opens

them up to a takeover by the aerodrome. The Air Force, over time, developed a reputation for treading on all the ways of the village. When they finally take over the village, the Air Vice-Marshal announces the coming change coldly to the villagers at the Rector's funeral. This coldness quickly becomes legend in the village, as the Air Vice-Marshal vows to eliminate all of the village's weaknesses and replace them with cold efficiency. He declares,

We in the Air Force look upon things very differently from those who have been used to dictate your ideas to you. Muddle, inefficiency, any kind of slackness are things which we simply do not tolerate...Now we shall bury the dead body." (98)

The implication is that the villagers' muddle, inefficiency, and slackness have rendered them incompetent to run their own village. By the same token, we see both the benefits and drawbacks of the aerodrome way of life. The Air Vice-Marshal promises efficiency, but also takes all ceremony out of the somber and hallowed occasion by declaring that it is now time to "bury the dead body."

Perhaps the principal moment in which the Air Vice-Marshal illuminates the Air Force philosophy occurs when he delivers a speech to Roy and his fellow trainees at the aerodrome when their training is winding to a close. In this speech he orders the young new airmen to cast off their associations with family, to scorn the possibility of marriage, and under no circumstances to father a child. He orders that "'parenthood,' 'ownership,' 'locality' are the words of those who stick in the mud of the past to form the fresh deposit of the future" (178-179). He goes on to enumerate the weaknesses of village life, that their "lives are devoted to the lowest and meanest of all aims, the acquisition by cunning



and hypocrisy of large or small sums of money. This is the type of man which our historical tradition has produced in our age, a monster...” (178-179). The Air Vice-Marshall’s solution to the myriad problems presented by village life is to shun all familial and home associations. The villagers easily cast off family loyalty in their numerous affairs and the illegitimate children produced by them. While it may seem that the Air Force is fighting for significant revisions of the village lifestyle by casting off the mores of religion and custom, in truth it is only promoting the same lifestyle lived in the village, without the hypocrisy.

In his review of *The Aerodrome*, John Gray writes favorably of the novel as one that accurately captures the “sinister glamour” of fascism in the inter-war years (50). He continues this thread of analysis by reading it as an allegory of totalitarianism versus the decaying democratic liberalism of the inter-war period:

*The Aerodrome* is easily interpreted as a parable of the evils of collectivism. The Air Force stands as a symbol of the totalitarian state, whose perfect efficiency rests on suppression, cruel but always incomplete, of ordinary humanity, while the Village is a cipher for freedom – the lax and confused but still fundamentally sound and decent life that Britain was defending against the Nazis by the time the book was published. (50)

It is this dichotomy of evils that the novel clearly portrays. Neither system is ideal or even, perhaps, desirable, but they are the only choices that are seemingly available. It was the fact that the old system suffered from an excess of sensory and emotional indulgence that makes fascism with its removal of humanity so appealing.

However, the Air Force does not aim to reform anything, but rather to gain power for itself. Roy muses that “[w]e constituted no revolutionary party actuated by humanitarian ideals, but seemed to be an organization manifestly entitled by its own discipline, efficiency, and will to supreme power” (226). It is as if the Air Force desires an escape from a meaningless life of small labors and petty aims through the acquisition of power. Or, as the Air Vice-Marshal puts it, “[t]o be freed from time, Roy. From the past and from the future. From shapelessness” (221). Roy himself becomes inculcated into the Air Force mentality, which we see when he and the Air Vice-Marshal find the Flight-Lieutenant speaking against the Air Force in church. Roy observes of the Flight-Lieutenant that “[t]here was a look of such desperation in his eyes that it was impossible to question his sincerity. It was evident that, in this mood, he could be of no use to us whatever...” (232). The primary feature of the aerodrome is a callous disregard for personal feelings and for the associations of friendship and family. They see these things as obstacles to their real purpose. Thus, while the Air Force is able to accomplish goals of which the villagers could never dream, they seem to have lost a key element of their humanity.

The Air Force bears much similarity to the BUF in the 1930s. While Mosley never advocated a complete rejection of familial ties and romantic love, he felt that inter-war culture had gone astray and was now the very image of ignoble aims and inefficiency. Like the BUF, the Air Force seeks to transform society. One of these new societal features is an emphasis on masculinity as a societal virtue. The Air Vice-

Marshal's dream of "a new and more adequate race of men" could have been Mosley's own dream, as the hyper-masculinity of the Air Force is greatly reminiscent of the hyper-masculinity of the BUF (ML 305). Mosley mostly manifested his organization's masculinity in the paramilitary nature of his youth movement, and later of his entire organization. Particularly, the use of the black shirt as a military uniform was both controversial to the public but virulently defended by Mosley. He argued that the uniform removed class distinctions and fostered equality among BUF members. He called it "the basis of a new model army, with its new political idea, and a new ideal of life" (ML 305). He further claimed that this uniformed political army "was designed to instill a renaissance of manhood" (ML 305). He noted that the black shirts helped BUF members distinguish each other from the local Communists who tried to break up their meetings (16).

Mosley commonly leveled a charge of femininity at his opponents when he disagreed with them, while holding up his own organization as the last bastion of British masculinity. For example, he felt that science could render poverty a modern-day irrelevance, but blamed the fact that poverty still existed on a lack of manhood in his opponents: "We see the character of calm strong manhood inherent in the British yielding place to the semblance of a meddlesome old woman armed only with a shrill tongue and an umbrella" (12). In *Blackshirt Policy* he further referred to the Labour Party caucus as "endless mothers' meetings" (12).

As we get to know the Air Vice-Marshal in the novel, we see that his aims of military takeover have a distinctly fascist flavor. The Air Vice-Marshal comes to reveal his aim to change or destroy every “race of money-makers and sentimentalists, undisciplined except by forces which they do not understand, insensitive to all except the lowest, the most ordinary, the most mechanical stimuli...” (223). He has utterly rejected the culture of the village, and his goal is to change it to reflect the culture of the Air Force, or simply to destroy it.

The parallels between the Air Force and fascism are apparent, but what makes the aerodrome itself an interesting symbol is the fact that it is a structure deliberately built into the surrounding landscape and camouflaged so that any aircraft flying overhead would not be able to tell the difference between the aerodrome and the country itself. Roy first speaks of the aerodrome as something very well concealed near the village:

it was so well concealed that many visitors to our village have gone away from the neighbourhood without ever having suspected its existence, although the sight and sound of perhaps fifty planes in the air at one time must have convinced them that some such a concentration of force could not be far distant. (17)

As in *Land Under England*, the aerodrome is not a hostile force invading from a faraway land – the aerodrome is a noisy piece of countryside that is indistinguishable from the very land that makes up the country.

The protagonists of the two novels, Anthony and Roy, undertake similar journeys. Both reject a “normal” life in the environments in which they were raised. Anthony rejects a life of working in the motor industry and being married to a young woman with

whom his mother's family attempts to pair him. Roy rejects a life of mindless labor in the village punctuated with regular patronage of the pub and a torrid and entangled personal life. Both of them travel to the nearby "fascist" institution, and both ultimately reject that fascist institution and return to embrace the mundane lives they originally left behind. Like the young men of England in the inter-war period, they are seduced by the ambitious world of fascism. The strong appeal of fascism to the young men it actively sought to recruit was not to be discounted. This threat was made even more frightening by the fact that it arose from inside England's own political structure. The roots of the BUF came from Britain's own Parliament.

The BUF was not a fascist force invading from another country, but a political group operating legally within the boundaries of its own nation. Like the aerodrome announcing its presence through the noise of fifty airplanes, the BUF announced its presence to the people with the sound of military force. The aerodrome and the BUF are domestic threats. The village, like the majority of the British populace, see the aerodrome/BUF as a nearby nuisance that can be ignored and has no impact on daily life, but the threat of takeover hangs over the scene. It is significant that the Air Force takes over the village legally, just as the BUF vowed to take over Britain by being legally elected to Parliament.

The symbol of the coming takeover in *The Aerodrome* is that of the Squire's prize bull, Slazenger. The Flight-Lieutenant unleashes the bull at the village agricultural show,

and Slazenger proceeds to run around the tents and displays wreaking havoc. Roy sees it as a “text or symbol” of what is to come (57). The bull, like the Air Force, is a prized example of strength and masculinity that is both useful and admirable when controlled by the villagers.

However, when the bull is let loose and is no longer in the villagers’ control, it is a force of destruction and power. Ultimately, though, the bull submits again to the villagers’ control, because there is no point in his unbridled, destructive freedom except power for power’s sake. Roy comes to this same realization after he has been in the Air Force for some time. He begins to wonder what the point is of “the acquisition of power over men’s lives” (249). The episode in which the bull gets loose and causes mayhem in the village agricultural show is a brief parallel to the later narrative of the Air Force gaining power in the village and running amok. The agricultural show is a beloved activity among the villagers, and is symbolic of village traditions. By its very nature it is a celebration of their way of life. The bull is a part of the village way of life, even as the aerodrome is in some way a part of daily life. Even though the aerodrome is on the periphery of the village, the villagers still witness aircraft flying to and from the facility as a loud and disruptive event. They also regularly interact with members of the Air Force, whose presence is also usually regarded as disruptive. The bull, like the Air Force, becomes unleashed on what is a representation of the village way of life, and disrupts it. However, the bull is then recaptured, just as the Air Force eventually rescinds its bid for domination over the village with the death of Antony.

Ostensibly, both the BUF and Warner's Air Force desire takeover in order to eliminate muddle and inefficiency, but Warner portrays the aim as vacuous; in the end, the goal is power as an end in itself. This reveals much of Rex Warner's opinions of fascism. He depicts it in the novel as something cold and artificial, and we see these symbols manifested in Roy's transformation toward, and then away from, the Air Force mentality. Roy describes his return to the village mentality as "though there had been something in me like snow and ice which were now melting and gradually revealing a landscape whose outlines I had not seen for some time and barely remembered" (245). This is a comment on the cold and unfeeling nature of the Air Force way of life. The snow and ice blur the finer outlines of life and create a vision of life as a single solid form without warmth or variation. When Roy describes the symbolic melting away of his Air Force mentality as he returns to the village mentality, he again recognizes emotional warmth and sees a life more defined and rich in its variety. The price for efficiency and power is warmth and depth. This is the same conclusion Anthony reaches at the end of *Land Under England*.

Warner describes village life, despite its "drunkenness and inefficiency," as "wider and deeper" than that of the Air Force, which rendered him a slave to the Air Vice-Marshal's ambition (261). While the Air Force has "abolished inefficiency, hypocrisy, and the fortunes of the irresolute and remorseful mind," it has also abolished "the spirit of adventure, inquiry, the sweet and terrifying love that can acknowledge mystery, danger, and dependence" (262). He laments that on the ashes of the old order,

the Air Force is a “denial of life,” and returns to the ways of the village (283-284). The novel closes with Roy musing “[t]hat the world may be clean’: I remember my father’s words. Clean indeed it was and most intricate, fiercer than tigers, wonderful and infinitely forgiving” (302). Those who seek the Air Force way of life, including Antony and Roy, are seeking something that they believe a village-style life cannot provide. They seek a way of life that is “clean,” devoid of the impurities of inefficiency and useless emotional attachments. However, the Air Force way of life is, in its simplest form, a more honest version of the village life. Members of the Air Force participate in the same affairs and moral deviances, only without emotional attachment and without a pretense of morality. Roy discovers that leaving the village did not grant him an escape from such moral muddle, and that he might as well have stayed in the village to begin with. He is then satisfied with the notion of living the rest of his days in the village, because there he can at least find emotional fulfillment.

Rex Warner wrote at length about the threat of fascism in the face of modern problems in his 1946 essay “The Cult of Power.” He discussed fascism through the framework of the new tragic hero – an individualistic hero who violently rejects the status quo. He wrote that this particular, usually power-hungry hero emerges most often in times when the security of the present is called into question: “In these ages, and in others when the power-cult has come to the fore, there has been a general breakdown in political life accompanied by an uncertainty about moral and intellectual standards” (13).

Warner’s view that such a scenario existed in the inter-war period, as well as in village



culture in *The Aerodrome*, is already established. All that remains is for this tragic hero to emerge. Both the Air Vice-Marshal and Oswald Mosley emerge as types of Warner's tragic hero in answer to the ostensible environment of "low aims and indecision" (14-15). Even though both of these figures fit the bill for the kind of tragic hero Warner describes, they may not qualify as heroes *per se*. Both are egomaniacal individuals who seek to dominate others. Warner's use of the term "tragic hero" for this purpose is likely born of his academic background in classical literature. Even though the Air Vice-Marshal and Oswald Mosley fit the bill with his description of a dominating personality taking the reins of a decadent culture, both of these figures are more like anti-heroes than tragic heroes.

It is during these times, Warner writes, that the "self-made man" emerges who is filled with "moral anarchy" (Warner 14-15). This moral anarchy is a result of his ability to see everything that is wrong with the old-established values and institutions of his society and to feel that he is strong enough to break them down. The problem with this man, Warner writes, is that he is ultimately unable to sway the great masses of people and does not really embody any set of values that can replace the old system. But if the people do come to see this man as their leader, they as a mass are stronger than he is individually, and they will demand of him a new system to replace the old one he has broken down (14-15).

Warner writes that this proposed new system is fascism. He writes more of fascism in terms of its moral and human modes of thinking than in terms of its concrete state structures. He sees fascism as the exact opposite of “generally accepted ideals of the early twentieth century such as toleration, kindness, objective truth, freedom” (16). Even though he points to Germany as an example, he writes that fascism is a European movement which is not confined to a single nationality: “Fascist ideals appear in the most unlikely places, and, in England, are by no means confined to the followers of Sir Oswald Mosley” (16).

Warner did not often refer to Mosley directly, but he was a vocal opponent of fascism. He saw the appeal fascism made to the undisciplined and amoral life that was common in his time, and he simultaneously rejected it as the solution to society’s ills. Stephen Tabachnick argued in his biography of Warner that the aerodrome society was a metaphor for Marxism, rather than fascism. Warner himself espoused Marxism and had a tumultuous love life during the time he was writing *The Aerodrome*. Tabachnick interprets the novel as the semi-autobiographical account of Warner embracing his sordid personal connections over the order of his former Marxist inclinations.

However, Warner himself described fascism in the same terms as we view the aerodrome society:

The success of Fascist propaganda in Europe is largely due to the fact that the Fascists, for a number of reasons, have appreciated better than their opponents the deep seated desire in modern men and women to escape from the bourgeois illusion of disconnected and aimless freedom. People

need a framework of convention in which their lives may be shaped, and, rather than the abstract inhumanity of the cash-nexus they will choose the concrete inhumanity of Fascism and war. (163)

Tabachnick argues that Warner based the aerodrome on Marxism, instead of Fascism, because he uses Marxist language in this passage to describe the kind of discipline and convention offered by his fictional aerodrome. While Tabachnick understands Warner's Marxist past, Warner is clearly speaking of fascism in this passage, and he speaks of it in exactly the terms on which we see the aerodrome-village dichotomy in the novel.

The dualism between a general dissatisfaction with the status quo and a lack of satisfaction with the new proposed system also marked public opinion of Mosley's movement. Mosley had plenty of support in his belief that the old party system had failed England in its time of crisis. Many of his members did not become disillusioned with the current system under Mosley's tutelage, but had rather been drawn to Mosley because of an existing disillusionment with party politics (Brewer 32). Indeed, anyone who chose to be honest and critical about the current situation would have been dissatisfied with the village/old Parliamentary system. In fact, a good number of people felt as Mosley did that the old party system was ineffective. An unattributed limerick which appeared in a 1931 edition of the *Saturday Review* read:

There once was a Liberal L.G.  
Who said: 'We must see, we must see';  
For to speak and not vote  
On all matters of note,  
Is what makes the perfect M.P. (146)

Such writers as these were grateful to Mosley for bringing his dynamism to the conversation.

However, public opinion of Mosley during his New Party phase and into the early stages of his BUF days held mainly that his economic ideas were not completely practical, that his proposed system was too reminiscent of a dictatorship, and, later, that he drew too much from foreign influences. John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1930 in *Nation and Athenaeum* that he too believed as Mosley did that laissez-faire represented “the invisible hand is merely our own bleeding feet moving through pain and loss to an uncertain and unprofitable destination” (Sir Oswald Mosley’s *Manifesto* 367). He also felt that too many of the nation’s critical problems were held up in committees, noting that “[w]e should be grateful to Sir Oswald Mosley for an effort to clear the air” (367). However, he thought that Mosley’s economic plans were too ill-defined. He thought that Mosley should focus on benefit to the producer in order to create jobs, that he should de-emphasize the raising of wages, and that his rationale for tariff-raising was ill-founded. Others, such as Sir Herbert Samuel, rejected Mosley’s ideas and resented the fascist undercurrent that threatened anti-Semitism, declaring that “the utter impossibility of applying it in practice is obvious” (The *Mosley Programme* 400). Just like Warner’s tragic hero, Mosley failed to present the people with a solution they could accept as a reasonable replacement of the old system.

Warner goes on to paint a picture of the kind of man who might lead the fascist revolution as an individualist moral anarchist. He writes of a man of high ability and charisma who wishes to assert himself against the system – whose primary motivation is to prove that he himself is above the system and thus can conquer it (16-17). He describes the transformation of a man into a fascist leader as a progression “from intellectual skeptic to power-addict, from the power-addict to the ‘leader’” (19). He writes that the fascist leader continues through his successes with more and more violence and “trappings of power” (19).

This depiction could be used to describe both Mosley and Antony. Both are men of some unusual ability, and both are individualists. Both encountered events that disillusioned them toward the old system – for Antony: the moment his best friend attempts to murder him, for Mosley: WWI – which turned them into skeptics of the old order. Slowly they begin to acquire power within their organizations, and become power-addicts until eventually they are highly-vaunted “leaders.” Indeed, Mosley’s propaganda newspapers commonly referred to him simply as “The Leader.” However, in the end they both fail for the same reason Warner predicted: neither of them was able to produce a better system to replace the old one. The British people agreed with Mosley that the old system was failing, but they rejected his proposed fascist system that smacked of a foreign-influenced dictatorship. It is also easy to see why Antony rejected the village life and why Roy subscribed to his ethos for a while, but while ultimately he, the Flight-Lieutenant, and the other villagers reject the Air Force’s unfeeling way of life.

Like Roy, Anthony reaches the same conclusions in *Land Under England*. Anthony struggles to reconcile the romantic fantasy of a life which his father inspired in him with the prospect of a life of mundane labor. The democratic *status quo* is unsatisfying for him. It is this very dissatisfaction that tempts Roy and Anthony to partake of the totalitarian system. However, after both of the young men experience it, they come to the same realization that individualism, for all its faults, is preferable because it allows them to retain their humanity.

In the end, Warner, like Anthony in *Land Under England* and Roy in *The Aerodrome*, also rejects fascism as an unsatisfactory solution of sex, violence, and masculinity couched in the security of a governmental system (25). Indeed, sex, violence, and masculinity are key features of Warner's Air Force as they are of Mosley's BUF. Both are totalitarian, power-seeking organizations led by a single dynamic leader, and both combat a dying and ineffective way of life. However, they reject a certain measure of humanity in their systems. While so much humanity found in the old system leads to a certain "muddle and inefficiency," it is ultimately a measure of humanity that the people are not willing to sacrifice. In the end the British people and the villagers reject the idea of power and greatness when it comes at the cost of their humanity.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The conflict between humanity and authority in these novels, and their comparison to socio-cultural developments throughout the inter-war period, is compelling. Yet, we must take a moment to examine the relevance of these issues today. It has been nearly eighty years since the BUF saw its short-lived zenith, and not many fewer years since the Third Reich fell. The catalyst for fascism in England, Germany, and Italy was economic turmoil – the kind of turmoil that can occur in any age and in any nation. Perhaps the developed nation with the greatest and most publicized of these problems currently is Greece. The global recession of 2008 exacerbated Greek debt and deficit spending. Ultimately, the country faced bankruptcy. For the sake of distressed investors, the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, and the European Union – more commonly known in Greece as the troika – offered bailout packages in exchange for the adoption of austerity measures designed to bring the Greek economy back into balance.

As government spending plummeted, unemployment rose sharply. The current general unemployment rate in Greece is around twenty-five percent, with a fifty-five percent unemployment rate among young people (*Immigrants as Scapegoats* 63).

Furthermore, illegal immigration is a major problem for Greece, as the nation is geographically situated as a major European entry point for Middle Eastern and African refugees. If these refugees pass on to another country in the EU, immigration laws allow that country to deport them back to the EU country into which they first entered. This leaves Greece with not only a staggering unemployment rate, but also a surplus of refugees and illegal immigrants competing with Greek citizens for jobs (Trilling 26).

The people of Greece see their plight as one that is not their doing. They blame the politicians for miring the country in debt and creating the crisis, the troika for the austerity measures that are bearing down hard on the average Greek citizen, and the immigrants – coupled with EU immigration laws – for making the unemployment problem worse. They see themselves as being punished for the mistakes of others, the puppets of the financial interests that created austerity in the name of saving investors, and the victims of a corrupt and incompetent governmental leadership. These sentiments have evolved into nationalism, and feelings of nationalism lead many Greeks to see immigrants as scapegoats.

The political scenario has been ripe for one party, Golden Dawn, to rise into Greek Parliament. Golden Dawn was founded in 1985 by the imprisoned leader of the newly-fallen Greek military junta (Wheeler 4). Since its founding, Golden Dawn has been a fringe neo-Nazi group, until now. In the 2012 election, Golden Dawn won eighteen seats in Parliament. Its members wear black shirts with military pants and boots,



and have been linked to numerous attacks on immigrants. Their weapon of choice is often a club draped in the Greek flag, and their emblem bears a striking resemblance to the swastika (Alderman 2). Police rarely interfere with Golden Dawn attacks, and it is estimated that, in some areas, fifty percent of Greek police voted for Golden Dawn (Wheeler 5).

While it is unlikely that Mosley influenced the Golden Dawn movement, many of his ideas bear a striking similarity to the sentiments of disillusioned Greek citizens and militant Golden Dawn leaders. The common threads between Mosleyite doctrine and Golden Dawn nationalism are more likely lust for power combined with similarity of circumstance than direct influence. Keeping the previous point in mind, one can practically hear the echoes of Mosley's 1939 "Britain First" speech on the noble Briton facing undeserved hardship at the hands of government blunders, Jewish financial interests, and culturally backward immigrants. The Greek lamentations that their government is eating out of the hands of the all-powerful troika make the paranoid-sounding rants from Mosley's Parliament resignation speech that the banks controlled the government sound suddenly relevant (8-9).

Golden Dawn's leaders are colorful characters themselves. Ilias Kasidiaris, a Golden Dawn MP and the party spokesman, slapped a female MP on live television during a debate, and in another instance he publically threatened the lives of communists protesting a Golden Dawn event (Kitsantonis 10). Another Golden Dawn MP, Giorgos

Germenis, a former bassist in a heavy metal band, attempted to punch the mayor of Athens when he came to shut down one of their events. Instead, he missed and hit a twelve-year-old girl (Kitsantonis 4). Recently, Golden Dawn was connected to the murder of Greek rapper Pavlos Flyssas, who spoke out against the party. The authorities more or less tolerated Golden Dawn's violence as long as they attacked non-Greeks, but the murder of a Greek has led to multiple arrests of Golden Dawn MPs, whose Parliamentary immunity has been stripped in some instances (Alderman 4). The current government is also attempting to classify the party as a criminal organization (Stamouli A.17).

Golden Dawn has the same penchant for ostentatious displays of power that the BUF once had in Britain. A former BUF member once reflected:

The Blackshirts went out of their way to be provocative. I think you know, they had this thing about publicity for the crowd, marching around, holding street meetings. They went in for gimmicky stuff. The violence helped build up the movement, giving a common bond between members. (Brewer 39-40)

The black shirts, the military pants and boots, the showy displays of the Greek flag and Swastika-like symbol, and above all the violence against Communists and immigrants draw members of Golden Dawn together and earn the Party a great deal of attention.

While these elements of Golden Dawn and the BUF are so similar, there are also major differences. The 1930s British government and the citizenry were largely put off by Mosley's violence and his anti-Semitic rhetoric, so much so that Mosley spent nearly as much of his time defending or denying his party's violence as he did promoting his

Fascist policies. Golden Dawn, on the other hand, often seems to meet with approval and even gratitude from the Greek people when members denounce the government and commit violence upon immigrants.

Indeed, Golden Dawn's popularity among Greeks showed no symptoms of declining until the death of Flyssas. In fact, after Ilias Kasidiaris slapped the female MP on the air, the Party's popularity increased (Sotiris 32). Kasidiaris himself was said to have picked up 60,000 "likes" on Facebook. The party often hosts Greeks-only blood drives and food handouts, which receive harsh criticism for their blatant racism, but at the same time are welcomed by the many Greeks who accept the handouts. In fact, a good number of the Greeks who were against the party in better times now see Golden Dawn as the only party that does anything for the people. In addition to giving out food and blood, Golden Dawn members escort elderly people through the streets at night, and offer aid to Greek citizens who have been mugged by immigrants. They have also been known to help elderly Greeks pay for their medicine. These acts, which are seen as acts of kindness and relief, lead many Greeks to turn a blind eye to Golden Dawn's thuggishly violent side (Wheeler 5-6).

Dimitrios Theodossopoulos writes that many Greeks have aligned themselves with parties that are against austerity, and that they gloss over the rest. Syriza, the Greek far-left party and Golden Dawn are the most outspoken against austerity. As such, they have drawn to their cause new members who do not necessarily believe in all, or even

many, of the parties' tenets. Theodossopoulos bases these findings on his longitudinal study of Greek citizens. He finds that the "overwhelming majority" of new Golden Dawn supporters are not actually fascists. However, although these supporters do not embrace the totality of Golden Dawn's neo-Nazi ideology, their support is still rooted in a nationalism that was born in their public educations and has ripened in the current economic crisis. Therefore, this is less an alliance of convenience, and more the monstrous birth of a violently nationalist ideology (109-110).

The sources of this nationalism and the Golden Dawn violence it has brought seem to be part culture and part economic hardship. Elisabeth Kirstoglou argues that the supposition that Golden Dawn support is purely the result of economic hardship is an oversimplification. She argues that Golden Dawn's prejudice against immigrants provides the main force behind their support. She writes that, since Golden Dawn asserts that most of the illegal immigrants in Greece are from Muslim countries, Golden Dawn's listeners associate the immigrants with American anti-terror propaganda originally used to justify the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (105). She further argues that the Greek public education is driven by nationalist ideology aimed at creating citizens loyal to the government. However, this education has lost its meaning in a nation where the people blame the government for the bulk of their sufferings, and they are not entirely wrong. Thus, Greek citizens are left with cultural metaphors of national kinship, which bind the people together in a sort of nationalism not allied to the current government. In this way,

Golden Dawn's success comes from its willingness to play on these cultural metaphors (107).

Rachel Donadio attributes more of the conflicts within Greek society to the economic hardships. She points to unemployment as a major source of tension within the country. Since the unemployment rate for young people exceeds fifty percent, tensions arise between generations, with young people envious of jobs held by older people. She points out that lawmakers clash with each other over their various corruption scandals. In light of the increased crime in Greece, Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras compared the country to Weimar Germany before Hitler came to power (6-7).

While Kirstoglou's argument for the cultural influences of nationalism is valuable, we can also see from history that economic hardship is a major catalyst for nationalist and fascist sentiments. It would seem that a nationalist philosophy embedded in a nation's educational and cultural structure flares into an extreme form when the nation becomes mired in economic hardship. Golden Dawn is not the only European country with a strong nationalist party attempting to rise to the forefront of their nation's governments. The National Front in France, Jobbik in Hungary, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, and the Finns Party in Finland are all right-wing ultra-nationalist parties. While they are not leading parties in their nations, they are not fringe groups either. All of these parties have significant followings which make them notable players on their respective political stages (Ferguson 1-2).

Overall, Golden Dawn is a more extreme and more successful version of the BUF. Golden Dawn's humanitarian element is something that was missing in the BUF, and something that blurs moral and political lines for many Greeks. Even though the mainstream Greek government condemns and fights Golden Dawn just as British Parliament condemned and fought the BUF, Golden Dawn's popular support among the people – still a force in the Party's favor despite recent declines – keeps the organization alive as a contender for power. Golden Dawn is everything that Mosley in his arrogance dreamed that the BUF was.

The era in which fascism was a major threat in Europe is gone, but not forgotten, and the potential for such a threat to rise again is not an unlikely concept. Nationalism, while not in itself fascism, is still alive and well, awaiting the catalyst of national disturbance to awaken it into fascism. Like the automaton society in *Land Under England*, and the camouflaged Air Force culture in *The Aerodrome*, fascism in any culture is simply lying beneath the surface, ready to emerge at any time. The study of works such as these serves to remind us that these forces are alive in our own culture, ready to arise. Nationalism embedded in a country's culture and public education is not an outlandish concept confined forever to another time or another place. The political realities that lie just beneath the surface, dependent upon a concealed potential, make for a fascinating study of human nature and the capacity of human beings to subsume their own humanity to a nationalist authority.

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