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**BETWEEN THE IDEA AND THE REALITY FALLS THE SHADOW:  
VARIETIES OF MODERNIST DYSTOPIA**

**by**

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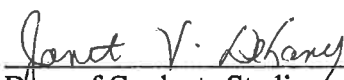
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## Abstract

Between the Idea and the Reality Falls the Shadow:

Varieties of Modernist Dystopia

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By tracing the literary heritage of dystopia from its inception in Joseph Hall and its modern development under Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Samuel Beckett, and Anthony Burgess, modern dystopia emerges as a distinct type of utopian literature. The literary environments created by these authors are constructed as intricate social commentaries that ridicule the foolishness of yearning for a leisurely existence in a world of industrial ideals. Modern dystopian narratives approach civilization differently yet predict similarly dismal limitations to autonomy, which focuses attention on the individual and the cultural crisis propagated by shattering conflicts in the modern era. During this era the imaginary nowhere of utopian fables was infected by pessimism and, as the modern era trundled forward, any hope for autonomous individuality contracted. Utopian ideals were invalidated by the oppressive nature of unbridled technology. The resulting societal assessment offers a dark vision of progress.

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## Introduction: No Place

The word dystopia has its origin in ancient Greek, stemming from the root *topos* which means place. Utopia, perhaps a more familiar term, means no place (*ou-topia*), or good place (*eu-topia*, a term that has fallen out of fashion) while dystopia indicates a bad or evil place (*dys* being equivalent to un- or mis-, as in un-well or mis-take).<sup>1</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* dystopia entered English usage in 1868, when John Stuart Mill invoked the term to describe the Irish Land policy in a speech to the British House of Commons. However, dystopia's literary origins go back even farther, chiefly to Bishop Joseph Hall's *Mundus Alter et Idem* (*Another World and Yet the Same*, 1605). Paul Turner suggests, in his introduction to Thomas More's *Utopia*, that "Hall had invented the so-called Dystopia."<sup>2</sup> This dystopia takes the form of a satire illustrating an upside-down world where vice passes as virtue.

During the intervening centuries, utopian literature matured and the archetypes that constitute its plot structures were confirmed through a series of interdependent narratives that form an unbroken chain of discourse between authors in the genre. The idea of bucolic splendor in a utopian paradise is satirized by authors aware of the true state of human nature in dystopian narratives positing a nightmare in place of a dreamscape. Dystopia emerges as progress pushes humanity toward a precipice. Technological developments in pure science eclipse the benefits of natural communal balance and human nature dictates that strong individuals will likely upset the balance of contentment. In modern dystopias, progress appears as a growing threat to autonomy

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<sup>1</sup> Sargent discusses the problems of defining utopia in great detail in the introduction to his annotated bibliography. Lyman Tower Sargent, *British and American Utopian Literature 1516-1975: An Annotated Bibliography* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1979), ix-xix.

<sup>2</sup>From Paul Turner's introduction to Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Penguin Group, 1965), 18.

because political movements bent on uplifting humanity frequently fail to produce better conditions for society as a whole and only benefit the elite, while socialist models promise an underlying nightmare of slavery to the state as the individual loses all definition under the encroaching shadow of collectivism. For H.G. Wells, who saw the violence of the early twentieth century as a prelude to a peaceful scientific society, the future showed promise through innovation more than it did slavery through totalitarianism. However, forcing the evolution of people into simple mechanisms of industry hinders the development of an individual identity by denying innate behavioral aberrations and the possibility that an individual will reject enforced happiness. The model set forth is a society of uniformed drones walking in step; docile and benign. In contrast, the autonomous intellect rejects mindless bliss and challenges the false dreams of the status quo. Utopias and dystopias offer two visions of humanity, either as inherently good or innately bad. These visions mirror the discrepancy between social reality and utopian idealism while forming the opposite ends of a dialogue about the essence of human nature throughout utopian and dystopian literature. Modernist dystopia began as a response to the cataclysm of World War I, which destroyed utopian ideals, and this literary genre progressed through the twentieth century featuring darker visions of human nature as the individual was devalued while mass culture and the threat of totalitarian hegemony grew.

The discourse between Aldous Huxley and George Orwell in twentieth-century England is especially important to the development of the modernist dystopia as *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* present contrasting archetypes that undergird their imaginary worlds. Samuel Beckett, on the other hand, was not explicitly a writer of

dystopias but the overall emotional climate of his novels, especially *Murphy* and *Three Novels*, share the dystopian viewpoint espoused in Orwell's dour assessment. Anthony Burgess picks up the threads of this modernist discourse between Huxley's anti-utopia, Orwell's dystopia, and Beckett's philosophical conundrum and synthesizes a terminology to deal with this spectrum of dystopian types while constructing societies that shift from permissive to repressive political dogmas. These authors each create a nightmare world in response to their social climates, conditioned by war and discord, which chronicle the frustrations of an autonomous individual faced with impenetrable conformity. In addition, these worlds are peppered with concepts of development borrowed from contemporary settings and littered with scenarios that suggest or echo concerns of the present, lending credence to satirical indictments of modern culture. These modernist dystopias call attention to the encroaching extinction of autonomy through a discourse between diametrically opposed ideals, while illustrating that humanity, despite the best efforts of a collective spirit, is unable to transcend the chasm between individual and social identity.

Dystopia takes many forms but dystopian narratives are as much critiques of utopia as they are social commentaries on the present day and, consequently, dystopias cannot be mistaken as distinct from utopias. "Every utopian writer has to struggle with the anxieties suggested to him by his own society, trying to distinguish the moral from the conventional, what would be really disastrous from what merely inspires a vague feeling of panic, uneasiness, or ridicule."<sup>3</sup> Social commentary naturally colors the created society based on how the author treats social customs of his own time. Both utopias and dystopias can coexist under the same umbrella and it is unnecessary to cleave

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<sup>3</sup> Northrop Frye, "Varieties of Literary Utopias," *Daedalus*, 94, no. 2, Utopia (Spring, 1965), 337.

dystopia from its present place under the general heading of utopia. Utopia, at least in Thomas More's original model, is a place; but a place that is eternally remote. In a theoretical sense, More's place represents a paradox because the rigorous discipline necessary to maintain such a society would negate feelings of individual happiness. The wit behind More's vision of utopia is that such a place would crumble if one person had a bad day or took the afternoon off. The ideal being satirized by dystopias is the human goal of an earthly Eden or Paradise, which is a dream that would paradoxically require extreme vigilance to establish, and a renewal of the mythical Golden Age. The impossibility of a physical utopia derives from its mythic proportions. Plato's *Republic* suggests the perfect society on earth by transposing the attributes of gods into his philosopher kings, basing their resulting society upon reason while instituting a strictly maintained hierarchy. Plato's work is an obvious source for Thomas More but More takes a large step beyond Plato by pretending that utopia is a distant place found by explorers. Utopia, in More's mind, is an impossible place, but one that can be speculated on and held up for comparison with the present society.

Thomas More initiated the utopian genre of literature with his work *Utopia* (1516), and with it coined a new term for what had previously been an ambiguous ideal for the perfect civilization. More's *Utopia* evinces incipient socialism in its construction whereas Bishop Hall's dystopian satire exhibits pessimism in describing the immoderate inhabitants of Crapulia or Moronia, two of Hall's invented lands. Hall's pessimistic response to More's model launched the literary dystopia. Northrop Frye classifies the utopian genre as consisting of two types of literary "utopian romances," which are: "the straight utopia, which visualizes a world-state assumed to be ideal, or at least ideal in



comparison with what we have, and the utopian satire or parody, which presents the same kind of social goal in terms of slavery, tyranny, or anarchy.”<sup>4</sup> Frye places works like More’s *Utopia* in the former and novels like *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and *We* in the latter of these two broad categories. This classification lacks depth because satire is a necessary component of both utopia and dystopia, yet this simple duality assists in illustrating the range of utopias between ideal worlds and nightmare scenarios. Frye also identifies Plato’s *Republic* as a foundational text for More. According to Karl Kautsky, More preferred the ancient Greek philosophers to the Romans and, “[i]n many ways Plato’s *Republic* was the model for *Utopia*.”<sup>5</sup> More’s primary innovation in adapting Plato’s concept of the perfect society to the utopian model is a physical description and functioning simulation of an extant dreamscape.

Lyman Tower Sargent, in the introduction to his annotated bibliography of utopian literature, examines obstacles that confound a conclusive explication of utopia and sets up rigid parameters to discern the genre’s limits. He employs restrictions in the interest of limiting the scope of what fits under the general heading “utopia” and differentiates between literary utopia, utopian thought, and utopian communities. “Topos implies that the utopia must be located spatially and temporally; even though nowhere, it must have some place.”<sup>6</sup> For this reason, *The Republic* has no place in Sargent’s bibliography. So where does this leave Plato? Perhaps pre-utopian best describes the doctrines behind the perfect *polis* for the present purpose, as well as other works imagining an ideal society before Thomas More. Following this model then, what constitutes pre-dystopian literature and how is dystopia classified within utopian

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 326.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Kautsky, *Thomas More and His Utopia* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959), 97.

<sup>6</sup> Sargent, *British and American Utopian Literature*, xi.

boundaries? Taking the latter first, dystopia is probably best classified as a sub-genre (or sub-type as Sargent suggests) within the larger, parent genre of utopian literature.

Dystopia represents the fall of the ideal world, mirroring man's fall from grace, resulting either from human corruption or a shattering cataclysm. Both utopia and dystopia share certain attributes while the main divergence between these worlds originates in the author's perspective. Northrop Frye suggests, "[t]he direction of social change may be thought of as exhilarating, as in most theories of progress, or as horrible, as in pessimistic or apprehensive social theories."<sup>7</sup> Frye's straight utopia indicates an Arcadian or classical model while the modern dystopia falls under his idea of the utopian satire.

To address the former question of dystopia's origins, it evolves from a darker region of the human imagination. The dystopian image is inverted and distorted; it is a journey through the writhing vicissitudes of the abyss: "Hell is the archetypal dystopia."<sup>8</sup> One of the most potent sources for dystopia is Dante's *Inferno*. As Chad Walsh states in *From Utopia to Nightmare*, "A trip through the modern inverted utopias is a repetition of Dante's journey through hell."<sup>9</sup> The dystopian narrative becomes a vehicle to portray the nightmare vision of paradise as an inverted experience or a journey through the darker nature of humanity. Future societies are adumbrated as places bereft of beauty and art, where stability is worshipped, and the state controls its inhabitants. Projecting the future society as a bad place for human beings gives a satiric edge to the author's estimation of humanity at the present time and where civilization is headed. If society is created by humans for their own benefit, how do science and industry become the preponderant concerns of humanity while the individual is stripped of liberty and fallibility? Modern

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<sup>7</sup> Frye, "Varieties of Literary Utopias," 326

<sup>8</sup> Sargent, *British and American Utopian Literature*, x.

<sup>9</sup> Chad Walsh, *From Utopia to Nightmare* (London: Geoffrey Bles Ltd., 1962), 78.

utopian collectivism espouses the destruction of the traditional family and private lives so that all individuals become one instrument, contributing to the overall happiness and contentment of a greater organism: the state. Besides espousing happiness as the result of collective cooperation, utopian ideals promise that each individual will find bliss as long as they accept the state's mandate of what constitutes happiness. Yet before scrutinizing the modern age and twentieth-century dystopias, it is necessary to inspect certain facets of their antecedents.

Both More's *Utopia* and Hall's *Another World and Yet the Same* define the dynamic that plays out between utopia and dystopia while setting up the archetypes of each form. The individual structures developed in these two works informed the later creation of modern dystopia as a response to a naïve utopianism fixated on technological progress. In *Utopia*, More employs the character of a traveler to convey all of the distant land's wonders to More's invented, narrative self. More distances himself from his creation through the use of a narrative device, the traveler, to avoid being labeled as a political dissenter in his socially precarious position. Essentially, More creates a remote mental space for the inventive humanist to imagine the possibilities of life in a society more attuned to the needs of its citizens and without those vices, such as greed, which make utopia impossible. Bishop Hall hides behind a pseudonym (Mercurius Britannicus) and constructs his dystopia as a Menippean satire or an indirect satire of ideas. Hall describes a distant land that is in many ways the mirror-image of Europe in the early fifteenth century yet warped and exaggerated. "European concern for the body instead of the mind is exaggerated into a land where all merit is determined by the size of one's stomach, European competitiveness is exaggerated into a land where everyone tries to

beggar everyone else, and so on.”<sup>10</sup> In this sense dystopia is employed to reflect darkly on Hall’s society by amplifying the vices of English culture while the distant geographic setting heightens objectivity, providing greater effect in the likeness between the alien and the familiar.

[A]nother kind of utopian satire is obviously possible, one in which social rituals are seen from the outside, not to make them more consistent but simply to demonstrate their inconsistency, their hypocrisy, or their unreality. Satire of this kind holds up a mirror to society which distorts it, but distorts it consistently. An early example is Bishop Hall’s *Mundus Alter et Idem* (1605), much ridiculed by Milton, but perhaps more of an influence on him than he was willing to admit. A more famous one is *Gulliver’s Travels*.<sup>11</sup>

Hall’s mysterious lands are peopled with excessive personifications of vice. For example, gluttons rule *Pamphagonia*, in the land of *Crapulia*. Hall perceives the flaw in More’s design; that a designed society based upon any ideal may be inherently flawed if the ideal is not sound. Hall’s use of exaggerated satire became an integral component of dystopia.

Jonathan Swift, who is better known as a satirist, contributes both utopian and dystopian archetypes to the genre. In the third part of *Gulliver’s Travels*, Swift creates a narrative satire aimed at the prevailing science of his day beginning with the floating island of Laputa. The inhabitants of this strange floating land “are so taken up with intense Speculations, that they neither can speak, or attend to the Discourses of others, without being roused by some external Taction upon the Organs of Speech and Hearing.”<sup>12</sup> Swift presents these beings that must be constantly struck about the head with flails as a damning portrait of intellectual seclusion. Swift also indicts his contemporary society and the pursuits of pure science as futile in their aims within the

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<sup>10</sup> John Millar Wands from his introduction to Bishop Joseph Hall, *Another World and Yet the Same* (*Mundus Alter et Idem*), trans. John Millar Wands (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), xxxiv.

<sup>11</sup> Frye, “Varieties of Literary Utopias,” 337-8.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* in *The Writings of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Robert A. Greenberg and William B. Piper (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973), 132.

various chambers of the Academy of Lagado. Robert Elliott refers to the Academy of Lagado as “that progenitor of negative utopias without number” due to the futile pursuits of the various scientists like the man “trying to reduce human excrement to its original food.”<sup>13</sup> Swift suggests in his own time that pure science is not useful to humanity as a solution to the problems of civilization that cannot be solved through innovation alone. The progress of technology is illusory without a concomitant development of human morality to complement the utopian inclination. Swift injects his pessimism into *Gulliver’s Travels* as well as humor. To Swift, man is not a rational animal but rather “man is an animal possessed of the faculty of reason; he is *rationis capax*—capable of rational behavior (as with the king of Brobdingnag or Don Pedro), but also capable of using reason for the most vicious ends.”<sup>14</sup> What Swift suggests is that man’s innate brutality precludes the emergence of utopias as suggested by the comparison of dignified horses with filthy and primitive humanity, signified by the Yahoos. Swift outlines an Arcadian or pastoral utopia with the land of the Houyhnhnms while Laputa and the Academy of Lagado evoke dystopian Science Fiction through the satire of humanity’s reliance upon progress as a panacea.

Bishop Hall and Jonathan Swift contributed to the development of the modern dystopia by developing solid narrative frameworks that foreground the flaws in human culture that restrict the proliferation of harmonious and contented civilizations. During the nineteenth century, the tradition of challenging previous utopian models continued in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* (1872), Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888), William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* (1890), and culminated in H.G. Wells’s *The Time Machine*

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<sup>13</sup> Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 58-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

(1895) and *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899). However, in the inter-war years of the early twentieth century the literary dystopian future was refined and codified, illustrating the growing pessimism among modernists in a degenerate post-World War I London.

Aldous Huxley's remote future portrays humanity as benign and ultimately reasonable in their pursuit of scientific perfection while George Orwell's future focuses on the organized aggression of hatred for a common enemy. However, both futures portray progress through blind devotion to technology as a sham. The opposite ends of the modern dystopian spectrum, between engineered contentment and enforced indoctrination, were set by these two opposing outlooks on humanity's future in reference to technology and industrial progress.

World War I revealed the dangers of technology, especially in regard to the view of technology as an inoculation that could solve society's problems. While military tactics were rendered powerless in the trenches of the Somme and Verdun, warfare began to change from an honorable profession to the professional slaughter of entire classes of young men from Oxford and Cambridge. The resulting atmosphere in Britain after the war was a fatalistic ennui and pleasure-seeking hedonism that permeated the so-called Jazz Age. Although military hostilities ceased in Europe from 1919 to 1938, an ideological conflict persisted in the rhetoric and temper of the European powers. The Spanish Civil War raged during this period and the continent was still in chaos. The realities of parceling out the territories of Europe after World War I signified the inability of the reigning powers to affect any real change through diplomacy. A fear of war pervades the literature of interwar society.

The nightmare of war is reflected in the nightmare of an individual at war with his environment. The bad place had been created by humans themselves through reckless destruction and social upheaval, “a specifically modern fear, the Frankenstein myth of the enslavement of man by his own technology and by his perverse desire to build himself an ingenious trap merely for the pleasure of getting caught in it.”<sup>15</sup> Huxley and Orwell reinforce the supposition that utopian society becomes a nightmare vision of life through the eyes of a nonconformist who realizes that there is truth and beauty in life for the autonomous intellect. This autonomous intellect reflects the humanist’s desire for the freedom to imagine the best of all possible worlds. However, in *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the machinery of modern society consumes the individual as an element of the greater clockwork of society, thereby engulfing human beings and their lives as propellant for industry. Eugenics, Stalinism, behaviorism, modernism, existentialism, and war define this period in literary dystopia.

Aldous Huxley’s satiric novels *Antic Hay* and *Point Counter Point* display the foibles and failings of his peers during the inter-war years without a biased perspective. Early in his literary career, Huxley pioneered the “novel of ideas” creating a cross-section of characters that embody ideas more than they convey actual human beings. Huxley constructs his World State to explore the impact of pure scientific design to a worldwide society, changing his setting from contemporary London to a Wellsian futuristic landscape. He blends satire with Science Fiction in *Brave New World*. Huxley satirizes the technological utopias of H.G. Wells, while examining the ideology engendered by the stabilization of a population through eugenics. Huxley develops certain dystopian archetypes such as the problem of mass culture, the “we” of the collective vs. the “I” of

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<sup>15</sup> Frye, “Varieties of Literary Utopias,” 337.

the individual dwarfed by the immense edifice of the state. He recognizes the potential need to create and impose a social hierarchy upon the citizens of the industrial utopia. A society made up of intellectuals would not function smoothly, as they would inevitably disagree with one another and the labor-intensive work of producing food and commodities would be neglected by distracted academics resembling their progenitors from Laputa. Therefore, an enforced social stratification is imposed on the society and the citizens are conditioned to fit within the hierarchy. As long as civilization continues to function smoothly, the utopian dream persists. The antiseptic promise of the laboratory and pure science supplant the need for breeding while the godhead of the state replaces the need for obedience to the arcane laws of a deity or creator. In *Brave New World* the state is the creator of its own citizens, the state *is* god. Children are produced on an assembly line and designated for duties of the greatest possible utility to society. In other words, children are no longer born, they are mass-produced to fit certain tasks and conditioned to behave, unquestioningly, as they should. Huxley takes no side but remains aloof while the ideas of moderation vs. excess, monogamy vs. promiscuity, and nature vs. technology play out through a discourse between characters; each person representing a facet of the argument.

George Orwell, on the other hand, stabs directly at totalitarianism and the blind loyalty of the status quo, through the lens of Stalinism, after World War II. The looming dread after The Great War is mirrored in the hopeless devastation in the aftermath of World War II. Huxley and Orwell are connected by more than just national heritage. Aldous Huxley was a young Eric Blair's French teacher at Eton. However, Orwell's response to Huxley is not that of a novice. Orwell's future is repressive, a society where



surveillance is the norm through the supervision of Big Brother. Huxley and Orwell both set up the edifice of the state as the modern idol worshipped by the faithful. Huxley focuses on the role the conveyor belt assembly line will have in future generation's day-to-day lives while Orwell concentrates on the problems propaganda poses for the language of a society and the influence of collectivism in a revolutionary context; like that of the Stalinist regime. The latter half of Orwell's previous effort, *Animal Farm*, is, in fact, an allegorical parody of Stalin's rise to power and the subsequent purges which took place. Arthur Koestler and Yevgeny Zamyatin, two rabid anti-communists, were both influential to Orwell's dystopia. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* owes a great debt to the oppressive atmosphere of Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1941) as well as the futuristic society of Zamyatin's *We* (1924). In Orwell's future London, history is malleable and used to further the ends of the ruling party because who controls the past, controls the future. Orwell demonstrates the dangers of manipulating language through propaganda. Newspeak threatens the very existence of language as an expressive art form while Winston Smith indulges himself in experiments with self-expression in a forbidden diary.

Comparing Huxley and Orwell is imperative to an understanding of the progression of pessimism in modern dystopia and helps to define the difference between Huxley's concept of an anti-utopia and Orwell's dour assessment of dystopia. Huxley's citizens are bred to be good while Orwell's creations are indoctrinated into the Party and controlled with surveillance and an iron boot. Huxley's pill-popping culture of blissed-out hedonists is conditioned to love its servitude unto ignorance and unremarkable equality; balance is the by-word. Orwell's self-censoring, paranoid party members are kept loyal through fear and need; in scarcity, servitude equals survival. Where Huxley

and Orwell differ is in their approach to the fate of humanity based on their divergent points of view about the true nature of the human organism. Huxley approaches humanity from an elitist intellectual angle, seeing only the adaptive potential of the individual and making the naïve assumption that the state will ultimately treat its citizens with a benevolent and free hand. Huxley's inhabitants are conditioned against disagreeable behaviors while Orwell's are forever withdrawn due to the overbearing presence of Big Brother. Orwell views society from the position of the proletariat witnessing the injustice of a harsh and invasive totalitarianism on the average human being. Orwell's model became more influential after the Second World War; the dark viewpoint of the individual at the mercy of the outer world, endlessly manipulated and corralled, withdraws into inner worlds as a way to escape a bad place. This inner realm becomes an extension of utopia in a context of nightmare as the individual, faced with impossible circumstances, prefers the oblivion of nothing to a hellish reality.

Samuel Beckett serves as a crystalline example of the individual's withdrawal into an inner world. His systematic approach to nothingness and the individual's progression from something to nothing mirrors the struggle to escape the scourges of existence, both paranoia and anguish being equated by Beckett not with classic conceptions of brutality but with the conscious act of willing. In his work, Beckett equates consciousness with a dualistic conception of the world in the tradition of Descartes and Schopenhauer. Beckett's characters embody the Cartesian duality between mind and body. Their struggles to overcome one way of being in favor of another are prevented mostly by their being trapped within literature unable to change their circumstances. To put it another way, Beckett's style progressed beyond the traditional

detached quality of the novel to a direct, first-person delivery as though the novel was nothing more than a journal expressing the weight of existence through language. The frustrated and confused mental states of characters derive from the gulf that exists between thought and action. Their bodies have lost flexibility and mobility while their minds remain trapped within their skulls waiting for nothing to overtake existence. Beckett's pessimism rests upon his belief that the phenomenal world is not to be trusted as real and that true paradise is a void without perception. Beckett's characters lead nightmarish lives in the sense that they carry life as a *pensum*, inflicted upon them without their counsel. Pessimism and confusion with the world outside brings their expulsion from the womb into greater relief as they relate being pushed out into a hostile world and ultimately brought down by the forces of nature. Beckett's characters live life under a shadow that reveals itself as the impermanence of all things, especially memory. Whereas Huxley and Orwell connect mass culture with a concurrent difficulty for self-expression within a so-called free society, Beckett's fiction is an idiosyncratic indictment of existence itself. As modernism lost steam and the Cold War began though, the dystopian focus shifted back to society.

Anthony Burgess responded to the models of Huxley and Orwell with his own concept of a flux between two opposed political forces. Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* presents the character of Alex, a brutal and degenerate adolescent delinquent with a little culture. For his crimes against society he is brainwashed and forced to endure circumstances near torture when his physical revulsion becomes a function of his subconscious mind. Alex relays his story from the comfort of hindsight but his consciousness remains trapped just as Orwell's Winston and Beckett's protagonists

convey the hell of self-consciousness. Alex's fate is determined by the change in government from progressive permissiveness to conservative control. In his next novel, *The Wanting Seed*, Burgess identifies two ends of the dystopian spectrum as the Pelagian state, wherein the human is thought to be perfectible and therefore given more personal liberty within a moderate society, and the Augustinian state, wherein the human is viewed as fundamentally flawed with more strictures imposed upon them by the state. Burgess would later revisit these themes when he writes *1985*, the first part being a study of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* while the second half is a narrative set in a future similar to Orwell's. In both of these latter works, Burgess employs an Orwellian framework while hinting at Huxley's view through Pelagian optimism.

Huxley and Orwell, then, occupy opposite ends of the dystopian spectrum. Huxley defined his *Brave New World* as an anti-utopia while Burgess identifies Orwell's future as a cacotopia or an evil place. Huxley's world represents a dystopia seen through the twentieth-century sensibility of a radical living in a technological utopia like those of H.G. Wells, while Orwell represents the totalitarian dictatorship enforced upon the masses after a nuclear war in the vein of Stalin's cult of personality. Huxley satirizes the *fin de siècle* ennui of London's post-war Jazz Age along with the supposition that technology can be bent to humankind's will and not the opposite, where humans are overshadowed by their own creations. Orwell satirizes Communist Russia, Stalin, and English jingoism through the lens of a bombed out London, post-World War II, at the birth of the atomic age. In both cases, technology is more of a tormentor than a savior. However the One State of *Brave New World* obviously occupies the Pelagian end of Burgess's spectrum in that humans have been perfected through eugenics, the precursor

to genetics, while Ingsoc in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* occupies the Augustinian side because the regimentation of humans is in service to the state and the means of government control are brutal, to say the least. The individual is only dimly aware of the motives and machinations of the ruling elite and thus their own destiny as prescribed by the state. The majority of the population accepts the arrangement while a few nonconformists perceive a subtle dissonance between what they have been indoctrinated to believe and what their inner selves infer about the fundamental nature of humanity, to reject conformity and excel at innovation. Though these characters are doomed by the very qualities that set them apart, they illustrate the individual's view of utopia as a suffocating and mindless existence.

Modern dystopian literature contains archetypes distinct from other sub-types of utopian satires and espouses pessimistic expectations for the classical view of utopia as a peaceful paradise. By necessity, a perfectly stratified and controlled civilization must begin under incredibly repressive circumstances to redirect the energy of individuals and control free will. The Wellsian view projected in works like *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), that humans will arrive at the conclusion that servitude to the collective is in their best interest, became a ridiculous prognostication to authors who repeatedly spun the microscope of inquiry back on the autonomous intellectual. Aldous Huxley defined the anti-utopian view by simulating a Wellsian future, into which is thrown a literal savage, hinting at the clash of culture between a scientifically bred, well-adjusted collective and the contemporary, emotionally flawed individual. George Orwell examined the repression of a structured society even more closely and with a more pessimistic view. These two authors define the opposite ends of a spectrum of dystopian

types and this opposition extended into a discourse left unfinished. Orwell's dark vision of life under the influence of a psychological police-state exemplifies the terror of hiding one's emotions from view. Comparing this escape inward with the novels of Samuel Beckett provides a clearer view of the nightmare of existing on two planes; the physical and the mental. Anthony Burgess then carries Orwell's ideas forward while allowing for change within dystopian societies and illustrates the breadth of the dystopian spectrum while defining its gradations.

## Chapter 1: Bad Places

“Every road towards a better state of society is blocked, sooner or later, by war, by threats of war, by preparations for war.”<sup>16</sup> World War I was *the* event that defined the first half of the twentieth century. As the one hundredth anniversary of World War I’s commencement approaches, it is interesting to note how the world changed due to the developments of the Second World War. Yet before this conflict, the vast destruction of the Great War demanded a price that was paid not only with men and equipment, but the aftermath of war also marked the beginning of a drastic shift in morals and expectations for the future. The promise of a future *a la* H.G. Wells, wherein technology would ease the burden of labor on the individual and science would create a world without inequality and strife, suddenly appeared unsustainable against the backdrop of a society faced with its inability to curb violent confrontation and settle international disputes. “Given the overpowering technology of warfare—the machine guns, the artillery, and the gas—the individual soldier was overwhelmed by a sense of vulnerability and helplessness.”<sup>17</sup> These feelings of vulnerability and helplessness were passed on from the returning soldiers and permeated all of English society in the inter-war years.

Responding to these factors, modernist writers like Aldous Huxley, pioneering the novel of ideas wherein multiple perspectives present arguments and the narrator remains aloof, transformed the utopian vision of contentment and plenty into a satirical portrait of the repressive strictures required for such a society to emerge. Stephen Greenblatt proposes that “Huxley is profoundly aware of the sickness of society, but he cannot settle

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<sup>16</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods Employed for Their Realization* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1937), 100.

<sup>17</sup> Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 184.

his mind on a standard of judgment.”<sup>18</sup> In Huxley’s elitist estimation, innovations in technology and industry assure the possible cessation of humanity’s domestic drudgery in favor of personal recreation and social harmony. The English landscape during the years between the World Wars changed considerably due to the encroaching automation of industry and an accompanying psychological discord due to human displacement. Clinical methods of scientific analysis applied to essential areas of human experience during this period, led to a conflict between human emotion and the cold calculation of the laboratory. After World War II the rise of a totalitarian regime in the East accompanied the fresh nightmare of German Fascism’s recent bloody demise. Suddenly the political landscape became a primary focus of the dystopian lens through the efforts of George Orwell. Progressive Huxley propounds a scientific elitist view of an automated anti-utopia while archaic Orwell presents a politically enslaved everyman in the clutches of a repressive dystopia. The spirited yet disjointed discourse between Huxley and Orwell inaugurated the modern literary dystopian spectrum by establishing two opposing positions within a genre that aims to examine individuality in an imagined collective civilization on the proposed path of modern progress.

Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) is a critique of the inter-war British intelligentsia, played out in the future, where collectivism is a necessity purchased at the price of individual liberty. His vision exemplifies the confluence of satire and social commentary. In *Brave New World*, Huxley rigorously designs a framework for civilized happiness, consisting of eugenically designated castes within a hierarchy, where the individuals are conditioned in groups to love only the things necessary to their caste.

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen Jay Greenblatt, *Three Modern Satirists: Waugh, Orwell, and Huxley* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 79



This creates an entire society of people who do not understand the concepts of individual liberty and personal choice. Huxley's critical eye identifies the hidden dangers of systematization while illustrating a possible future where sacrificing individuality produces happiness but limits human nature. "It is Huxley's conviction in *Brave New World* that practically the whole of modern western development has been a steady descent into nightmare. Progress has been a grotesque and cruel illusion."<sup>19</sup> The logical objective of progress necessitates a renunciation of personal liberty, an ideal hard won in the struggle to save Western Civilization.

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), in contrast, is a dour and oppressive illustration of totalitarianism set in a future London, eerily reminiscent of the bomb cratered East End during the German Blitz in World War II, where shortage is the standard and war is the rule. The wretched occupants of Orwell's post-Armageddon police state are watched at all times by an intricate network of "telescreens" that are controlled and supplemented by the Thought Police, as well as the Spies, a children's organization resembling scouting. Orwell's citizens are browbeaten into submission through propaganda and indoctrination. These methods were proven to be effective during Orwell's experiences on the home front; his experiences with Britain's Ministry of Information and the BBC's Empire Service provided inspiration for the Ministry of Truth.<sup>20</sup> There is no rigorously enforced drug regimen to maintain social adhesion or a eugenically designated hierarchy as in *Brave New World*. Orwell's future is dirty in contrast to Huxley's hygienically pristine surfaces. The individual faces sudden

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<sup>19</sup> Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 242.

<sup>20</sup> Judy P. Soprnyi, "George Orwell: On the Road to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*," *British Heritage* 24, no. 3 (May 2003): 50.

dissolution at the hands of a terrifying and efficient torture machine. Alex Zwerdling insists the Holocaust had an influence on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, stating that “the seedtime of Orwell’s novel—the mid-1940s in which he was planning the book and composing the first draft—coincided with the first widespread publicity about just what had happened in Dachau and Buchenwald, in Belsen and Treblinka and Auschwitz.”<sup>21</sup> Huxley’s ideal of a eugenically structured world had been perverted to justify a racial cleansing at the behest of a single politician wielding absolute power. The implication here must be that Orwell recognized more astutely than Huxley the danger of tyrants, which were beginning to emerge in the contemporary cultural zeitgeist, within the dystopian paradigm. Just as Huxley alludes to the atrocities of the Great War, which overshadowed the happiness of his future, Orwell too cannot ignore the horror that was wrought on Europe by two power-crazed dictators. Orwell’s nightmare of progress is a warning of the terrifying possibilities behind the efficiency of totalitarian regimes. Through a small stretch of the imagination, both Huxley’s and Orwell’s prognostications of dystopian futures could easily bear the subtitle *A Satire of Progress*. Progress is revealed not as a promise of paradise but a terrible loss of freedom for human society. Huxley’s anti-utopia thrusts democratic capitalism into the logical development of a perfectly balanced worldwide human factory, while Orwell’s dystopia reinterprets the Stalinist cult of personality within a Communist model of society, with Britain as a subjected nation. In both novels, society has reached the zenith of progress and progress has led to a stagnant oligarchy of communal identity.

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<sup>21</sup> Alex Zwerdling, “Orwell’s Psychopolitics” in *The Future of Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ed. Ejner J. Jensen (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 91.

These novels share a curious, yet significant, dialogue within the tradition that Krishan Kumar refers to as “that chain of challenge and response that largely makes up the history of utopia and anti-utopia from the 1880s to the 1950s.”<sup>22</sup> Within the greater body of dystopian narratives of the early twentieth century, these two works still occupy an elevated stature through their continuing endurance and relevance, unlike their predecessors by H.G. Wells and Yevgeny Zamyatin. The disordered dialogue between Huxley and Orwell ultimately reveals two distinct worldviews espoused through dystopian narratives. These worldviews are largely influenced by certain preconceived notions about the nature of humanity and constitute the opposite ends of a spectrum of modern dystopia that informs later narratives within the genre. Huxley’s ideas of power and human nature differed from Orwell’s in a fundamental way. The question of humanity’s innate perfectibility, perhaps more than any other single element, distinguishes between the approaches taken by Huxley and Orwell in the construction of their dystopian societies. Huxley writes from a perspective of human perfectibility within a world of balanced plenty, largely in response to a capitalist model informed by scientific methods. Orwell’s model obviously originates in the view of humanity as fallen and in need of structure through a brutal regime of repression modeled on Stalin’s Russia. Essentially, both authors concern themselves with the problems of humanity in reference to imagined worlds, yet this is where these two roads diverge.

Huxley and Orwell were acquainted, though not as peers. Huxley taught French at Eton between 1917 and 1919. As a young Etonian, Eric Blair “was fascinated by the

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<sup>22</sup> Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, 128.

highly eccentric and rather miserable figure of Aldous Huxley.”<sup>23</sup> Both authors shared another experience as writers, but at separate times and in much different circumstances, which informs the opposition that sprung up between their dystopias. Huxley and Orwell came by their respective views on modern civilization when they took trips into the industrial heart of England, to places like Durham and Yorkshire, for different publications, and with different intentions in mind. The reportage later published was vastly different. Huxley’s aloof and myopic gaze relates the experience of a man on a higher plane, well above the gutters where the filth of society runs. Huxley enters Durham through the “grimy industrial suburbs” and remarks romantically upon the beauty of Durham Cathedral, “the great stone fossil left over from another world.”<sup>24</sup> In another article Huxley guiltily muses over what he has witnessed, uttering a commonplace of the upper classes.

[M]orally I suffer. I am ashamed of being a tourist from another world, sight-seeing in the alien Englands of manual labour and routine. My only hope is that the inhabitants of these other Englands don’t find their countries quite so awful as I find them. It is the traditional consolation of the prosperous and the free. ‘Believe me, my dear, they really don’t feel as intensely as we do.’<sup>25</sup>

Huxley’s guilt is admirable but, compared to Orwell’s compassion and empathy, lacks authenticity.

Orwell has a very different message to convey while passing through such places. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* he records his impressions on seeing a woman from a train in a state of utter degradation. “She knew well enough what was happening to her— understood as well as I did how dreadful a destiny it was to be kneeling there in the bitter

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<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Meyers, *Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 40.

<sup>24</sup> Aldous Huxley, “Abroad in England” *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine*, lxxxvii, May 1931, reprinted in *The Hidden Huxley Contempt and Compassion for the Masses 1920-36*, ed. David Bradshaw (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), 52.

<sup>25</sup> Aldous Huxley, “Sight-Seeing in Alien Englands” *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine*, lxxxvii, June 1931, reprinted in *The Hidden Huxley*, 72.

cold, on the slimy stones of a slum backyard, poking a stick up a foul drain-pipe.”<sup>26</sup> This image of poverty would later be recycled for use in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell is perhaps better acquainted with the indigent’s plight in a modern society since he had gone out of his way to experience poverty, amassing ammunition for his early writings. Huxley speaks of encountering what he referred to as a “Chinese wall” in his encounters with class barriers, and after meeting the Dean of Durham Cathedral, he finds it easier to connect with “the ecclesiastical dignitary than with my companions from the mining town. They were men I liked; I found them pleasant, intelligent, well informed; I agreed with their views. But all the same it was easier for me to get on with the Dean.”<sup>27</sup> Orwell consciously attempts to vault over this wall of class barriers by dressing the part, attempting to disguise his middle-class background in the transient hostels presented in *Down and Out in Paris and London* and in the boarding houses he inspects in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Huxley’s resulting articles are more intellectually remote than Orwell’s embedded reporting. “Unlike Orwell, he is not outraged by the plight of the common man, not haunted by the specters of oppression and tyranny, not under the compulsion to be a pamphleteer or a revolutionary. Huxley is concerned, rather, with the Bright Young People.”<sup>28</sup> Huxley’s novels usually deal with the privileged classes while Orwell’s normally focus on the common man. Huxley is firmly rooted in the intellectual class, given his pedigree, but Orwell’s guilt and intellectual honesty led him to depict a different class.

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<sup>26</sup> George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1958), 18.

<sup>27</sup> Huxley, “Abroad in England” *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine*, May 1931, reprinted in *The Hidden Huxley*, 51-3.

<sup>28</sup> Greenblatt, *Three Modern Satirists*, 77.

Huxley's position as a part of the British intelligentsia is solidified in *Brave New World*, a novel that largely concerns itself with the ruling elites, or Alphas, in "this year of stability, A.F. 632."<sup>29</sup> The fears and anxieties evinced in his satire were shared by people in the thirties, but only a select portion of intellectuals, scientists, and political elites. Huxley's Alphas, the top of the bottle-bred heap, are the primary focus and the only segment of the population worth investigating. Even John the Savage, raised on a savage reservation in poverty from a birth mother—an indiscretion uncovered and unceremoniously exploited by the conniving Bernard Marx—descends from a lineage of Alphas which is revealed when John meets his putative father, who happens to be none other than the Director of Hatcheries, in chapter ten. Alternatively, Orwell had a rather negative view of the intelligentsia, an opinion he made plain in *The Lion and the Unicorn*. For Orwell, the attitudes of the intellectual elitists could be studied through their newspapers, and in these papers he saw little "except the irresponsible carping of people who have never been and never expect to be in a position of power," as well as the "emotional shallowness of people who live in a world of ideas and have little contact with physical reality."<sup>30</sup> Orwell did not believe, as did Huxley and Wells, that humanity would experience a collective epiphany and suddenly decide one day to be generous with one another. Huxley's later insistence that his model has more viability in the fullness of time is based upon this kind of supposition. These were people who "he [Orwell] knew in his bones, were always obscenely eager to prostitute themselves in the service of

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<sup>29</sup> Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> George Orwell, "England Your England" *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*, reprinted in *Facing Unpleasant Facts: Narrative Essays*, ed. George Packer (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2008), 133.

absolute power.”<sup>31</sup> Scientists among the intelligentsia are subservient to those in power, which render Huxley’s novels of embodied viewpoints drifting without authorial direction suspect, yet Huxley’s aims were vastly different from Orwell’s.

Reflecting back on the year 1931, and the composition of *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley differentiates between the “nightmare of those depression years” and “the nightmare of the future described in *Brave New World*.”<sup>32</sup> Huxley’s London was a strange mixture of hedonism among the young and entitled, with widespread shortages of amenities among most of the middle and lower classes. “Despite a slight redistribution of income since the Edwardian period, Britain remained a very unequal society roughly divided between the eighty per cent defined as manual working class by their occupation, fifteen per cent middle class, and five per cent upper class.”<sup>33</sup> The war created a swift upsurge in production that was followed just as swiftly by a depression, both economic and spiritual, which was felt in every corner of England. “Europe slumped into a monumental melancholy. The homes promised its heroes remained fictional palaces, and the utopian social dreams evoked by wartime rhetoric were brutally erased by inflation, unemployment, and widespread deprivation.”<sup>34</sup> The war had wrought its terrible effect and the idealist world leaders Woodrow Wilson, David Lloyd George, and Georges Clemenceau were jolted back into reality as the League of Nations foundered. The League of Nations “evokes images of earnest bureaucrats, fuzzy liberal supporters, futile resolutions, unproductive fact-finding missions, and, above all, failure: Manchuria in

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<sup>31</sup> W. Warren Wagar, “George Orwell as Political Secretary of the Zeitgeist” in *The Future of Nineteen Eighty-Four* ed. Ejner J. Jensen (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 184.

<sup>32</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1932, 1958), 237.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), 86.

<sup>34</sup> Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 253.

1931, Ethiopia in 1935 and, most catastrophic of all, the outbreak of the Second World War.”<sup>35</sup> The inter-war years represent a massive shift in values, away from idealism, that became manifest in Europe in the shadow of a bloody conflict. *Brave New World*’s World State develops in the shadow of a similarly costly and destructive war, but through planning and sacrifice the World State remains stable. Orwell creates Oceania with an added insight into totalitarian regimes, sparking a debate not between matched adversaries but between dystopian novels.

There is an obvious rift between Huxley’s and Orwell’s future visions and this fissure was generated not only by a difference of opinion about war and human nature but also by a discrepancy between chronological vantage points. Writing in response to two distinct post-war worlds engenders differences in perspective. Huxley elucidates this disparity by comparing Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with his own anti-utopia in *Brave New World Revisited* (1958).

George Orwell’s *1984* was a magnified projection into the future of a present that had contained Stalinism and an immediate past that had witnessed the flowering of Nazism. *Brave New World* was written before the rise of Hitler to supreme power in Germany and when the Russian tyrant had not yet got into his stride. In 1931 systematic terrorism was not the obsessive contemporary fact which it had become in 1948, and the future dictatorship of my imaginary world was a good deal less brutal than the future dictatorship so brilliantly portrayed by Orwell. In the context of 1948, *1984* seemed dreadfully convincing. But tyrants, after all, are mortal and circumstances change. Recent developments in Russia and recent advances in science and technology have robbed Orwell’s book of some of its gruesome verisimilitude. A nuclear war will, of course, make nonsense of everybody’s predictions. But, assuming for the moment that the Great Powers can somehow refrain from destroying us, we can say that it now looks as though the odds were more in favor of something like *Brave New World* than of something like *1984*.<sup>36</sup>

Huxley professes that Orwell had the benefit of hindsight, writing as he did in the wake of Hitler and after Stalinism had gained its terrible momentum. Compare this assertion

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<sup>35</sup> Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 83.

<sup>36</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, 238.



with the following excerpts taken from a letter that Huxley wrote to Orwell (E. H. Blair) in October of 1949, after reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, nine years before *Brave New World Revisited* was published.

[S]ince poor sight makes it necessary for me to ration my reading, I had to wait a long time before being able to embark on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Agreeing with all that the critics have written of it, I need not to tell you, yet once more, how fine and how profoundly important the book is. May I speak instead of the thing with which the book deals—the ultimate revolution? ... Whether in actual fact the policy of the boot-on-the-face can go on indefinitely seems doubtful. My own belief is that the ruling oligarchy will find less arduous and wasteful ways of governing and of satisfying its lust for power, and these ways will resemble those which I described in *Brave New World*. ... Within the next generation I believe that the world's rulers will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient, as instruments of government, than clubs and prisons, and that the lust for power can be just as completely satisfied by suggesting people into loving their servitude as by flogging and kicking them into obedience. In other words, I feel that the nightmare of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is destined to modulate into the nightmare of a world having more resemblance to that which I imagined in *Brave New World*. ... Meanwhile, of course, there may be a large scale biological and atomic war—in which case we shall have nightmares of other and scarcely imaginable kinds.<sup>37</sup>

Given that Huxley received Orwell's novel through his publisher but addressed his letter to E.H. Blair parenthetically, it is clear that he realized Orwell was none other than his former student Eric Blair. Huxley appeals to Orwell in this letter, in much the same fashion as stated above, by calling attention to facets of what he believes to be a far more likely future. In October of 1949, however, Orwell was a patient of "Dr. Andrew Morland, a specialist in tuberculosis ... at University College Hospital on Gower Street in Bloomsbury."<sup>38</sup> It is quite possible, since Orwell's attempts to continue writing at this time were hindered while he remained under treatment, in fact his right arm was encased in plaster for a time, that Orwell meant to respond to Huxley and engage in this debate directly, but did not complete a response before his death on January 21, 1950. At any rate, Orwell's death prohibited any record of what Orwell thought of Huxley's opinions

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<sup>37</sup> This letter is cited as "Taken from *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, ed. Grover Smith, (Harper & Row, 1969), the full text of this letter is reprinted in the Appendix to the previously cited edition of *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, Appendix 15-18.

<sup>38</sup> Meyers, *Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation*, 301.

and precluded the continuation of what could have been a lively and informative exchange.

Huxley left behind a wealth of written material illustrating that he was intensely preoccupied with the future of humanity and how his present affected what lay ahead for future civilizations. He later addressed the atomic age and nuclear holocaust in his dystopia *Ape and Essence* (1948) which Orwell loathed.<sup>39</sup> Huxley seems unable to drop the pedantic pretense of educator in either of his responses to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s model as an unsustainable system and this seems almost obtuse given that Orwell's created future occupies a less remote place in time than Huxley's. Perhaps his tone is born from a passionate defense of *Brave New World*'s viability in the face of another author's challenge. However, the most striking feature of the two examples mentioned above is how little Huxley's thought had changed in the nine years between his reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and writing to Orwell, and the publication of *Brave New World Revisited*. Both Huxley and Orwell engage in creating dystopias as satires of likely scenarios of a modern society where power is the ultimate goal. Due to the lack of a response from Orwell they are like two ships passing in a dense fog, unable to signal each other by line of sight. It remains unclear whether Orwell ever drafted a reply to Huxley's letter, but his earlier essays and letters contain scattered criticisms on Huxley's work. Orwell's most explicit attack on *Brave New World* comes in his 1946 review of Zamyatin's *We*.

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<sup>39</sup> In a letter to Sir Richard Rees dated 3 March 1949, Orwell reviewed Huxley's *Ape and Essence* with one word; "awful." Peter Davison, ed., *George Orwell: A Life in Letters* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 448.

Orwell accuses Huxley's book of being at least "partly derived from" the novel *We*.<sup>40</sup> Huxley's eye problems were always a source of personal frustration and, as he comments in his letter to Orwell concerning the delay of his reply, his visual deficiency limited his reading, so nothing points with certainty to whether or not Huxley ever read Zamyatin. Orwell compares *We* to *Brave New World* and deems the former a more relevant work. "Huxley's book shows less political awareness and is more influenced by recent biological and psychological theories."<sup>41</sup> It is troubling that Huxley does not mention any criticisms from this review specifically in his letter so it is possible that his overbearing tone is a response to it, but the reply to Huxley's challenge is here, composed before *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In Huxley's book the problem of "human nature" is in a sense solved, because it assumes that by pre-natal treatment, drugs and hypnotic suggestion the human organism can be specialised in any way that is desired. A first-rate scientific worker is as easily produced as an Epsilon semi-moron, and in either case the vestiges of primitive instincts, such as maternal feeling or the desire for liberty, are easily dealt with. At the same time no clear reason is given why society should be stratified in the elaborate way that is described. The aim is not economic exploitation, but the desire to bully and dominate does not seem to be a motive either. There is no power hunger, no sadism, no hardness of any kind. Those at the top have no strong motive for staying at the top, and though everyone is happy in a vacuous way, life has become so pointless that it is difficult to believe that such a society could endure.<sup>42</sup>

It is important to note here what Orwell says about the ruling party of *Brave New World*. He fails to see any "motive for staying at the top" on the part of the world controllers.<sup>43</sup> However, Huxley goes out of his way to explain to Orwell, in his letter, that the ruling party would find other ways of "satisfying its lust for power."<sup>44</sup> On this point there can be no consensus due to the fact that their dialogue is incomplete. Orwell attacks

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<sup>40</sup> George Orwell, "Review of *We* by E.I. Zamyatin" *Tribune*, 4 January 1946, reprinted in *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950 IV*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 72

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Excerpt from Huxley's letter quoted above. Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, Appendix 15-18

Huxley's lack of motive in 1946 in his review of another book, while Huxley writes to Orwell, who is literally on his deathbed, without mentioning any of Orwell's previous commentary signaling an impasse. Bemoaning the incomplete record aside, this disparity between their critical opinions, coupled with the two novels, is linked to how each of their literary strengths informed their writing. As Gregory Claeys observes, "Huxley's work is often described as anti-materialistic, Orwell's rarely so, Huxley as a man engaged in permanent religious crisis, Orwell not. And while Orwell's great work was at one level intensely political, Huxley's has often been described as having few political overtones at all."<sup>45</sup> Orwell attacks Huxley for his weakness in politics, one of Orwell's strengths, while Huxley criticizes Orwell for not giving the scientific outlook a voice. Perhaps unwittingly, they sketched out the basic archetypes of the modern dystopian spectrum and sparked a debate between the political motives of utopian thinking and the scientific promises of technology.

Orwell obviously discounts the promise of science, much like Swift's satire. Jonathan Swift's lampoon of speculative science, epitomized in the floating island of Laputa, warns against the conflation of scientific thinking and political discourse. In his 1946 essay on Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* Orwell comments that in Part III Swift is making a political statement about totalitarianism, and that "mixed up with much fooling, there is a perception that one of the aims of totalitarianism is not merely to make sure that people will think the right thoughts, but actually to make them *less conscious*."<sup>46</sup> In this

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<sup>45</sup> Gregory Claeys, "The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley, and Orwell" in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 118.

<sup>46</sup> George Orwell, "Politics vs. Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver's Travels*," *Polemic*, 5, 1946, reprinted in *All Art is Propaganda: Critical Essays*, ed. George Packer (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2008), 304.

astute commentary, Orwell stresses that elucidation, one of the aims of practical science, goes against the point of the state; the state controls the masses and demands ignorant allegiance, leaving the individual adrift in the world and in need of structure. The idea of conscious, educated individuals running amok in the future, especially during wartime, is a dangerous implication. According to Freud, “civilization has to be defended against the individual, and its regulations, institutions and commands are directed to that task.”<sup>47</sup>

Propaganda is utilized instead of behaviorism to tell people how and what to feel, fear is used to manipulate them. The difference illustrated by Huxley and Orwell is their argument between scientific design and political indoctrination. Progress demands a high price of intellectual liberty, yet Huxley does not seem willing to pay. The loss of individual identity would be anathema, hopefully, to the President of an association known as “For Intellectual Liberty.”<sup>48</sup> Huxley struggles with his own ideas about social planning throughout various pieces of journalism surrounding the writing of *Brave New World*. He publicly asserts that planning is needed for Britain while privately doubting such propositions for the elite through characters that resist social conditioning and communal propaganda. Social planning and individual liberty seem to be opposing ideas in this context and this paradox is something Huxley obviously struggles with in his writing. The design of each novel, in contrast to the other, enriches and expands the disjointed dialogue between authors.

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<sup>47</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 7.

<sup>48</sup> This organization was founded in February 1936 with Huxley on the executive committee. He later became the association’s president. Richard Overly, *The Twilight Years: The Paradox of Britain Between the Wars* (New York: Viking, 2009), 301.

Huxley's World State, with its motto "COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY,"<sup>49</sup> represents a secure society still rife with the remainders of capitalism while outlining a collectivized economy based on consumption and behaviorism. The identity of the individual citizen is based on their standing within the stable community. "The motto places the key term, "Identity," within the bracketing embrace of the collectivist ideals of the World State, "Community" and "Stability.""<sup>50</sup> The society internalizes the capitalist's zeal for efficiency and by applying the methods of industry to the perfection of human civilization, realizes a benevolent *technocracy*. The reigning figurehead, Our Ford, signifies emergent technology of the early twentieth century and how it promises to relieve the physical stresses of industry on the factory worker. Ford's revolutionary assembly line process brought the incredibly sophisticated activity of building automobiles within the scope of laymen. No scientific understanding or specialization was required of the machine operator, only the most basic orientation with a particular station's function. "Wheels must turn steadily, but cannot turn untended. There must be men to tend them, men as steady as the wheels upon axles, sane men, obedient men, stable in contentment."<sup>51</sup> There is no socialist promise of the workers controlling the means of production and, in fact, there is not even a basic understanding of the whole process. In Huxley's paradigm, the man has simply become an extension of the machine. "Man, in using his reason to create the ultimate life of pleasure, has ceased to be man."<sup>52</sup> The prevalence of this concern in the 1930s is easily countenanced in

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<sup>49</sup> Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Robert S. Baker, *Brave New World: History, Science, and Dystopia* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1990), 81.

<sup>51</sup> Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, 48.

<sup>52</sup> Greenblatt, *Three Modern Satirists*, 97.

examples from cinema such as Fritz Lang's men dwarfed by the machines of *Metropolis* and Charlie Chaplin's risible trip through a machine's works in *Modern Times*.

The individual pushing a button, thereby calling the machine into action, has little to no control over the actual manufacture of a product, and is contented with his efforts as a component of the machine rather than as a skilled laborer. "The principle of mass production at last applied to biology."<sup>53</sup> The reduction of the individual to a mechanism invites the analysis of this comparison between man and machine. The individual's worth is no longer based upon an individual quota in relation to production but, simply the ability to pay attention and perform the required task. If the individual becomes a machine component, then the nonconformist element, or autonomous intellect—as a fault within the system, becomes a force for change which is a terrifying implication to the ruling body. To combat this threat the characters speak litanies of vapid mottos and sing-song rhymes, designed to curb natural behavior patterns. Huxley presents a utopia in the mold of Thomas More with one very important difference: the nonconformist. Instead of a traveler, Huxley uses the character of John the Savage, as an outsider, to stand in for the contemporary man. In other words, since the Savage shares the same irrational passions and superstitions as the inter-war Englishman, he ultimately views the World State society with caution, aversion, and disdain. The rogue element within a benign system is represented in three incarnations within the novel: Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson, and John the Savage. Bernard and Helmholtz are dysfunctional instruments within the machine while John is a rogue element introduced from without, who is then expelled.

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<sup>53</sup> Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, 19.

Alternatively, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a forecast of engineered scarcity and perpetual conflict. Orwell's Party with its twisted slogans, "WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH," exists in a future resembling Russia in the repressive days of Stalinism.<sup>54</sup> The individual is shaped by fear in this society of informers. The pariah Goldstein resembles Trotsky as a scapegoat and an abhorred figure of ridicule. England is now Airstrip One, a colony of Oceania which consists of the Americas, and Big Brother is the Stalinesque figurehead and savior of the Party. The characteristics of Orwell's future and its development are delineated by Goldstein in his book *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*.

The world of today is a bare, hungry, dilapidated place compared with the world that existed before 1914, and still more so if compared with the imaginary future to which the people of that period looked forward. In the early twentieth century, the vision of a future society unbelievably rich, leisured, orderly and efficient—a glittering antiseptic world of glass and steel and snow-white concrete—was part of the consciousness of nearly every literate person. Science and technology were developing at a prodigious speed, and it seemed natural to assume that they would go on developing. This failed to happen, partly because of the impoverishment caused by a long series of wars and revolutions, partly because scientific and technical progress depended on the empirical habit of thought, which could not survive in a strictly regimented society. As a whole the world is more primitive today than it was fifty years ago.<sup>55</sup>

This is Orwell's bleak vision of a future society that has trampled Huxley's values and hopes. Material resources are squandered on ceaseless war and technology becomes the means of the population's enslavement. Humans are expected to function as machines in unquestioning dedication to the Party's inevitable victory. Forbidden to enhance their appearance, men and women wear drab uniforms making them indistinguishable from one another. When Julia is first mentioned in the novel, she is described as having "some mechanical job on one of the novel-writing machines."<sup>56</sup> In a superb parody, the writing

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<sup>54</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1945, 1949), 91.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 264-5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.



of fiction is now done by heavy machinery in an assembly line fashion to reinforce the inane nature of entertainment for the masses. Science is again the butt of the joke. This is Orwell's narrow view of the controlling faction of totalitarianism. Instead of a population conditioned to love their servitude, Orwell presents a cowed and paranoid population kept in check through propaganda and torture. Orwell is also writing after the Second World War, an important fact that must not be overlooked.

The world was vastly different in the wake of rocket technology and atomic weapons. The complete annihilation of civilization was a dread piqued by World War I, but that dread became everyday paranoia in the early years after World War II, during the rise of the Cold War arms race. Orwell's vastly different world of repression is almost diametrically opposed to Huxley's engineered society. This is a state where "the central issue is not so much the exploitation of the masses for profit as it is the nature and use of power as these have developed in the twentieth century."<sup>57</sup> The control of the population, through surveillance and fear of torture, aid the ruling caste in its ultimate goal to consolidate power. "The novel makes a double-distillation of every nightmare of monstrous entrapment and powerlessness to which the average human brain is vulnerable."<sup>58</sup> The reader becomes entrenched in the fear that Winston and others live every day. Huxley's future is more remote than Orwell's, as well as more sedated, and suggests a civilization that emerges from a war to end all wars. Orwell's civilization is occupied in a shifting series of alliances with the two other world powers, Eastasia and Eurasia, and constantly at war with one of them. He is not explicitly setting out to fill

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<sup>57</sup> William Steinhoff, "Utopia Reconsidered: Comments on *1984*" in *No Place Else: Explorations in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*, ed. Eric S. Rabkin, Martin H. Greenberg, Joseph D. Olander (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 147.

<sup>58</sup> Christopher Hitchens, Introduction to Orwell's *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, x.

any void but his problems with Huxley's forecast are dealt with explicitly in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell carves out a niche for himself within modernist dystopia and the space he occupies is, essentially, the interval between his present and what Huxley forecasted. In other words, Huxley's future is impossible before the purifying Inferno of Orwell's present vision. "1984, in spite of its setting in the future, is not primarily a utopian fantasy prophesying what the world will be like in thirty or forty years but a novel about what the world is like now."<sup>59</sup> The beginning of *Brave New World* is vague in its treatment of the immediate past. There is very little information to go on. Orwell is responding to his own estimation of Huxley's limitations, or omissions, as he sees them. Emerging in opposition to Huxley's ideas are those terrifying aspects of human nature so wantonly utilized by Fascism.

Orwell, not satisfied with Huxley's conclusions about the shape of the future, criticized *Brave New World* for failing to espouse an intention behind the central government, embodied by the world controllers, in his review of *We* cited above. Orwell views Huxley's benevolent rulers with suspicion since they lack a motive like power or sadism to engage in the domination of individuals. In addition to this, he identified the idealism of Wells and Huxley as a limiting factor to their creative imaginations. "Their rationalism inhibits them from seeing the profoundly irrational, 'primitivist' roots of modern totalitarianism."<sup>60</sup> Huxley cannot see what Orwell clearly can; tyranny has a much different character in the mind of the common man. While individuality and intellectual liberty are precious, there is another, simpler kind of liberty that must be defended. In 1941 Orwell published an essay on Wellsian optimism in the face of the

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<sup>59</sup>Greenblatt, *Three Modern Satirists*, 66.

<sup>60</sup> Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, 299.

repressive Nazi regime under Hitler. He states that the Nazis are the new threat to liberty and that in these circumstances, idealism will not suffice.

“Creatures out of the Dark Ages have come marching into the present, and if they are ghosts they are at any rate ghosts which need a strong magic to lay them. The people who have shown the best understanding of Fascism are either those who have suffered under it or those who have a Fascist streak in themselves. A crude book like *The Iron Heel*, written nearly thirty years ago, is a truer prophecy of the future than either *Brave New World* or *The Shape of Things to Come*.”<sup>61</sup>

Orwell reveals yet another inspiration for his model, Jack London’s *The Iron Heel*, and he recapitulates his disagreement with Huxley’s fixation on a shimmering, Wellsian future. Orwell’s growing focus on the sadism of pursuing power renders optimism absurd.

Both Huxley and Orwell cast a keen eye into the future while criticizing facets of contemporary society, concurrently. R. Buckminster Fuller identifies two distinct mindsets that are illustrative of this divergence.

We have learned in the last decade from our behavioral science studies that aggression is a secondary behavior of humans—that when they get what they need, when they need it, and are not overwhelmed, they are spontaneously benevolent; it is only when they become desperate that they become aggressive because what they have relied on is no longer working. There are two kinds of social behavior manifest today around the world—the benign and the aggressive.<sup>62</sup>

Huxley’s citizens occupy a benign experience of comfort in plenty while Orwell’s collective is founded upon the cathartic release of aggression. In addition, the relaxed quality of the World State aids in the maintenance of contentment while aggression is sown and harvested by Oceania. This discrepancy is most easily illustrated with a simple comparison between the two authority figures in these narratives who act as cultural censors to ensure the sanctity of their respective systems: Mustapha Mond and O’Brien.

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<sup>61</sup> George Orwell, “Wells, Hitler and the World State” in *All Art is Propaganda*, ed. George Packer, 154.

<sup>62</sup> R. Buckminster Fuller, *Critical Path* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 67.

Mustapha Mond serves as a guardian of the World State's stability, as well as a filter for wrong thinking. Before a work of scientific research can be published, it must be read and deemed to be strictly conventional. He explains the absence of Shakespeare in the World State to John as a matter of economic concern. Shakespeare's works are old and if people became interested in old things, it might distract them from "ceaselessly pursuing the new."<sup>63</sup> O'Brien on the other hand is Winston's handler and later his tormenter, a perversion of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor from *The Brothers Karamazov*. According to Robert Plank, both Huxley and Orwell take part in adapting Dostoyevsky's Inquisitor into a character of their stories. "Huxley's World Controllers still seek the happiness, albeit a debased version, of their charges ... O'Brien, however, along with the ruling group he represents, pretends nothing and believes in nothing."<sup>64</sup> Huxley's World Controllers are not interested in repressing the desires of their charges, "[t]heirs is the friendly face of totalitarianism."<sup>65</sup> O'Brien, on the other hand, represents the authoritarian constraints of Ingsoc, a contraction of English Socialism, as well as the dark side of Big Brother. "What he [O'Brien] allows his victim is a glance into a gaping void, indistinguishable from the maw of Hell."<sup>66</sup> O'Brien is the aggressive tyrant, and yet, he is merely an instrument of the greater machine. O'Brien's job is to make Winston perfect before he is dispatched. Huxley's is a model of controlled consumption that attempts verisimilitude in comparison with the contemporary world while "Orwell did not intend his picture of a horrible future as a prediction of what will happen, but as a

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<sup>63</sup> Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, 261.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Plank, *George Orwell's Guide Through Hell: A Psychological Study of 1984* (San Bernardino: The Borgo Press, 1986), 68.

<sup>65</sup> Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, 260.

<sup>66</sup> Plank, *George Orwell's Guide Through Hell*, 68.

warning against what could happen if we do not guard against it.”<sup>67</sup> The plausibility of these stories allows for easy comparison between reality and conceptual realization which makes them perfect for analyzing the limitations of utopia. “Satirical prose, then, is not a transparent medium through which the reader is given a view of reality, but a very peculiar lens, which renders distorted and often grotesque images of society.”<sup>68</sup> When viewed from a distance, the tenets of dystopia reveal the failings of humanity in reference to the present as well as the possibility of future failure. Furthermore, the modernist dystopia is more easily decoded through the writer’s perspective.

Huxley and Orwell diverge in their stylistic choices of perspective, especially the narrative voice. Huxley employs an aloof and omniscient narrator, detailing the movements and dealings of his characters as if they danced under a microscope upon a Petri dish. He refers to himself as an “amused, Pyrrhonic aesthete”<sup>69</sup> in his preface to the 1946 edition of the novel, and it is obvious that, as with his previous satires, he has reserved any judgment of his created world. “The ‘multiplicity of eyes’ the author strives for is ultimately destructive to many of his novels, because Huxley is temperamentally unable to choose between them.”<sup>70</sup> That Huxley cannot decide on a perspective is a familiar criticism, but more importantly Huxley goes against the modernist conceit of the self-conscious storyteller. The reader becomes disoriented by the lack of an overriding voice lending moral weight to one side or another, forcing the reader’s commitment to a personal judgment. Orwell, on the other hand, utilizes “an intermediate method: the author-narrator; but although the narrator is outside the action himself ... he actually

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>68</sup> Greenblatt, *Three Modern Satirists*, 58.

<sup>69</sup> Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, 6.

<sup>70</sup> Greenblatt, *Three Modern Satirists*, 79.

presents one character, the protagonist, as though he were inside him.”<sup>71</sup> As a result, Orwell’s novel seems more intimate than does Huxley’s cold, detached chronicle. However, Huxley’s ends are different from Orwell’s.

Irony transforms Huxley’s vision from a utopia to a dystopia and Huxley himself preferred the term anti-utopia to describe *Brave New World*, employing the cliché that appearances are misleading. Orwell commented that he had written “a Utopia in the form of a novel” in a letter before the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.<sup>72</sup> Possibly Orwell did not label his work a dystopia because this word had not yet become the pregnant term it is today thanks, in fact, to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Huxley constructs a gleaming technological model of a metropolis that is coldly utilitarian, offering little in the way of humane surroundings while Orwell reveals the real dirt and grime of industrial production where pollution begins to render human life unhealthy. Regardless, their goals were clear and their stylistic divergences informed their respective approaches to the negative utopia. Huxley wrote *Brave New World* and poured his personal fixations into it; mass hedonism, behaviorism, drugs, and eugenics. What Orwell did was different; he precisely stated and perfectly embodied the common anxiety of his times in a terrifying vision of what was just around the bend, but only if humanity—but especially Britain, was not careful. “George Orwell, his *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, his other writings, and the flesh-and-blood man who invented them all, Eric Blair, expressed the dominant world view in the high culture of late capitalism.”<sup>73</sup> This is not to say that Huxley did not

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<sup>71</sup>Plank, *George Orwell’s Guide Through Hell*, 20.

<sup>72</sup>Letter to Julian Symons, 4 February 1949 reprinted in *George Orwell: A Life in Letters*, ed. Peter Davison, 442.

<sup>73</sup>Wagar, “George Orwell as Political Secretary of the Zeitgeist” in *The Future of Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ed. Ejner J. Jensen, 179.

have his finger on the pulse of his own times in London, only to reinforce that Orwell was equally perceptive.

However, Orwell was also archaic in many ways and the most pronounced example of this in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the pastoral splendor of Winston's first rendezvous with Julia in the countryside. According to W. Warren Wagar, Orwell was "a man of the heart rather than science and reason. ... [H]e pitched his tent in the camp of the romantics."<sup>74</sup> The connection to nature and the loss of green pastures Orwell bemoans in his later work intensifies the focus on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s paradisiacal landscape as opposite to the wasteland of the city. Winston's first assignation with Julia is among the bluebells, in the English countryside, what he calls "the Golden Country—almost."<sup>75</sup> Oceania is a drab war zone but Winston states that this Golden Country is something out of his dreams. Nature is not something fearful, as it is to the clinically sterilized citizens of Huxley's World State, but a welcome image of peace at its best. After the foul, dingy, and putrid cityscape, the pure bucolic majesty of an untouched meadow is a welcome indulgence, a return to Eden, out from under the ceaseless gaze of the Thought Police. In *Brave New World*, technology can provide any distraction and Bernard Marx's choice of vacation destination, the Savage reservation, is viewed as odd. John later tries to escape technology in a defunct structure on the outskirts of civilization only to be plagued by curious onlookers who are fascinated by his strange, primitive behavior.

Orwell's population is kept distracted with a mind-numbing insistence on communal activities and lectures but without the equally distracting technological

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>75</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 204.

amenities or pharmacological benefits that science could provide. This kind of slavery to the machinery of war is a darker interpretation of Huxley's mechanized individual. The privations of subsisting on horrible gin and rancid food, along with the rationing of all luxury consumables, are equally tyrannous with the invasion of privacy Orwell's slaves must endure. This is a closer representation of the true totalitarian state than Huxley's glittering metropolis of wonder. Huxley employs a more subtle method to undermine the simplistic notions of his day, that industry and technology were a panacea that would eventually cure society of all human inconsistencies. Huxley wrote a short essay titled *Science and Civilisation* which was broadcast in January of 1932 on the BBC National Programme. Huxley states quite clearly in this essay, on the eve of *Brave New World's* publication, that "Science is power as well as truth. Besides being an end in itself, it is a means to other ends."<sup>76</sup> Reacting directly to H.G. Wells and his model of a technological paradise, Huxley casts his gaze into a remote future while lampooning Science Fiction of the twenties and thirties.

Robert Baker estimates that Huxley was not only writing in response to the "Wellsian Utopia" but also intended to parody Well's *Men Like Gods* (1923) before abandoning the idea to embark upon the creation of his own World State.<sup>77</sup> Unlike Orwell, Huxley employs the contemporary development of behaviorism as a tool used by the social planners to engineer individuals who love their servitude. There is no need for the boot-on-the-face tactics of Orwell's Ingsoc. In *Brave New World* peace and prosperity are engineered just as the individual is tailor-made to fit each stratum.

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<sup>76</sup> Aldous Huxley, "Science and Civilisation" published as 'Science – the Double-Edged Tool!,' *Listener*, vii, 20 January 1932, reprinted in *The Hidden Huxley*, ed. David Bradshaw, 105.

<sup>77</sup> Baker devotes Chapter 4 of his work to defining the "Wellsian Utopia" and discusses the effect of Wells upon Huxley as well as Orwell and Zamyatin. Robert Baker, *Brave New World: History, Science, Dystopia*, 23-5.



However, Orwell's vision of destruction carries just as much weight. "Human creations are easily destroyed, and science and technology, which have built them up, can also be used for their annihilation."<sup>78</sup> Science can be used for ends against human liberty just as easily as for human leisure.

The satire of these two approaches differs in terms of intention. Both authors warn and criticize yet Huxley is concerned more with warning future generations, as is obvious in his preoccupation with his model as the one that will emerge, while Orwell criticizes the institutions of totalitarianism within the context of a contemporary Britain circa 1948. However, Huxley did recognize Orwell's benefit of writing after Hitler and, in his way, also recognized the threat of totalitarian thinking, though only in the context of nuclear stalemate. In Huxley's determination, if the threat of a nuclear war is not replaced with human cooperation then "we have only two alternatives to choose from: either a number of national, militarized totalitarianisms ... or else one supranational totalitarianism ... developing, under the need for efficiency and stability, into the welfare-tyranny of Utopia."<sup>79</sup> According to Huxley in 1946, even if a totalitarian regime was made manifest, it would eventually develop into utopia through economic and political pressures. This kind of idealism is simple-minded in Orwell's judgment and one of the prime factors in his problem with the intelligentsia as a handmaiden of the totalitarian machine. "The scientific specialist, bereft as he usually is of any insight into history or politics, willingly throws himself at the feet of dictators."<sup>80</sup> The suggestion remains that there will always be an O'Brien or a Stalin to seize power for selfish or

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<sup>78</sup> Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Aldous Huxley, "Preface to the 1946 Edition" (of *Brave New World*) reprinted in *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Wagar, "Orwell as Political Secretary of the Zeitgeist" in *The Future of Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ed. Ejner J. Jensen, 188.

decadent ends. Orwell's distrust of science is not necessarily foundational; it is a critique of humanity's innate weakness, countenanced through conformity in deference to strong leadership, and its manipulation through avarice.

Ultimately, the difference in viewpoint between *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* stems from a problem of definition, the resulting confusion of terminology between science and politics mirrors the discrepancy between an ideal and reality. Whether humanity is forced into reasonableness through scientific manipulation or good old fashioned brute force, the outcome looks pretty grim. Orwell recognized the pessimism irrevocably tied to the future of humanity while it remained in the shadow of an inhuman *technocracy*. Both Orwell and Huxley intone the swan song of the individual but Orwell highlights the importance of the inner, self-reflexive life of the writer, setting up the atmosphere of internalized pessimism of Samuel Beckett's dreary dystopian viewpoint.

## Chapter 2: Beleaguered Bodies

Perhaps the most fundamental change of view from the classical utopia to the modernist dystopia is the application of psychology to civil planning. Freud states that whereas it seems that human civilization's "essence lies in controlling nature for the purpose of acquiring wealth and that the dangers which threaten it could be eliminated through a suitable distribution of that wealth among men, it now seems that the emphasis has moved over from the material to the mental."<sup>81</sup> Freud forever altered the mechanistic model of human behavior of strictly diagnosing social ills as consequences of physical stimuli. Under scrutiny, socialist models of a worker's paradise hint that the removal of financial barriers to physical satiation does not always equal collective contentment. Social responsibilities that yoke an individual to a collective existence still burden the autonomous intellect. A social obligation attached to a meaningless existence as part of a blissful collective is not every human's hope. This recognition that a designed paradise is likely to be just as miserable as any contemporary model of government finds its fullest expression in modern dystopia, which emerges from a sense of pessimistic anxiety embedded within the mind of an individual in a utopian society. Orwell makes it clear in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that civilization will not evolve into a hedonist paradise, but instead a totalitarian prison. "It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined. A world of fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but *more* merciless as it refines itself."<sup>82</sup> If utopia is no longer possible in the physical sense, the resulting

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<sup>81</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961), 8.

<sup>82</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc., 1945, 1949), 341-2.

dystopia where one tramples or is trampled upon, pushes the powerless to create a mental no place.

Although Orwell refers to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a utopia, hindsight reveals that the novel has become the prototypical modern dystopian paradigm to which all other modern efforts are compared. This paradigm consists, partly, of a character beset by a hostile outer world struggling towards impossible freedom. Like Orwell, Samuel Beckett portrays human individuals in the midst of impossible and futile struggles to attain freedom from consciousness. They are born into a world they do not understand and an existence they do not want. The only asylum left to these characters within closed spaces is a withdrawal into the ephemeral nothing of the unconscious, to escape the despotism of modern life. Both Orwell and Beckett focus on the mental aspects, as opposed to primarily material concerns, of the individual's plight, which is divided into a Cartesian duality between inner and outer worlds. Orwell's Winston encapsulates himself in an inner realm, the only private place left to him, which is the object of a psychological assault. Similarly, Beckett creates characters that are forced to envision utopia as a psychological destination, a literal nowhere, mirroring Winston's thwarted escape inward and connecting modern dystopia with the discord of mundane reality more than the failure of industrial progress. Orwell's focus on tyranny, as it influences Winston's inner self, complements Beckett's focus on the negative aspects of the phenomenal world and his characters' retreat into their own closed worlds as a means of escape. The establishment of mental landscapes by characters as a means to escape physical squalor is suggested by Orwell and confirmed by Beckett as the only deliverance from the unwanted burdens, the demands and contradictions, of modern material existence. The

identification of utopia, as a place where all the material needs of humans are provided for, is supplanted in both Orwell and Beckett with mental realms humans create for themselves, their dreams or inner worlds, since utopia is itself a dream or at best a simulacrum.

Beckett's world is intrinsically bad due to the encumbrance of existing in a state of constant division between the world of the mind and the world of the senses. The problems of memory, confusion of impressions, and a mentality disconnected from the outside world permeate Beckett's *oeuvre* as well. Unlike Huxley, both Orwell and Beckett articulate the individual's vulnerabilities to a hostile environment, or dystopia, and connect utopia to the individual's inner experience. Like Winston, Beckett's characters persist even though it is pointless to do so. As in Orwell's fictional setting, language is suspect, the characters are being observed in some way, places lack distinction, and there is a general decay of the body and surroundings. Beckett's characters are beset by the demands of the outside world, a cause of their suffering or confusion. They are disassociated because they are adrift and at the mercy of more powerful forces. Beckett's work is not set overtly in the future or in response to an oppressive government yet his character's surroundings are indistinct and the only information about their environment is revealed through the narrator's awareness of objects. The stories that Beckett relates through his characters suggest disconnected individuals who seek solitude over community and prefer inner sanctity over communal acceptance.

Shane Weller states that Beckett embodies a particular facet of modern nihilism but that the "religious category of transcendence is preserved, but only in the form of a

transcendence of nothingness (*Nichts*), a literal u-topianism, a belief in the valuelessness of being and the absolute value of non-being.”<sup>83</sup> Beckett renounces the divine gift of existence and, through his pessimism, illuminates the way to transcend the weight of dystopia. This transcendence is based upon the work of Arnold Geulincx whose work *Ethica* Beckett read in Latin in the Trinity College Library.<sup>84</sup> Beckett fixated on the epigram “*Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis*,” or “Where you are worth nothing, there you should want nothing.”<sup>85</sup> This particular translation is probably the strongest for Beckett’s purposes and there is no doubt that Beckett studied the text closely, due to the detailed notes he kept. David Tucker discusses the adaptable nature of this epigram in translation by pointing out that the Latin *valeo* carries the meaning of both to have power and to have worth, and states that “Beckett was also well aware of the multiplicity of this densely woven little phrase.”<sup>86</sup> It is important to note that the translated phrase includes both power over others and inherent worth, since this double meaning appealed to Beckett’s taste. As recorded in a letter, reprinted in *Disjecta*, Beckett named his artistic “points of departure” as “the ‘Naught is more real...’ and the ‘Ubi nihil vales...’ both already in *Murphy* and neither very rational.”<sup>87</sup> The uncovered worthlessness of being is the cause of suffering when the rights of individuals, for instance those guaranteed by social laws, fail to live up to expectations. Not only is the individual worth nothing in the

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<sup>83</sup> Shane Weller, *A Taste for the Negative: Beckett and Nihilism* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2005), 7.

<sup>84</sup> James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 206-7.

<sup>85</sup> Weller, *A Taste for the Negative*, 4.

<sup>86</sup> David Tucker, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx: Tracing ‘a literary fantasia* (London: Continuum, 2012), 18-19.

<sup>87</sup> Samuel Beckett, Letter to Sigle Kennedy June 14, 1967, reprinted in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, Edited by Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 113.

greater sense of the macrocosm of perception but this epigram also implies an underlying powerlessness of the individual.

Beckett's works are littered with allusions to philosophical systems that impose structure on the impalpable substance of mind. Democritus of Abdera provides Beckett with the ultimate value of nothing while Geulincx, applying the Cartesian duality of mind and body to the problem of existence in a world where the individual has no inherent worth, provides the answer to escape. In the knowledge of their worthlessness, Beckett's characters illustrate the difficulty in negotiating the Cartesian duality, spanning the gulf between body and mind. The freedom of indifference is the only escape from this suffering for Beckett's many incarnations of consciousness. Weller connects Beckett's Schopenhauerian interpretation of Geulincx's epigram (*ubi nihil valet...*) as a clue to the idea that the "where" in which a human is worth nothing is "outer reality."<sup>88</sup> In summary, Schopenhauer emphasized the denial of the Will which Beckett connects with Geulincx's epigram of renunciation, while the Cartesian duality is restated and synthesized through a comparison of two types of awareness; sensory and intellectual. Beckett, just as Schopenhauer and Geulincx, distrusts the sensory impressions of reality and prefers the stillness of a catatonic. As Anthony Cronin suggests in his critical biography of Beckett, the "world was divided in two, macrocosm and microcosm, the macrocosm being the external reality and the microcosm the mental one, the kingdom of one's own mind."<sup>89</sup> As in *Murphy*, the protagonist undoubtedly prefers the inner microcosm. As Beckett's characterizations progress, they focus more and more on interiority in response to outer hostility and bodily degradation. Beckett's characters, like

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<sup>88</sup> Weller, *A Taste for the Negative*, 73-6.

<sup>89</sup> Anthony Cronin, *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 231.

Orwell's, are not important people or the greatest minds of their time; these distinctions mean nothing.

Instead of exemplary and intelligent people, the characters trapped in these dystopias are ignorant and struggling to understand the forces that direct their progress. Winston is Orwell's powerless stand-in for everyman but Winston is forced inward by the constraints of a regime bent on consolidating power. Oceania dictates the worth of the individual based upon his contributions to the ultimate power of the Party. Orwell's creation proves an oppressive ideal society in that it demands the Party member's total loyalty and attention. This demand is enforced through fear and coercion that necessitates an outward calm or mindlessness in the ineluctable presence of the Party. Winston must retain an external aspect of disinterestedness to belie his inner activity. "You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized."<sup>90</sup> The ubiquitous gaze of surveillance technology forces Winston to turn inward, out of the harsh glare of the light trained on him. The xenophobia built into Oceania reflects Winston's withdrawal into himself and entices him to find refuge from those he cannot trust within his mind. Winston's escape takes three forms in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: his diary, a glass paperweight, and the room above Mr. Charrington's shop. These private spaces will ultimately be destroyed by the invasive torture tactics employed by O'Brien, yet before this breaking of his mind takes place he consciously attempts to enlarge his neglected imagination.

As Orwell presents a waif at the mercy of an invasive and overbearing parent body, Big Brother, so Beckett presents consciousness adrift in a hostile landscape with

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<sup>90</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 90-1.



little to no understanding of its surroundings and, in the case of *The Unnamable* (1958) specifically, wanting silence but forced to communicate by mysterious interrogators. Beginning with *Murphy* (1938), Samuel Beckett creates characters who seek solace in the nothing of non-existence. Murphy's outer world is a dark and distorted place, unfriendly to the traveler. Beckett's progression of novels and stories pursue interiority as an extension of the idea that the individual finds no innate worth within themselves. The resultant viewpoint becomes an enclosed space, a nowhere. Beckett's characters feel they would be better off never having been born, hinting that existence is a burden regardless of civilization. Beckett's narrative intellects become closed spaces as the perspective shifts from a narrator outside the character to entrapment within a character's mind. These are characters that hint at a plane of existence somewhere between being and nothingness. According to Adorno, Beckett's characters fail in their attempts to surrender the burden of existence and through this failed attempt the character conceives of a negative image of being, which represents a degraded form of utopia as a negation. Weller clarifies Adorno's idea of a "haven of hope," or an attitude of indifference, explaining that, for Adorno, "true resistance to nihilism in Beckett takes the paradoxical form of a submission that fails and thereby leaves a difference behind it, a 'haven of hope' within which the negative image of a better world, a utopia, remains intact."<sup>91</sup> In Weller's view, Adorno is suggesting that, though Beckett never mentions it, the turn inward is the only acceptable response to the spectacle of the Holocaust. The individual recoils into the mind as a response of horror at the sight of the modern world. The

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<sup>91</sup> Weller explains the importance of Adorno's ideas to dispel the view that Beckett's view of existence is a nihilistic response to life and instead positing that Beckett's response is the only reasonable reaction to modern life. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* is quoted and discussed by Weller in *A Taste for the Negative*, 13-14.

nightmare of World War II plus the discoveries of concentration camps after the war provide a *Grand Guignol* Theater and the appalled citizen of the modern world withdraws. Withdrawal is echoed in many ways in Beckett's fiction, whether as a form of psychosis or a disconnection in being. Mr. Endon in *Murphy*, as well as the protagonist of *The Calmative* and Malone, are similar "for we are needless to say in a skull," and also confined to rooms resembling cells.<sup>92</sup> They inhabit solitary rooms of white, much like a mind encased within a skull, free of the distractions of the outside world. Mr. Endon's one physical indulgence is attaining perfect balance in chess while Malone's single frivolity is a fastidious inventory of his few remaining possessions. By forcing the renunciation of the body and perception, the only alternative is nothing. However for Beckett, the concrete substance of the phenomenal world is less real than nothing, as with Malone's adaptation of Democritus, "*Nothing is more real than nothing.*"<sup>93</sup> This idea is entwined with Geulincx's ethical imperative to want nothing where you are worth nothing. With the conflation of Democritus and Geulincx, Beckett poses a quandary to the reader; there is no paradise to escape into, only a decision between a bad place and a void. The void or nothingness Beckett offers is not truly an absence but instead the substance of nothingness. Murphy finds nothing within himself and sees that he is "not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom."<sup>94</sup> By projecting his mind into nothingness Murphy then escapes into a utopia, according to Weller's distinction of it as an opposite reality.

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<sup>92</sup> Samuel Beckett, *The Calmative* in *Samuel Beckett: The Grove Centenary Edition Volume IV: Poems, Short Fiction, Criticism* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 269.

<sup>93</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Malone Dies* in *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 1956), 192.

<sup>94</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1957), 112.

Beckett takes very little interest as a writer in detailing the surroundings of his characters. The uncharted frontier of the modern world is not a distant place but a mental landscape that Jungian psychology breaks into three zones, a structure studied by Beckett and mirrored in Murphy's mind. "There were the three zones, light, half light, dark, each with its specialty."<sup>95</sup> In Weller's view, with *Murphy*, Beckett is beginning to negate the body in favor of the mental states of characters. Weller draws attention to the importance of chapter six, which is an explanation of the phrase "Murphy's mind."<sup>96</sup> Beckett erects in this chapter a structural skeleton of the workings of Murphy's mind and lays out the philosophical dictates that shape this space. As Murphy grows older he becomes more convinced that "his mind was a closed system, subject to no principle of change but its own, self-sufficient and impermeable to the vicissitudes of the body."<sup>97</sup> Murphy identifies himself as more mind than body while adapting Leibniz's description of monads as closed systems. Murphy shies away from the material world, finding freedom and solace only in a state of mental activity and physical rest. Beckett's Cartesian duality of physical substances and the evanescent mind further illustrates this division between a body and a mind. Therefore, Murphy embodies the difficulty of apperception, or the problem of existing on two planes of awareness at once, and the resulting dissonance within the human psyche. In other words, Beckett's characters, along with Winston Smith, construct utopias within themselves by engaging in telling stories and writing chronicles as a distraction from the outside world. As utopia represents a reimagining of civilization, the character's stories allow them to imagine better circumstances and convey their experiences. Beckett's protagonists represent conscious existence more than

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<sup>95</sup>Beckett, *Murphy*, 111.

<sup>96</sup>Weller, *A Taste for the Negative*, 74.

<sup>97</sup>Beckett, *Murphy*, 109.

particular individuals and their writing is the only means they have to demonstrate their being. On a purely metaphysical level, Winston and Beckett's protagonists share many of the same manias and defects exacerbated by a hostile and incomprehensible physical world. London is a bleak and desiccated landscape for both Winston and Murphy but in different contexts.

Orwell sets out in the beginning of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to adumbrate the fictional attributes of Oceania but the novel is mainly concerned with Winston Smith and the affinities and activities of his individual consciousness.

The author of a utopia is expected to give his full attention to the elaboration of the social and political system he is describing; individuals are for him nothing more than miniature figures of human beings in landscape painting, the millions of soldiers of which great warriors dispose, the proles in *1984*. Why then should he [Orwell] care about one of them?<sup>98</sup>

Winston has no role in the management of Oceania but is just another cog in the wheel. Orwell concentrates on Winston's impotence as a powerless drone more so than with the inner workings of Ingsoc. The machinations of the various ministries that command Ingsoc are invisible and obscure to Winston. The lens that Orwell chooses places a diminutive nobody front and center, changing the societal focus to that of a trapped and confused automaton. Winston's attempts at rebellion appear feeble and cowardly in comparison with contemporary expectations for protest, but Winston loses his perspective on the situation with which he is faced. He imagines that simply through his private writings and furtive assignments, he is setting in motion Big Brother's eventual downfall. In reality, his actions are easily monitored and gently encouraged as Winston steps unwittingly into his fate of dissolution.

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<sup>98</sup> Robert Plank, *George Orwell's Guide Through Hell: A Psychological Study of 1984* (San Bernardino: The Borgo Press, 1986), 86.

From the perspective of Winston's manipulators, his inner rebellion is more threatening than a show of force and one of the most important components of Orwell's dystopia, one that would become synonymous with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is what he named Thoughtcrime. "He [Winston] had committed—would still have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper—the essential crime that contained all others in itself. Thoughtcrime, they called it. Thoughtcrime was not a thing that could be concealed forever."<sup>99</sup> Winston turns against Big Brother's regime first in his own mind. This simple act, otherwise a relatively unimpressive action against despotism, begins Winston's journey into revolt and into the waiting arms of the Thought Police. He turns away from the Party, his only connection to society, and hides himself in an inner refuge. Winston's problem is that he lacks imagination and the necessary intuition that would guide him to the truth. The motive of Ingsoc is deliberate obfuscation and he is not even sure of his own age because "he did not know with any certainty that this *was* 1984. It must be round about that date, since he was fairly sure that his age was thirty-nine."<sup>100</sup> This confusion of time is coupled with his unreliable memory. Winston fails to recall any "childhood memory that should tell him whether London had always been quite like this. ... But it was no use, he could not remember: nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible."<sup>101</sup> Winston is wandering in a fog, cut loose from time and place. He attempts to solidify his presence and come to an understanding of his surroundings without hope of any confirmation. His rebellion is doomed but he accepts the necessity of attempting it. "There is no possibility that any perceptible change will happen within

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<sup>99</sup>Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 105.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 91.

our own lifetime. We are the dead.”<sup>102</sup> Winston severs his ties with the Party in secret but his time is limited before he is discovered. He is physically alive through the last page of the novel yet his extermination is inevitable from his first instance of Thoughtcrime. While his defeat and ultimate death are unavoidable, Orwell allows Winston a paradoxical escape inward.

Winston’s mental escape from Ingsoc is hinted at by Orwell through a glass paperweight that Winston finds in a junk shop. As Winston puzzles over this rare and seemingly worthless object he detects another world. “Winston had gazed into the heart of the paperweight, with the feeling that it would be possible to get inside that glassy world, and that once inside it time could be arrested.”<sup>103</sup> Winston finds an imaginary place within the magnified glass where the outside world can be forgotten. Robert Plank suggests that the lack of inherent worth in the paperweight provides its function. “There is nothing that he will ever do with it except gaze at it, and it does nothing to him except induce reveries.”<sup>104</sup> By projecting his imagination into the glass world, Winston fortifies his dreams of escape by imagining a placid state of disembodied existence. Plank comments that to the average psychologist “the glass globe would be nothing but a symbol of the maternal body, expressing Winston’s longing to return to his mother’s womb, into that hollow sphere where peace rules, where no impulse can disturb, and where all dangers from without are banished.”<sup>105</sup> This globe of glass contains a space into which Winston can project his consciousness without being disturbed, much like Murphy who values his rocking chair, ordinarily not a special piece of furniture, as a

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>104</sup> Plank, *George Orwell’s Guide Through Hell*, 42.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 51.

means of transportation to escape the phenomenal world and enter his realm of mind. In both examples the protagonist renounces the comforts of the material world in favor of a comforting imaginary place or no place, setting consciousness adrift on a sea of nothingness.

The interesting quality that Winston's paperweight has is that this "cherished object is made of glass, and an outstanding quality of glass is that it breaks. Having accompanied its owner in life, it does so in death. Its breaking coincides with his."<sup>106</sup> This quality of the glass is symbolic of the fragility of Winston's mind, especially when O'Brien begins his deconstruction of Winston's autonomy. The fact that the globe breaks, as Winston ultimately must, represents the feebleness of this mental rebellion. Memory is also fragile and the only record of the past that Winston will ever know. The paperweight is also connected to history as it contains a piece of coral that is "a little chunk of history that they've forgotten to alter."<sup>107</sup> Once the paperweight is broken Winston is surprised by how small it actually is and Mr. Charrington, revealed as an undercover agent, demands that one of Winston's captors gather up the pieces. The coral encased within the glass undergoes the obfuscation Winston experiences through magnification, reflecting the ease with which perspective can be employed to distort scale.

Just as Winston has his paperweight, Murphy has his rocking chair. *Murphy* initiates a progression in Beckett's *oeuvre* that concentrates less and less on the without and focuses more and more on the within. In the novel, Murphy binds himself "naked in his rocking-chair of undressed teak, guaranteed not to crack, warp, shrink, corrode, or

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>107</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 224.

creak at night. It was his own, it never left him.”<sup>108</sup> He does this because it makes him happy and it is not until his body is still that he can come alive in his mind. The chair accompanies Murphy, even into the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat where he meets his end in an accidental fire. The rocking chair is a means of transport between worlds for Murphy yet there is no concrete evidence as to whether the chair is destroyed. However, since Murphy’s death results from burns, the chair is more than likely consumed by the fire along with him since Murphy is in his chair just as the “gas went on in the w.c.”<sup>109</sup> Once again, as with the paperweight’s inherent fragility, a wooden chair may be guaranteed against cracking, shrinkage, and warping but not against fire.

The rocking chair is an apparatus that allows Murphy to escape his perception but everything outside of him is still inextricably tied to him. This prevents Murphy from any real escape and explains the reason for his friends, or mirrors, to constantly seek him out. Eric Levy posits that “Murphy is located at the centre of concentric closed systems which, one and all, reflect him.”<sup>110</sup> As in the philosophy of Leibniz, all other characters, or monads, reflect one another but Beckett places Murphy at the center, instead of God, and what Murphy sees reflected in Mr. Endon’s eyes is his own emptiness. “The last Mr. Murphy saw of Mr. Endon was Mr. Murphy unseen by Mr. Endon. This was also the last Murphy saw of Murphy.”<sup>111</sup> Murphy is an empty void at the center of an empty system. He relies on the reflections of those around him to define his outer reality. The reflection of nothing Murphy sees in himself ultimately draws the others closer to him. This theme

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<sup>108</sup> Beckett, *Murphy*, 1.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>110</sup> Eric P. Levy, *Beckett and the Voice of Species: A Study of the Prose Fiction* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1980), 18.

<sup>111</sup> Beckett, *Murphy*, 250.



of reflections recurs in Beckett's early French stories, like *The Calmative* (1946). The protagonist tells himself a story while he waits for a sedative.

[I]t's to me this evening something has to happen, to my body as in myth and metamorphosis, this old body to which nothing ever happened, or so little, which never met with anything, loved anything, wished for anything, in its tarnished universe, except for the mirrors to shatter, the plane, the curved, the magnifying, the minifying, and to vanish in the havoc of its images.<sup>112</sup>

The protagonist wishes for a physical transformation and here the reflection connotes the outer physical body seen in a mirror, the recognition of which is a primary signifier of personal identity. Therefore, changes in the outer aspect of the individual cause the characters to become disconnected from their physical selves. Levy connects this portion of the text to a destruction of individual identity "where the narrator expresses the aim to shatter the unity of his physical identity into a universe of fragmentary reflections."<sup>113</sup> To put it another way, the reflection contains nothing except a physical image that can be recognized by its owner. Beckett's shattered mirror alludes to an empty vessel or one who no longer recognizes. However, the identity is connected with the outer world and the intention behind breaking the mirror is to shatter the identity, releasing the subject from differentiation in the physical realm. The search for nothingness leads to the realization that all outward appearances must be denied and turning within leads one into the void of the unconscious. As in *Murphy*'s case, the individual becomes lost when he ceases to reflect. The mirror reflection also ties the mind to the body through the identification of the features reflected.

Orwell uses reflection in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in this way when O'Brien reminds Winston of his physical decline and lack of substance. His body is already in a state of

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<sup>112</sup>Beckett, *The Calmative* in *The Grove Centenary Edition Volume IV*, 263.

<sup>113</sup>Eric P. Levy, *Trapped in Thought: A Study of the Beckettian Mentality* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 39.

utter degradation and he suffers outwardly at the beginning. He has an enflamed ulcer on his ankle and a persistent cough. However, once in the bowels of the Ministry of Love, Winston undergoes a horrifying bodily transformation. Winston is destroyed mind and body but attempts to hold on to any identifiable traits of himself within the Ministry of Love's dungeons. He holds tightly to his memory but, before he is broken in Room 101, he is invited to view the nightmare of his own reflection. "He had stopped because he was frightened. A bowed, gray-colored, skeletonlike thing was coming toward him. Its actual appearance was frightening, and not merely the fact that he knew it to be himself."<sup>114</sup> Winston's appearance in the mirror is frightening because it does not resemble his memory of his own visage. From this point on, Winston's identity is shattered and forever lost. His outer appearance has been degraded to such a degree as to be unrecognizable. He has become disconnected from his physical identity and the trauma of this event foreshadows his total collapse. An unrecognizable reflection entails the loss of identity and initiates a move away from the body and dystopia. Winston's very being has been erased, along with his diary, effectively destroying his self-consciousness.

The individual's narrative independence is established through his attempts to record perception on paper as a reminder of the novelist at work. As Beckett began writing fiction in French, his focus shifted from a classic novel form to a concentration on first-person perception with narrative relegated to an activity that elevates the writer. As Raymond Federman suggests "as Beckett frees his creations and allows them to relate their own experiences in the first person, even though these experiences may be totally

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<sup>114</sup>Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 345.

false, the characters escape the overpowering control of the omnipotent creator.”<sup>115</sup>

Actively creating a convincing human consciousness on the page, Beckett allows for this mind to create its own narrative to reflect creative failure. The stories told are, admittedly, improvised and lack any force or discernible progression. “Beckett’s people begin and end their fictional journey at the same place, in the same condition, and without having learned, discovered, or acquired the least knowledge about themselves and the world in which they exist. Theirs is a journey without beginning or end, without purpose or meaning.”<sup>116</sup> These stories are best described as interludes in which the fiction becomes conflated with the character and his circumstances. The writers are not writing to entertain the audience, they are writing for themselves. They resemble Winston in his first attempts to record things in his journal before he becomes more adept at forming his ideas into words. The problem for both Beckett’s protagonists and Winston is a general distrust of language. In Winston’s case the meanings of language are being constricted to limit thought while Beckett’s characters lack the words to express the ephemeral aspects of nothingness. The characters are not illiterate but they tend not to trust the meanings of words as given. They are forced to rely on their imperfect abilities in language and a faulty memory merely exacerbates the narrator’s confusion. In Winston’s world, words and their meanings are being excised to insulate the population from foreign sentiment. Beckett’s characters have personal attachments to words and confuse meanings which reinforce their insularity. “I spoke, I must have spoken, of a lesson, it was pensum I should have said, I confused pensum with lesson.”<sup>117</sup> Beckett

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<sup>115</sup> Raymond Federman, *Journey to Chaos: Samuel Beckett’s Early Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 183.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>117</sup> Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable* in *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, 310.

illustrates the elasticity of meaning in *The Unnamable* through the narrator's difficulty with expressing the inexpressible. The very nature of language, rife as it is with double meanings and paradox, poses considerable difficulty for confused storytellers faced with an untrustworthy medium in which to create.

Winston begins his diary without knowing what he intends to say or how to record his thoughts in an organized fashion. He begins simply with a jumbled telling of his most recent evening out, until he begins to recognize the importance of his actions.

To the future or to the past, to a time when thought is free, when men are different from one another and do not live alone—to a time when truth exists and what is done cannot be undone:

From the age of uniformity, from the age of solitude, from the age of Big Brother, from the age of doublethink—greetings!<sup>118</sup>

Winston attempts to ingratiate himself to an audience, though it is hopeless that his text will be read with empathy, and obviously he has little practice with this as his occupation demands that he employ Newspeak. Orwell was preoccupied with the degradation of language, to put it mildly. As propaganda became integral to the modern wartime society, the flexibility of language was pushed to the extreme. Idiom and colloquial usage became integral to the manipulation of language and were conflated with the concrete meanings of words. “The origin of such degradation was rooted in the self-perceived need of governments to present their horrible actions in a better light than they deserved.”<sup>119</sup> Newspeak is the official language of Oceania and it is presented as a constantly changing, pared down language to communicate only those ideas deemed conventional. In Orwell's view, political language is usually constructed of readymade phrases that “will construct your sentences for you—even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent—and at need they will perform the important service of partially

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<sup>118</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 113.

<sup>119</sup> Plank, *George Orwell's Guide Through Hell*, 83.

concealing your meaning from yourself.”<sup>120</sup> Orwell’s concern is that the degradation of language is connected to the inability to think clearly. Party members must understand the language according to the dictates of Ingsoc. Orwell also introduces contradiction into the names of the four Ministries of his society.

[T]he Ministry of Peace specializes in the massacre of prisoners of war; the Ministry of Love in the torture of political prisoners ... the Ministry of Plenty in the issuance of periodic communiqués announcing that certain rations have been raised, when in fact they have been cut; and the Ministry of Truth in lying (i.e., propaganda and the deliberate distortion and alteration of history).<sup>121</sup>

This conflation of ideas illustrates the importance of language’s effect on the mind’s ability to grasp certain concepts. The regime seizes the meanings of the language and the masses cannot understand the concepts of freedom and peace because there are no words to express these ideas in a straightforward, uncomplicated manner. Connotative and denotative meanings lose their distinction and become confused. The resulting language is consequently littered with compound words to stand in for outmoded phrases. For Orwell, the degradation of language consequentially led to the degradation of thinking.

In contrast, Beckett’s characters proceed by *aporia*, trying to express the inexpressible. *The Unnamable* begins with confusion as to how the narrator came to be in a world of imperceptible detail. “Perhaps I simply assented at last to an old thing. But I did nothing. I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me.”<sup>122</sup> The novel finishes in a similarly confused way “you must go on, I can’t go on, I’ll go on.”<sup>123</sup> The teller of this tale is frustrated with language and as pointed out in *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, the purpose of *aporia* in *Three Novels* is indifference, “the goal not

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<sup>120</sup> George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” *Horizon*, 1946 reprinted in *All Art is Propaganda: Critical Essays*, ed. George Packer (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2008), 280.

<sup>121</sup> Plank, *George Orwell’s Guide Through Hell*, 84.

<sup>122</sup> Beckett, *The Unnamable*, 291.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

nothing but impasse.”<sup>124</sup> Now language has taken on the qualities of the Democritean and Geulincxian quandary previously mentioned. Beckett focuses on interiority and also on duration given that any reading of an account is a dissection of language and its function. The characters seem to come alive within the pages, but their only activity is to struggle to understand why they are writing, who it is for, and where they are. The individual is alive as long as the text is being read and their identity and existence are tied to that act. According to Weller, in *Molloy* (1951) Beckett is identifying the human not as a rational animal “but, following Heidegger, the speaking being.”<sup>125</sup> Beckett’s later characters must write to exist or, to put it another way, they are detached from their physical identity and must continue to express their existence in words as they fade away. Unfortunately the act of creating through language demands the use of cliché and tired symbolism to retain meaning which is ultimately disappointing. “Saying is inventing. Wrong, very rightly wrong. You invent nothing, you think you are inventing, you think you are escaping, and all you do is stammer out your lesson, the remnants of a penum one day got by heart and long forgotten, life without tears, as it is wept.”<sup>126</sup> The effort of persisting is a purgatorial repetition of similar futile actions. The act of writing, for Beckett, is the burden of repeating the injunction that life implies witnessing phenomena while failing to understand them or to succeed in acting upon them. The resulting nightmare of senselessness intensifies the wretched nature of existence in dystopia.

Psychological discord is also a result of Winston’s main duty at the Ministry of Truth, which is to alter the historical record ensuring the Party’s control over the present.

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<sup>124</sup> C.J. Ackerley and S.E. Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader’s Guide to his Works, Life, and Thought* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>125</sup> Weller, *A Taste for the Negative*, 99.

<sup>126</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* in *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, 32.

Winston struggles with his own mental dissonance as he retains a memory of the changes he makes to records, but facing the monolithic edifice of the state, coupled with a lack of any printed evidence; Winston's memories lose all meaning. Winston is sure that his memories exist but he cannot prove that the events and things he recalls ever existed in reality. The evidence is destroyed through incineration in "memory holes" strategically located throughout Winston's workplace.<sup>127</sup> He dredges up fragments from the past in the nursery rhymes he hears from Mr. Charrington. Winston's search to complete the stanza and understand the rhyme in its original context is doomed, given that he cannot grasp the mindset of the time in which it was written, not to mention the bell towers and steeples are mostly destroyed. "He [Winston] is not happier when he finds the missing lines from the nursery rhyme. His search leads nowhere, but it must go on."<sup>128</sup> The collective purging of the historical record ensures the Party's survival. This pointless search for artifacts is a blind attempt to reconstruct the world in a broader sense, to give Winston the illusion of context. Winston finds an escape through time in the room above Mr. Charrington's shop where he and Julia meet. It has a stove and a double bed plus the window that looks out on the courtyard where a prole woman sings. "So long as they were actually in this room, they both felt, no harm could come to them. Getting there was difficult and dangerous, but the room itself was a sanctuary."<sup>129</sup> This archaic construct is a physical representation of Winston's desire to lose himself in a time without the hellish constraints of Ingsoc. He attempts to reconstruct history and his place in it by sifting through the debris of the modern world.

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<sup>127</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 122.

<sup>128</sup> Plank, *George Orwell's Guide Through Hell*, 27.

<sup>129</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 229.

Beckett's characters have a more distant relationship to the outer world of their bodies. Many of his characters carry keepsakes of dubious use and origin but they get incredible satisfaction out of repeated inventories. These artifacts have little inherent worth and, in the case of Malone, many are defunct or broken possessions like his body. These artifacts possess no information to unlock the past, they only represent the items they originally belong to but have disintegrated through time. Geulincx identifies the body as a machine, without which movement and thought both become impossible. "Without the 'machine,' even Geulincx's God would be a mindless imbecile."<sup>130</sup> The transcendence of Schopenhauer's concept of the Will by a human consciousness through a denial of the outer world produces an individual mechanism with no residual determinants of individuality. The complete freedom of such a consciousness lacks the persona of an individuated human being. In much the same way, Winston is a changed person at the end of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from his character at the beginning. He has been hollowed out in a psychological sense. He is a blank page upon which Big Brother inscribes the necessary ideals. Afterward, Winston becomes an automaton awaiting the final bullet in the back of his head while mulling over chess problems in the Chestnut Tree Café.

Both Beckett's and Orwell's works engage the metaphysical experience of nothing while trapping the characters within inescapable circumstances. While Orwell describes a war-torn city where the only escape is death, Beckett stages a similarly inescapable conundrum with *Endgame* (1958). In *Endgame*, Beckett develops a futile scenario within the confines of a house amidst some sort of cataclysm. "The world outside is dead. Some great catastrophe, of which the four characters in the play are, or

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<sup>130</sup>Weller, *A Taste for the Negative*, 79.



believe themselves to be, the sole survivors, has killed all living beings.”<sup>131</sup> When Hamm asks Clov to peer at the world without and comment on the condition of it, the only description Clov can manage is “Corpsed.”<sup>132</sup> The house has two windows, one faces seaward and the other toward a desolate landscape. Upon inspection the sea does not move, hinting that the tides have died. These scenes from the end of the world retain the wish for nothingness. The argument between Clov and Hamm remains as to whether Clov will leave and if he has anywhere else to go. Two ancient and legless parents live on in ash cans, having lost their legs while bicycling in the Ardennes and Hamm, immobile and blind, resides in a chair on castors. Clov, the only character capable of locomotion, cannot sit down. These characters simply remain rather than inhabiting the space.

The space is bereft of decoration, save a portrait turned to the wall. “After the Second World War, everything, including a resurrected culture, was destroyed, although without its knowledge. In the wake of events which even the survivors cannot survive, mankind vegetates, crawling forward on a pile of rubble, denied even the awareness of its own ruin.”<sup>133</sup> Amidst this refuse of culture and familial obligation the question remains the same, whether it is better to go on as before in a hellish place or to pursue nothing.

CLOV: Why do you keep me?  
 HAMM: There’s no one else.  
 CLOV: There’s nowhere else.  
 HAMM: You’re leaving me all the same.

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<sup>131</sup> Martin Esslin, “Samuel Beckett: The Search for the Self,” in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Edited by Bell Gale Chevigny (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 22.

<sup>132</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 106.

<sup>133</sup> Theodor Adorno, “Towards an Understanding of *Endgame*,” in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 85.

CLOV: I'm trying.<sup>134</sup>

The individual limps onward with what is left of the species in an attempt to escape the weight of perception. Martin Esslin draws attention to the pronounced presence in the play of “the sense of deadness, of leaden heaviness and hopelessness, that is experienced in states of deep depression: the world outside goes dead for the victim of such states, but inside his mind there is ceaseless argument between parts of his personality that have become autonomous entities.”<sup>135</sup> The play has been interpreted literally as the last humans huddling within the last shelter and figuratively as the battle between the body (Clov) and the mind (Hamm) or between the conscious and the unconscious. As Adorno points out “Beckett’s archetypal images are historical: what is “typically human” are the deformations inflicted upon human beings by the form of their society.”<sup>136</sup> Beckett’s representations of perpetually shabby people struggling to place themselves reveal what is truly human by stripping away the finery of culture to reveal the remnants of humanity left lying beneath the surface. The resulting dour assessment of experience offers little consolation other than renunciation.

As Wylie states in *Murphy*, “while one may not look forward to things getting any better, at least one need not fear their getting any worse. They will always be the same as they always were.”<sup>137</sup> The individual is doomed, life will continue to be just as bad as it has always been, and all these actions of characters are futile in the face of existence, let alone within a despotic police state. With bleak yet sharp vision, both Beckett and Orwell bravely approach the boundaries of culture and consciousness to unearth the

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<sup>134</sup> Beckett, *Endgame* in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, 95.

<sup>135</sup> Esslin, “Samuel Beckett: The Search for Self,” in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame*, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny, 28.

<sup>136</sup> Adorno, “Towards an Understanding of *Endgame*,” in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame*, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny, 97.

<sup>137</sup> Beckett, *Murphy*, 58, 201.

primal instincts that still form human identity regardless of what technology may hold in store for the future. Human beings can only be distracted and manipulated for so long before, through sheer desperation, they will be forced to recoil or rebel. Beckett and Orwell underline the importance of psychological factors within dystopia and how the utopian model is filtered through the consciousness to become dystopia. While the elitist minds of the world retain their place at the right hand of power, the individual is destroyed upon the anvil of progress. As that destruction takes place, the individual psyche takes refuge within and offers up a narrative of hope and resistance without finding any answers to explain his plight. In the next chapter it remains to be seen how Anthony Burgess adapts the discrepancy between Orwell's and Huxley's prototypes to construct a literary taxonomy of dystopia by replacing the titles *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with Pelagian liberalism and Augustinian conservatism and illustrates the cyclical flux between these poles of political doctrine.

### Chapter 3: Cyclical Cacotopias

Both Beckett and Orwell share a sense of the worthlessness of existence when faced with the weight of living in the modern world. Orwell envisioned a wasteland based on London after the Germans had bombed parts of the metropolis to smithereens. To the reader in the nascent era of the bomb shelter, the landscape of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, like that of *Endgame*, suggests a portrait of the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. The detonation of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki sparked the Atomic Age, leading to the Cold War. As the task of rebuilding Europe began after the destruction of the Second World War, the horror of the atrocities committed during this conflict came to light and further dulled the nerves of a society already suffering from intense shock. This numbness was soon replaced by a pervasive sense of fatalistic dread as the remaining world powers geared up for mass annihilation. Anthony Burgess connects this threat of annihilation with a cultural shift toward dystopia.

“When did the twentieth-century nightmare begin?”<sup>138</sup> Burgess opens his third dystopian study *1985* (1978) with this question. He answers “1945, when, for many people, it seemed to have ended.”<sup>139</sup> Burgess suggests that the horror of the first two world wars was only a prelude to this later nightmare. Orwell also predicted that the destructive technology behind the atomic bomb would prove detrimental to the cultural landscape.

So we have before us the prospect of two or three monstrous super-states, each possessed of a weapon by which millions of people can be wiped out in a few seconds, dividing the world between them. It has been rather hastily assumed that this means bigger and bloodier wars, and perhaps an actual end to the machine civilisation. But suppose—and really this is the likeliest development—that the surviving great nations make a tacit agreement never to use the atomic bomb against one another? Suppose they only use it, or the threat of it, against people who are unable to retaliate? In that case we are back

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<sup>138</sup> Anthony Burgess, *1985* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1978), 3.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

where we were before, the only difference being that power is concentrated in still fewer hands and that the outlook for subject peoples and oppressed classes is still more hopeless.<sup>140</sup>

After World War II, the only countries still able to wage war on a large scale were the three world powers: the United States, Russia, and possibly China. Orwell's prognostication of two or three monstrous ideological "super-states" competing for dominance manifests itself in the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and also in Burgess's *The Wanting Seed*. Burgess's dystopian writing is heavily influenced by Orwell's model as well as being inspired by a sense of Cold War paranoia. Burgess countenanced the developments of the 1950s in his dystopias, and they carry Orwell's ideas into the second half of the century. Anthony Burgess codifies Orwell's dark vision of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as the archetypal modern dystopia by utilizing Orwell's totalitarian model of an oppressive autocracy in an unfriendly landscape as a dystopian framework while developing a literary taxonomy of the dystopian paradigm.

Huxley, Orwell, and Beckett all occupy firm positions within modernism while Burgess's work spans a slow shift in aesthetic values from modernism to postmodernism. The postmodern theorist Fredric Jameson classifies the period after 1945 as late modernism. "Late modernism is a product of the Cold War, but in all kinds of complicated ways. Thus, the Cold War spelled the end of a whole era of social transformation and indeed of Utopian desires and anticipations."<sup>141</sup> The awareness of a possible fate for the world worse than the aftermath left by World War II irrevocably altered the utopian ideal, turning it into a dark social nightmare. Burgess recognizes this

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<sup>140</sup> George Orwell, "You and the Atom Bomb," *Tribune*, 1945, reprinted in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950 Vol. IV*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 8.

<sup>141</sup> Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), 165.

change and expands the scope of Orwell's modernist dystopia. "Burgess's output during the early 1960s embodies the wider social and cultural shift from modernity into another, more unconventional, stage: late modernity."<sup>142</sup> Burgess brings dystopian thinking into the Cold War era, and directly inherits Orwell's position. With novels like *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed* (both published in 1962) Burgess adopted specific Orwellian tropes, like the corruption of language, and explored the implications of various contemporary developments. He recognizes the range of dystopia and the ends of the scale established by Huxley and Orwell. Burgess illustrates the open disagreement between these views but devises a cyclical movement between dogmas to encompass two views of human nature based upon the figures of Pelagius (ca. 355-ca. 425) and St. Augustine (354-430).

Burgess's primary innovation within the dystopian genre is this cycle of two opposing ideas of government: the Pelagian and the Augustinian. "The association of the thought of Augustine and Pelagius with particular political paradigms is far from confined to Burgess, although his recounting of the cyclical pattern is distinctive."<sup>143</sup> The spectrum between opposing views of dystopian societies as exemplified by *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is reinterpreted as a vacillation between moral extremes. The figures of Augustine and Pelagius represent opposing views of human nature and illustrate the disagreement over the fallen nature of man according to scripture and Augustinian doctrine. "The forces that contend for governmental mastery are labeled "Pelagian" and "Augustinian," but they are more obviously Rousseauvian and

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<sup>142</sup> Peter Hughes Jachimiak, "Putting the boot in: *A Clockwork Orange*, post-'69 youth culture and the onset of late modernity," in *Anthony Burgess and Modernity*, ed. Alan R. Roughley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 148-9.

<sup>143</sup> J'annine Jobling, "Human nature, sin and grace in *The Wanting Seed*," in *Anthony Burgess and Modernity*, ed. Alan R. Roughley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 42.

Hobbesian.”<sup>144</sup> Geoffrey Aggeler argues here that the labels have been drained of any religious significance and represent social views of human nature embodied by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Hobbes. These figures are not the only two hinted at by Burgess but Aggeler uses them as generic labels for liberalism and conservatism. According to Andrew Biswell, while Burgess was in Gibraltar with the British Army he met a “Spanish-American soldier” who introduced him to the idea of equating Augustinianism with “political conservatism” and Pelagianism with “liberalism and socialism.”<sup>145</sup> By secularizing these views, altering the focus from an ecclesiastical context to a political one, Burgess constructs a cyclical movement of civil authorities in his future societies. In a state of Pelagian liberalism, a hedonist society falls into a destructive Interphase and from there into a stage of Augustinian conservatism. This model, developed most fully in *The Wanting Seed*, undergirds all of Burgess’s dystopias. The consensus at which Burgess arrives is on the side of the Augustinian conservatives and humanity’s innately flawed nature. Permissive Pelagian societies are doomed to regress into these authoritarian states of tyrannically invasive government authority. This idea evolves slightly but remains nearly unchanged under the surface of *A Clockwork Orange* and is explicitly outlined in *The Wanting Seed*.

Burgess also perceives the difference in tone between Huxley’s anti-utopia and Orwell’s much darker creation. In the first half of *1985*, Burgess resurrects an obscure term to describe the specific nature of the gloomier future vision: Cacotopia, or “a place

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<sup>144</sup> Geoffrey Aggeler, *Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist* (University: The University of Alabama Press, 1979), 162.

<sup>145</sup> Andrew Biswell, *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess* (London: Pan Macmillan Ltd., 2005), 104-5.

where all is evil.”<sup>146</sup> Explaining this term, Burgess recognizes his kindred view with Orwell. In 1985 Burgess refers to Orwell’s vision of the future as “an apocalyptic codex of our worst fears.”<sup>147</sup> Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is, for Burgess at least, a Rosetta stone of truly archetypal dystopian structures and concepts for such an imagined society. Burgess goes on to say that the terms eutopia and dystopia both fall under the general term utopia and, as a result, “I prefer to call Orwell’s imaginary society a cacotopia—on the lines of cacophony or cacodemon. It sounds worse than dystopia.”<sup>148</sup> Burgess, then, attempts to reframe Orwell’s creation as something original and distinct from the muddle of other anti-utopias or dystopias. In essence, Orwell becomes a signifier of change in dystopian thinking after World War II because what he presents is a much more sinister model of a civilization ruled by fear, emphasizing coercion and sadism. Furthermore, what Burgess sees in Orwell is an Augustinian ally.

The Wellsian future is derided in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*—a clean, innocent vision of a world full of Hellenic (or Mussolinian) architecture, rational dress and labour-saving devices, in which reason is in control and such base emotions as a lust for power and the exercise of cruelty are rigidly kept under. Had Orwell really been an Anglican rector, he would have known the term to use for describing it. He would have said that the rational society, with scientific socialism triumphant, was “Pelagian.”<sup>149</sup>

Where Wells, and later Huxley, imagined a rational future world based upon the primacy of science and reason, and the idea that humanity cannot be both free and happy, Orwell instead concocts a sadistic dungeon of tortures for the human psyche created from humanity’s own baser instincts. Orwell surpasses previous dystopias because he derives the true aggressive nature of humanity from the evident cruelty of modern warfare. The fierce brutality on display in the first half of the twentieth century leads Orwell to

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<sup>146</sup>This definition comes from an essay by Patrick Parrinder, “Updating Utopia? Burgess’s Future Fiction,” *Encounter* 56.1 (January 1981), 45-53. Excerpts reprinted in the Norton Critical Edition of Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1962), 265.

<sup>147</sup> Burgess, 1985, 48.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 52.



reassess human nature. As Freud suggests, “men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness.”<sup>150</sup> So if sadism and violence are in humanity’s nature, this quality cannot simply be dismissed on the basis of faith in moral progress. There is sexual pleasure that humans get out of cruelty to others and especially, as suggested by Burgess, within a society that is at great pains to eliminate the orgasm like Orwell’s Oceania. Perhaps it is for this reason that Burgess chose the connection between sadism and pleasure as the primary focus of his first dystopian novel, *A Clockwork Orange*.

*A Clockwork Orange* is Burgess’s most popular novel and possibly the most ambiguous. There is no set ground for the narrative, the city is not identified as London or any other specific place, but most readers would guess it takes place in a large modern metropolis in either Britain or North America. The societal structure is not adumbrated in terms of political dogma and governmental structure but the cycle of extremes is insinuated by changes that affect the protagonist, Alex. As in Beckett’s later works, the narrative is told from the perspective of the protagonist, in this case a youth bent on destruction as his only form of creative outlet. As the book begins, it is evident that a liberal government is in charge and ineffective disciplinary measures of the state are in evidence by the proliferation of youth gangs and street violence. “The Pelagian-controlled government that is in power as the novel opens is responsible by its very laxness for the enormous amount of crime that occurs.”<sup>151</sup> Alex is only captured after murdering an old woman because his friends betray him, leaving him injured at the scene.

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<sup>150</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 94.

<sup>151</sup> Aggeler, *Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist*, 174.

After Alex's incarceration, a new and more aggressive government arises and begins taking a new approach to criminal behavior. This new "government accepts as axiomatic that order must be *imposed* and that its imposition will probably require some form of violent force. It is actually far less interested in suppressing crime than in simply maintaining stability and the appearance of order."<sup>152</sup> The Augustinian ideal of control has no qualms about instigating repressive strictures to control a population, unlike Pelagians who prize the freedom of choice.

Burgess combines two Orwellian devices in *A Clockwork Orange*; a focus on pleasure in cruelty plus an adapted motif of language degradation. Similar to Newspeak, Nadsat is the language of the young teen gangs who roam the city after dark looking for easy targets to rob and other gangs to fight. This invented language "is the jargon of rape, plunder, and murder veiled in unfamiliarity, and as such it works highly successfully."<sup>153</sup> The language is meant to be somewhat obtrusive to soften the blow of Alex's chronicle of youthful violence. The vocabulary of Nadsat is made up primarily of Russian words with a dash of Cockney rhyming slang thrown in with conversational English. The reader, forming an indirect and dissociative relationship with the language due to the substitution of Russian and Cockney, takes part in the joy of violence experienced by Alex and his *droogs* as Alex's actions are filtered through his warped consciousness. The substitution of unfamiliar words for common and evocative language softens the blow of violence as the horrific vocabulary of bloodshed is removed.

It most certainly softens the atrocities of the book. It is far simpler, for example, to read about a "krovvy-covered plot" or "tolchocking an old veck" than it is to settle into two

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>153</sup> Esther Petix, "Linguistics, Mechanics, and Metaphysics: *A Clockwork Orange*" in *Modern Critical Views: Anthony Burgess*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 88-9.

hundred pages of “blood-covered bodies” or “beatings of old men.” The author keeps his audience absorbed in the prolonged violence through the screen of another language.<sup>154</sup>

In addition to softening the impact of the violence perpetrated on others by Alex, Nadsat also reinforces the adolescence of the protagonist. Alex speaks in a heightened form of Nadsat when confiding his affinities to the reader. This consists of slang with a “profusion of infantilisms starkly juxtaposed with violence.”<sup>155</sup> Words like “eggiweggs” and “skolliwoll” instead of eggs and school sound more appropriate in the mouth of a toddler than that of a brutal and bloodthirsty hooligan. Alex’s infantile speech allows the reader to pity him when considering that the malevolent Ludovico technique is performed on someone so young.

Alex’s cruelty to those he “tolchocks” and violates is mirrored in the cruelty he suffers at the hands of Dr. Brodsky and Dr. Branom who implement the Ludovico technique. These two proponents of behavioral reform are tasked with curing criminals through aversion therapies and behaviorist conditioning. These reforms are at the behest of a freshly nominated conservative government that replaces the ineffective liberal faction. The newly appointed Minister of the Interior states the position of the new government. “Cram criminals together and see what happens. You get concentrated criminality, crime in the midst of punishment. Soon we may be needing all our prison space for political offenders.”<sup>156</sup> The new government intends to eliminate its competition by imprisoning dissidents which requires the enforced rehabilitation of the violent offenders presently in prison. The Augustinian conservatives view traditional disciplinary measures as fruitless and foresee a greater threat from the liberal intellectuals

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1962), 61.

who might destabilize the present government. As the Augustinian power becomes apparent, the social climate comes to resemble that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The police force begins to recruit from the street gangs; both Alex's old *droog* Dim and his enemies alike become police, as a way to establish preeminence through brutality, thereby assuring compliance.

Alex becomes personally embroiled in the clash between political ideals when the author F. Alexander, who was a victim of Alex in the past, attempts to use Alex as an example of government cruelty against the incumbent power. Alex has the desire to misbehave removed from his psyche which more or less robs him of any ability to make an informed moral choice. This method presupposes that Alex does not possess the ability to choose rightly. Therefore he must be made to choose rightly. One of Burgess's targets was the behaviorist B.F. Skinner and with the Ludovico treatment, Burgess illustrated the degenerative impact of enforced conditioning upon the human individual that turns Alex into a sub-human machine that reacts in opposition to physical revulsion. Burgess here explores the behaviorism previously intimated by Huxley, but it is examined through the sadistic lens of Orwell's oppressive state. Burgess's strategy of draconian conditioning emphasizes the idea that a conservative society's most dangerous enemy is the autonomous individual.

If an individual will not conform through societal pressures, then the only recourse is Augustinian force. "Strapped in a chair, he is forced to watch films of incredible brutality, some of them contrived and others actual documentaries of Japanese and Nazi atrocities during World War II."<sup>157</sup> This reference to history draws attention to a pertinent connection between Burgess's future and the postwar world. The films of

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<sup>157</sup> Aggeler, *Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist*, 174.

Japanese and Nazi war atrocities are potent images of cruelty used in Alex's conditioning. A direct bridge from the aftermath of World War II to the future of *A Clockwork Orange* suggests the direct development of social brutality as a result of liberal post-war leniency. Geoffrey Aggeler suggests,

[A] civilization has evolved out of a fusion of dominant cultures east and west of the Iron Curtain. This cultural merger seems to be partly the result of successful cooperative efforts in the conquest of space, efforts that have promoted a preoccupation with outer space and a concomitant indifference to exclusively terrestrial affairs such as the maintenance of law and order in the cities.<sup>158</sup>

The Augustinians hope to deprogram the propensity for violence by brutalizing the perpetrators of violence. The Skinnerian conditioning foisted upon Alex is a brutal repayment for his past crimes as it renders him a sub-human machine. Alex is tortured by the scientists and reduced to a helpless waif. Then his previous victims come back to haunt him one by one, victims becoming aggressors as they brutalize one who cannot retaliate. The violence directed at Alex reverses the dynamic between victim and aggressor so that Alex must love his attackers to escape nausea, much like Winston Smith with O'Brien in the bowels of the Ministry of Love. Alex is only capable of turning the other cheek as an automatic response to the sickness he feels in the presence of violence. However, Burgess permits Alex to return to his original state after he attempts suicide and, in the final chapter, Alex has the revelation that he finally wants to grow up and have a family. The cyclical structure of a return to an origin is a theme that also defines the structure of Burgess's next dystopia.

*The Wanting Seed* is far more explicit in constructing a simulacrum to illustrate the pendulum swing between Pelagian tolerance and Augustinian brutality. The narrative arc of the story progresses from a failing overpopulated "Pelphase" or Pelagian state,

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 170.

through a violent Interphase, and into a repressive “Gusphase” or Augustinian state. The lawless Interphase that arises from the dust of the laissez-faire Pelphase government is a necessarily murderous time when cannibal mobs diminish the population by preying on the unaffiliated and unprotected. The emergent Augustinian power reasserts order through drastically restrictive policies and invasive control. For Burgess, the constant tension between Pelagian and Augustinian ideals is not static but dynamic, which causes an ebb and flow from one extreme to another. “Burgess is intent on making the point that, human nature being what it is, an inevitable, endless alternation of Pelagian and Augustinian periods will occur, separated always by ghastly, violent periods of transition.”<sup>159</sup> As the Augustinian brutality becomes less utilitarian, Pelagian tolerance resurfaces, and completes the cycle. Much of the cyclical instability in Burgess is an illustration of paradox, similar to Orwell’s concept of doublethink.

To further illustrate the inherent double-sided nature of modern society, Burgess gives his protagonist Tristram Foxe a twin brother, Derek, who is both more conniving and more successful. As Tristram’s life and career worsen, Derek’s brighten. Derek pretends to be homosexual while carrying on a secret affair with Tristram’s wife. The Pelagian state gently encourages homosexuality and sterilization as means of discouraging families and high birth rates. “The rigid, mutually exclusive classification of humanity into raw masculinity and ultrafemininity has been seen as a source of psychic disorder.”<sup>160</sup> Huxley’s hedonistic yet prophylactic society is strictly heterosexual, which could be a further cause of unhappiness. Burgess recognizes that a liberal society allows for diversity but the adoption of homosexuality in *The Wanting*

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<sup>159</sup> John J. Stinson, *Anthony Burgess Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 49.

<sup>160</sup> Aggeler, *Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist*, 164.

*Seed* is, admittedly, more utilitarian than egalitarian. Derek convincingly carries on this subterfuge during the Pelphase but reinvents himself to take a high place in the emerging Augustinian system. Tristram understands the society on a fundamental level but has trouble navigating the various pitfalls of modern life.

Before the Pelagian state collapses, Tristram is a history teacher. This conceit, similar to Winston's position as a manipulator of history in the Ministry of Truth, gives Tristram a privileged understanding of the systems at work in the world. "But he [Tristram] knew; this was the end of the Pelphase: people were going to be made to be good."<sup>161</sup> Tristram's knowledge is similar, in fact, to Winston's memory of the change to all recent records when Oceania's enemy changes from Eurasia to Eastasia. "There was, of course, no admission that any change had taken place. Merely it became known with extreme suddenness and everywhere at once, that Eastasia and not Eurasia was the enemy."<sup>162</sup> Winston retains a memory of the alterations he makes, yet this memory lacks any basis of truth because any evidence of a change is destroyed. The destruction or obfuscation of history through the destruction of records will not suffice and, in the changeover from one phase to another, Burgess recognizes that there must be a concomitant purge of radicals and dissidents to maintain the sovereignty of the state. The nightmare world of *The Wanting Seed* owes much of its impact to Burgess's adoption of this and other Orwellian motifs.

The world of *The Wanting Seed* shares a tripartite structure with that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. "Burgess follows Orwell closely in setting up three superstates. Burgess calls his Enspun, Ruspun, and Chinspun, whereas Orwell had called his Oceania, Eurasia,

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<sup>161</sup> Anthony Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1962), 36.

<sup>162</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1945, 1949), 256.

and Eastasia.”<sup>163</sup> In addition to this structure, Burgess establishes further details that can be traced to Orwellian inspiration. Unlike Huxley’s World State, Orwell and Burgess do not envision states that issue intoxicants as a means of control. “The only intoxicant available these days was a pungent distillation from vegetable and fruit-peel. It was called alc, and only the lowest-class stomach could take it neat.”<sup>164</sup> This description resembles Orwell’s depiction of Victory Gin that “gave off a sickly, oily smell, as of Chinese rice-spirit.”<sup>165</sup> Similarly, the food in both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Wanting Seed* is synthesized, bland, and contains little in the way of nutrition. However, the poor state of the average diet in *The Wanting Seed* is due to overpopulation. After the Augustinian government rises to power, they begin a phony war to facilitate the disposal of undesirable elements in the population and the “corpses are sold to civilian contractors, who can the meat and sell it back to the state: this is ‘bully’, the meat staple of the population’s diet.”<sup>166</sup> Tristram discovers that the trenches his troops are led into are part of a contrived battlefield encircled by a large fence. He escapes the slaughter by playing dead, and flees to continue his journey in search of his estranged wife. In both *The Wanting Seed* and *A Clockwork Orange*, the protagonists are granted a reprieve from the dour fate of Winston Smith. Burgess uses the themes that he borrows as tools to examine dystopian ideas of his own.

Burgess returns to Orwell’s model in *1985*, part in-depth study of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and part fictional narrative of an alternate future. In this narrative Burgess envisions the trade unionism of Tugland, supplanting Orwell’s totalitarian socialism of

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<sup>163</sup> Stinson, *Anthony Burgess Revisited*, 48.

<sup>164</sup> Burgess, *The Wanting Seed*, 37.

<sup>165</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 92.

<sup>166</sup> Jobling, “Human nature, sin and grace in *The Wanting Seed*,” in *Anthony Burgess and Modernity*, ed. Alan R. Roughley, 41.



Ingsoc. Burgess constructs his narrative on a simple strategy of substitution, using *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a blueprint and replacing Orwell's designations with others illuminating facets of modern England. Instead of English socialism and tyrannical rule, Burgess's society consists of a tangled web of labor unions restricting production with constant strikes. A chaotic world divided by syndicalism forces history teachers like the protagonist, Bev, to become "Confectionary Operatives."<sup>167</sup> Abstract concepts are outlawed from education, the only aim of education being manufacturing. Where Orwell invents Newspeak as a language built for propaganda, Burgess substitutes Worker's English, which "represents the rationalization of a general pattern of proletarian language."<sup>168</sup> The official language rationally takes the form of what the dominant social class deems worthy. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s Oceania holds Goldstein responsible for betraying the Party and Burgess introduces the mysterious figure of Mizusako who is rumored to have preached "disinterestedness" while seeking to establish an underground university to subvert the syndicalist movement.<sup>169</sup> Young groups form into gangs that defy the syndicalism of Tueland by edifying themselves with the knowledge provided by a classical education. Like Winston, Bev knows that he cannot stand alone against the sheer edifice of the unions but he decides "I can at least be a martyr to the cause of freedom, and some day, perhaps not till I'm long dead, people will remember my name and perhaps make a kind of banner out of it and fight the injustice that the unions stand for."<sup>170</sup> Winston Smith has similar delusions of grandeur connected to his future status. Their search for recognition intensifies the individuality these characters represent.

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<sup>167</sup> Burgess, 1985, 119.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 143-4.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 134.

Daring to dream in this way makes the individual dangerous as a possible source of unrest that may destabilize the balance of power.

The threat to the Augustinian state is the individual and Burgess goes to great lengths to emphasize the general drift in modern culture toward emulation and conformity as socially valid behavior. Burgess reinterprets the essential oneness of the state in *1985* from Orwell's Stalinist model to a worker's paradise through the concept of trade unionism. Burgess satirizes the tangled labor struggles in England while examining the fluctuation between liberal and conservative governments. As John Stinson argues, Burgess supported the idea that Orwell was not writing about the future but is satirizing his own time and that likewise, "*1985* is a "melodramatization" of Britain in 1978, an already pitiable place soon, Burgess thought, to become even worse."<sup>171</sup> Orwell's hieroglyphic title is assumed to be a simple inversion of the year he wrote it, 1948, emphasizing its contemporary targets. Burgess shares Orwell's fear of the present containing the seeds of a distasteful future. "Many people fear freedom and wish to be relieved of its responsibilities."<sup>172</sup> The resulting conditions of such a future offer a more restrictive existence for the individual who must conform to the collective will.

The autonomous memory is restricted by a collective forgetfulness. Records or memories become disengaged from truth as truth is whatever the ruling party dictates. As the Orwellian archetype proposes, the confusion of memory suggests the possibility of psychic paradox. Orwell devises an end for Winston in which he is broken by a mental paradox on O'Brien's rack; the injunction that  $2 + 2 = 5$ .<sup>173</sup> Similarly, Alex in *A*

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<sup>171</sup> Stinson, *Anthony Burgess Revisited*, 62.

<sup>172</sup> Christopher Hitchens, "Why Orwell still matters," in *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*, ed. John Rodden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 204.

<sup>173</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 325-28.

*Clockwork Orange* self-consciously relates his perspective on violence during his days of violent indulgence and just as distinctly recounts the visceral reactions of his body during his treatment. His old impulses and memories of the things he loves most (sex, violence, and classical music) haunt his steps and become his torturers. Alex relays his inability to be the master of his own thoughts which traps the reader within his paralyzed mind. This method precludes Burgess from stepping out of his characterization to outline this society or indulge his audience with details other than those few facets of the world in which Alex takes an interest. As with Beckett's fiction, the captive mind is a hellish side-effect of dystopia stressed by writing the story as a personal memoir.

Alternately in *The Wanting Seed*, Burgess reverts back to a classic novel format similar to Huxley's novel of ideas. However, unlike in *Brave New World*, a shattering upheaval in an overpopulated and under-regulated society throws the survivors into a violent purge. Those who emerge rebuild the remaining population into an alternate Orwellian model. The chaos experienced by ignorant individuals is the result of forces beyond their comprehension. In reality, liberals and conservatives exchange places as dictated by the social climate and majority rule. For example, after World War II Winston Churchill was replaced by Anthony Eden as British Prime Minister due to changes of the majority mindset and national interest. Burgess introduces realism through the vacillation between opposed government dogmas, invalidating Huxley's imagined precarious balance of rationality. Two concepts of human nature vie for supremacy and in *The Wanting Seed* Burgess confirms himself as a part of the Augustinian camp. "Although Burgess believes man is capable of sweetness and should

not be turned into a piece of clockwork, he [Burgess] is no Pelagian.”<sup>174</sup> Orwell’s sinister and manipulative model of dystopia evinces recognition of humanity’s brutal unconscious nature and asserts the obvious necessity of a motive to rule. Burgess confirms human brutality and gives true fluid movement to an otherwise static form of government.

Yet Burgess does not invalidate the original concept of dystopia which is the end of history or a stagnant world locked into a perpetual cycle. Not only is dystopia a darker reflection of the perfectly managed society, this mirror reflects the true nature of a rigorously designed state that restricts individual growth and self discovery. Therefore, if individuals no longer seek to understand themselves in the context of their surroundings, they only retain substance and importance as members of the collective. The organism becomes the community where all personal interest is subject to the will of the state. Burgess’s model promulgates the illusion of change as the state changes its outward aspect by an alternation between two poles of conservative invasiveness and liberal leniency while the apparatus of government scarcely trembles. To clarify, the shift between two modes of government rule is more of a sideshow for the inhabitants than a social upheaval as Burgess illustrates, with Derek in *The Wanting Seed*, how those who rule rarely lose their place among the elite. The modern mind in these cyclical circumstances is faced with a nightmare of communal supplication to an endless succession of coercive government rule followed by a steady decline into entropy instead of a technological paradise of peace and prosperity. The promise of progress is Eden on Earth through technology and rational development. “Dystopic literature, by nature, does not present us with such a supposedly glorious conclusion to human endeavor ... the end

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<sup>174</sup> Aggeler, *Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist*, 176-7.

of history represents an exhaustion of hope, a recognition of the impossibility of progress or genuinely purposeful movement.”<sup>175</sup> Indeed, Huxley, Orwell, Beckett, and Burgess are in agreement that the promise of happiness in physical progress is a lie. So-called progress appears to have reached a promised apogee, when in reality paradise proves to be merely an inert system without innovation, development, or forward momentum.

The concerns of dystopia differ from one historical period to the next and reflect the fears of the contemporary individual. Technology wrought destruction upon the face of Europe, killing the utopian dream. Modernist authors looked toward the future pessimistically and saw little hope for humanity. Modernist dystopia is a portrait of a collective system failing to achieve a utopian balance between individual comfort and communal rigorousness.

Life, if you looked about you, bore no resemblance not only to the lies that streamed out of the telescreens, but even to the ideals that the Party was trying to achieve. Great areas of it, even for a Party member, were neutral and nonpolitical, a matter of slogging through dreary jobs, fighting for a place on the Tube, darning a worn-out sock, cadging a saccharine tablet, saving a cigarette end. The ideal set up by the Party was something huge, terrible, and glittering—a world of steel and concrete, of monstrous machines and terrifying weapons—a nation of warriors and fanatics, marching forward in perfect unity, all thinking the same thoughts and shouting the same slogans, perpetually working, fighting, triumphing, persecuting—three hundred million people all with the same face. The reality was decaying, dingy cities where underfed people shuffled to and fro in leaky shoes, in patched-up nineteenth-century houses that always smelled of cabbage and bad lavatories.<sup>176</sup>

Orwell’s vision is influenced by his experiences of poverty and wartime rationing yet he illuminates the shadowy realm between the utopian dream and the human reality. Due to fundamental flaws in human institutions designed to produce contentment, the future transforms into a bleak and shabby perversion of the utopian dream. If utopia is a human creation yet human nature is flawed, then how can humanity perfect society when we

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<sup>175</sup> Jobling, “Human nature, sin and grace in *The Wanting Seed*” in *Anthony Burgess and Modernity*, ed. Alan R. Roughley, 49.

<sup>176</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 156.

cannot even control ourselves? Where Thomas More's *Utopia* reveals the intellectual horizon and allows space for the dream of a perfect society, modern dystopia clarifies the bounds of physical reality and limits the scope of human achievement in the construction of ideal worlds. What begins in Huxley as an individual response to the Wellsian model of rational development concludes in Burgess with the affirmation that individual freedom cannot be confined within a progressive model. Orwell and Beckett confirm an even darker fate for the individual who is more likely to become less valuable in the future. Burgess and his cyclical vision reinstate hope to an otherwise hopeless vision of imposed harmony. "What he [Burgess] stands staunchly against in all three of his dystopian novels (and others) is any violation or abridgment of man's true freedom, particularly his freedom of moral choice, the essence and jewel of man's humanity."<sup>177</sup> While humanity may be innately flawed it is the right of every individual to have the option to choose the right and not have it forced upon them.

Burgess is a prolific creator of dystopias like Huxley, but perceives the unending value of Orwell's contribution. He recognizes the importance of carrying the genre forward, tailoring his novels to allude to earlier works while constructing a basic literary taxonomy of dystopian types. Burgess notices that what underlies the structure of a particular imagined society is the creator's opinion of human nature in relation to governing behavior. As humanity developed more comprehensive methods of self destruction from artillery to planes and ultimately to inter-continental ballistic nuclear missiles, the dystopian landscape advanced nightmare scenarios to illustrate and accompany these horrific developments. After Burgess, the individual aspects of dystopian literature have been diluted and subsumed into a new genre: Science Fiction.

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<sup>177</sup> Stinson, *Anthony Burgess Revisited*, 63.

During the 1960s, Science Fiction carried the dystopian message in many incarnations. Futurism, space exploration, extra-terrestrial encounters, artificial intelligence, overpopulation, and ecological degradation, to name a few, are the concerns of contemporary Science Fiction. Aspects of Huxley's and Orwell's paradigms are evident in the writings of Ray Bradbury, Philip K. Dick, Brian Aldiss, and William F. Nolan. In addition to literature, dystopia has become a fixture in cinema. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been adapted to celluloid twice while *A Clockwork Orange* was made infamous by Stanley Kubrick in 1971.

Orwell's dystopian tradition was extended with the 1985 release of Terry Gilliam's original film *Brazil*, a civilization obsessed with the movement of information and the activities of industrial terrorists. The ruling government is made up of an ineffectual central bureaucracy, the Ministry of Information or M.O.I., made up of the departments of Information Retrieval, Information Dispersal, Information Adjustments, and Records. This bureaucracy is the source of government oppression while Central Services is the capitalist purveyor of goods and services through a system of ducts imposed upon the drab architecture. They fail to deliver quality products and pipe mindless consumerism into homes through television advertisements. The film's setting is bleak; grey concrete walls covered in propagandistic posters bearing slogans like "Suspicion Breeds Confidence" and "Happiness, We're All in It Together."<sup>178</sup> This latter slogan appears humorously on a prominent poster showing a Norman Rockwell-esque painting of a 1950s era nuclear family happily driving their car through the countryside. Trench-coated police wearing chrome helmets and bearing tactical shotguns occupy the

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<sup>178</sup> Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, Charles McKeown, *Brazil*, Criterion Collection Blu-Ray, directed by Terry Gilliam (Los Angeles, CA: Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 1985).

cavernous lobbies of government buildings manning security checkpoints. Citizens suspected of subversion are abducted in paramilitary operations and processed like bovines through an abattoir.

Doomed and hopelessly romantic, the protagonist Sam Lowry escapes reality through vibrant dreams of freedom, soaring like Icarus through clouds on gossamer wings. He is ultimately dragged earthward by air conditioning trouble and maintenance snafus. Central Services Operatives destroy Sam's apartment at one point searching for signs of tampering. He is captured and charged with an inventory of offenses after attempting to circumvent regulations and cut through bureaucratic red tape. Sam is subsequently tortured into a neurotic coma in a chamber of horrors reminiscent of Room 101. While exhibiting Orwellian archetypes, Gilliam's preposterous lampoon of a centralized bureaucracy pushes the boundaries of dystopia even further to encompass the effects of popular culture and consumerism on the inhabitants. The grotesque cosmetic procedures undergone by Sam's mother Ida and her friend Mrs. Terrain demonstrate the distorted ideals of a surface-obsessed culture. Additionally, the dystopian dynamic has been disseminated in contemporary popular culture through the visual style and set design of films like this and others like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. The technique of these films consists of wide angle lenses that distort dark worlds of monolithic edifices where the individual is dwarfed by his surroundings.

In Fredric Jameson's later work on utopia, he questions the relevance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in a post Cold War context. "If Orwell's sad passion stands as a paradigmatic expression of the Cold War, has it become anachronistic in



globalization?”<sup>179</sup> While the dystopian model first designed by Orwell is mostly a social commentary of his own time, the novel has lost none of its impact. The dystopian formula may have been diluted and absorbed into a more popular genre but the original source of these ideas is still a very potent representation of collective tyranny still practiced in disconnected enclaves like North Korea. Orwell’s name is more often invoked in reference to an invasive totalitarian government controlling all aspects of individual life through incredibly repressive measures, than in reference to any of his other works. Christopher Hitchens comments that ‘in those regions of the world where the state retains not just the ambition but the power to enslave the citizen, Orwell’s work continues to be relevant in what one might call its original form.’<sup>180</sup> The original form he refers to would be a smuggled copy passed between revolutionaries. As social systems become more restrictive these dark fantasies gain more relevance and seem less remote.

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<sup>179</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), 201.

<sup>180</sup> Hitchens, “Why Orwell still matters,” in *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*, ed. John Rodden, 204.

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