

Orwell's *1984*: Rewriting the Future

Of the many ironies of *1984*, one of the neatest is the way in which the novel's protagonist, Winston Smith, serves as a model for Orwell's own procedures in writing the novel. Winston's occupation is rewriting news items to accord with changes in the society's political requirements. And it is the contention of this article that Orwell's procedure in *1984* is a calculated, conscious rewriting of the political futures predicted in earlier utopian and anti-utopian novels. The point is not to say that nothing is original in *1984* but to show the literary context in which Orwell was working and to indicate how he adapted and transformed its materials to achieve a bleaker vision than anyone before had ever managed.

For some time he had been noting down ideas for his projected novel. He wrote in 1944 to Gleb Struve, thanking him for a copy of *Twenty Five Years of Soviet Russian Literature* which had aroused his interest in Zamyatin's *We*, a novel, as he said, "I had not heard of before. I am interested in that kind of book, and even keep making notes for one myself that may get written sooner or later."¹ Various commentators have indicated "sources" for *1984*. But these are not sources in the sense of material to be borrowed, rifled, plagiarized or adapted. They are sources that are "corrected". Orwell is rewriting the utopian and anti-utopian novels to accord with his new vision of political possibilities. *1984* is the product of a critical intelligence that has ranged over previous political and utopian fiction and commentary. Its incidents are not simple narrative, but to a large extent the corrected versions of events and situations from previous works. They are less invented fictions than documentary incorporations. And the documentation has been tampered with, it has been "corrected". It is this that contributes largely to the characteristic tone of *1984*—the bleak sense of closedness, the dead-end, the total negativity. The details of the society, the images, the events of the narrative have no freedom for alternative development; the progressions are inexorable and remorseless. They have been assembled and reduced from the creative possibilities of other fictions, and shaped by an analytic intelligence so that their meanings and implications are totally controlled. Orwell's procedure is the opposite of that of

1 *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, 1968 (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970, 4 vols.), iii.118. (Hereafter referred to as *CE*)

the creative artist whose fictions are created organically and contain within themselves alternatives, contradictions, differing possibilities. The closed, static society Orwell has created is achieved in large part by the willed, reductive rewriting of earlier political fictions. These materials may be located readily enough from Orwell's discussion of them in his essays and journalism. The major ones are Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, Arthur Koestler's *Darkness At Noon*, H. G. Wells's *The Sleeper Awakes*, and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.²

The super-city is a recurrent projection for both utopian and anti-utopian writing. Edward Bellamy's technological, automated society in *Looking Backward* and H. G. Wells's version in *A Modern Utopia* have super-urbanization as an ideal. But the negative implications of industrial urbanization have produced their alternative fictions. Zamyatin and Huxley both created anti-utopias from industrial urbanization—Zamyatin's in a totalitarian society, Huxley's in a projection of a monopolistic capitalist society. In both *We* and *Brave New World* the mastery of technology has achieved commodity fulfilment, but their message is that man does not live by bread alone. The centralized control of the society offers satisfaction that cannot satisfy the individual free human spirit. Zamyatin's protagonist grows a soul and finds himself out of key with his society.

Orwell complained that Huxley's projection of "the whole world turned into a Riviera hotel" (*CE* ii.46) lacked any persuasive rationale. The rationale Huxley presents is a mixture of protected happiness and capitalist-industrial consumerism. The controller, Mustapha Mond, runs a society based on mindless happiness, on the exclusion of the disturbing, on the satisfaction of satisfiable needs and the exclusion of the unsatisfiable needs. But the impulse is not, as Orwell's comments might seem to imply, mere benevolence. There is a basic economic rationale—the encouragement of consumerism. The whole society is oriented to purchasing, throwing away and buying afresh. By conditioning

2 Orwell's comments on these works can be found in *Collected Essays* as follows: "Prophecies of Fascism", ii.45-9; "Wells, Hitler and the World State", ii.166-172; "Arthur Koestler", iii.270-282; "Review" of *We*, iv.95-9; "Politics vs Literature: an Examination of *Gulliver's Travels*", iv.241-61. Discussions of Orwell's use of his sources can be found in Isaac Deutscher, *Heretics and Renegades* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1955); Robert A. Lee, *Orwell's Fiction* (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1969); Irving Howe ed., 1984: *Text, Sources, Criticism* (Harcourt Brace, New York, 1963).

and by mnemonic slogans, everyone is encouraged to spend, to consume.

Behind this capitalistic ethic, however, is the happy assumption that there will be sufficient wealth for everyone to be able to consume. Orwell's contention in *1984* is that this will not be the case, and he totally inverts Huxley's society of mass-produced plenty into one of perpetual scarcity. Though he draws on and adapts features from both Zamyatin and Huxley, his major positive sources for the texture of the urban industrial world are H. G. Wells's *The Sleeper Awakes* and Jack London's *The Iron Heel*. Here the super-cities are the product of oppression, of serf and slave labour, of subsistence and starvation economies for the proletariat. Orwell has looked at and rejected the prediction of commodity fulfilment in Zamyatin's and Huxley's anti-utopias; he responds to their accounts of the circumscription of the individual life, but for his anti-utopia the circumscribed individual life is to be lived in physically and economically uncomfortable circumstances. He turns to the Wells and London projections, in which the societies are run for the benefit of the power élite and the workers are kept in their place not by conditioning but by force, by physical and economic oppression. It is here that Orwell finds his model for the treatment of the proles. He makes one further cruel twist; in *The Sleeper Awakes* and *The Iron Heel*, the oppressors are the industrial capitalists; in *1984* the oppressors are the party that operates in the name of state socialism, Ingsoc.

The societies of *We* and *Brave New World* are lacking in freedom and spirituality, but they offer physically comfortable conditions. In *The Sleeper Awakes* and *The Iron Heel* the comfort exists only for the capitalist élite. In *1984* even the Inner Party members do not live in great comfort, and the society shows none of the technological and architectural achievements of Wells's or London's oligarchies. Wells's vision of a glass-enclosed society with moving stairways, arching bridges, aerial transport—amazing predictions in 1899—is negated in *1984*. Jack London saw the super-city as the aim both of the socialist and the totalitarian capitalist societies. His socialists have a vision of a Bellamy-like future while the oligarchy uses its captive proletariat to build a super-city that the proletariat will gain no benefit from.

Ardis was completed in A.D.1942, while Asgard was not completed until A.D.1984. It was fifty-two years in the building, during which time a permanent army of half a million serfs was employed.³

3 Jack London, *The Iron Heel*, 1907 (Fitzroy edition, Arco, London, 1966), p. 199. All subsequent page-references are to this edition.

The date of the completion of Asgard makes a significant ironic comment in Orwell's title. Asgard is the high technological and artistic architectural achievement of the brutal oligarchic society whose "boot stamping on a human face" philosophy Orwell borrows, suitably adapted, for O'Brien. But whereas in *The Iron Heel* 1984 marks the year in which the oligarchy creates a monument to its efficiency by completing a super-city, in Orwell's *1984* the city is the old, unreconstructed city of the past, crumbling, collapsing, decaying. It has four modern buildings for the ministries of Truth, Peace, Love and Plenty, each "an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, 300 metres into the air".⁴ But the rest of the city consists of "vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions", together with bomb sites covered with weeds or "sordid colonies of wooden dwellings like chicken-houses" (pp. 6-7). Orwell has inverted the utopian and the anti-utopian predictions. His *1984* cityscape is not so much like 1984 Asgard as like 1948 London—the year in which he wrote the novel, and the transposition of whose last two numerals, it has often been claimed, provided his title.

The super-cities of Wells, Zamyatin, London and Huxley were all glistening future visions, triumphs of technology. In *1984* they are touchstones of what the future will not be like, touchstones of what Orwell saw as the naive optimism of earlier projections. But before considering why Orwell argues that these visions will not come true, we need to look at Jack London's explanation for why he believed they would. As the plutocracy comes totally to control the society, the surplus from its capitalist industries will increase and increase. The plutocracy will not redistribute this surplus amongst the populace; however, they have to find some way to expend the surplus. London has his protagonist, Everhard, predict

When the oligarchs have completely mastered the people, they will have time to spare for other things. They will become worshippers of beauty . . . It will be great art, I tell you, and wonder cities will arise . . . Thus will the surplus be constantly expended while labour does the work. (pp. 148-9)

London draws on historical precedent for his prediction, comparing the hideous future with the past of Babylon and the "way that

4 George Orwell, *1984*, 1949 (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1954, 1961), p. 7. All subsequent page-references are to the 1961 reprint.

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the ruling classes of Egypt long ago expended the surplus they robbed from the people by the building of temples and pyramids" (p. 149).

All that Orwell borrows from the detail of this is the 1984 date and the pyramidal shape and terraces of the four Ministry buildings. But he also shares London's basic premise that the surplus has to be expended, that the oligarchy will never distribute wealth equally but will find ways to consume the surplus while preserving poverty. And the way Orwell suggests they will act is the complete opposite of London's way; the surplus will be expended not in building but in destroying, not by creating new cities but by continual war. This is Orwell's rewriting of Jack London's future. And just as London has Ernest Everhard spell out the rationale for the future expending of the surplus (provoking Orwell's criticism that Everhard was like a "human gramophone"—*CE* ii.45), so Orwell has his inversion of this projection spelled out in theoretical detail. The words are given not to a character in *1984*, but to Emmanuel Goldstein's book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*:

The primary aim of modern warfare . . . is to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living. Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, the problem of what to do with the surplus of consumption goods has been latent in industrial society. In the early twentieth century, the vision of a future society unbelievably rich, leisured, orderly and efficient—a glittering anti-septic 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. (p. 153)

The vision of the glass and steel and snow-white concrete future world is always present in *1984* as a vision that has been eclipsed. But its aesthetic style does not derive from Jack London—who does not describe his future cities. London provided the fictional projection of Marx's theory of the surplus, which Orwell then turned into an ever bleaker, more negative, destructive vision.

For the physical details of the city we need to go to Zamyatin—who probably borrowed details from Wells, and probably provided detail for Huxley. It is Zamyatin's portrayal of the shimmering colours, the abstract modernist poetry in the technological and architectural products of his future society that lies

behind *1984*. The world of *We* was created satirically; the regimented, mathematical nature of the society is shown as oppressing the individual human spirit; but nonetheless Zamyatin presented the beauty of numerical abstractions. As fantasies of mathematical designers they are unsuitable for human use and life—but they are still appreciable as artistic abstractions:

But the sky! The sky is blue. Its limpidness is not marred by a single cloud. (How primitive was the taste of the ancients, since their poets were always inspired by these senseless, formless, stupidly rushing accumulations of vapour!) I love, I am sure it will not be an error if I say *we* love, only such a sky—a sterile, faultless sky. On such days the whole universe seems to be moulded of the same eternal glass, like the Green Wall, and like all our buildings. On such days one sees their wonderful equations, hitherto unknown. One sees these equations in everything, even in the most ordinary, everyday things.⁵

The satirical component is clear enough. But the aesthetic appeal of the ordered mathematical society is allowed and created; if it had no appeal, there would be nothing to satirize, after all; it would be self-evidently unappealing. And it seems that Orwell, too, recognized the appeal of this orderly futuristic world—that is the point of his denial of it in *1984*. The rationale for the detail of the *1984* world is the denial of whatever might seem appealing, the exclusion of any pleasant or attractive features.

But though there may have been some recognition of the appeal of this gleaming future world by Orwell, at the same time he had absorbed sufficient of the anti-utopian tradition to reject it. There is something of a Doublethink approach in his portrayal of the city. The exclusion of the gleaming white futuristic world serves to stress the negative features of the decaying, nineteenth-century ramshackle London. At the same time the four examples of this futuristic architecture are present to summon up the stock response of the totalitarian, menacing, brutal qualities of such buildings and the society they represent. There is a similar ambivalence about the decaying city; its ramshackle state is a negative quality, its oldness is not a sign of a tradition, of a valid past. But Orwell elsewhere does use old buildings to denote a good, liberal past now destroyed by totalitarianism. Like Huxley, Orwell sets his novel in London, and like Huxley draws certain of his effects from the discrepancy between the London they knew and the London they projected. Orwell has Big Brother mounted on Nelson's Column

5 Eugene Zamyatin, *We*, trs. by Gregory Zilboorg, 1924 (reissued 1959, Dutton, New York), p. 5. All subsequent page-references are to the Dutton paperback edition.

in a Trafalgar Square now renamed Victory Square. The renaming alludes satirically to the political renaming of Soviet cities—St Petersburg becoming Leningrad, and so on. But both Huxley and Orwell draw on the cosy, trivial effects of seeing the permanent landmarks of the English bourgeoisie transformed: Orwell has the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields turned into a “museum for propaganda displays of various kinds—scale models of rocket bombs and Floating Fortresses, wax-work tableaux illustrating enemy atrocities, and the like” (pp. 82-3). Huxley has his Westminster Abbey Cabaret with “London’s Finest Scent and Colour Organ. All the Latest Synthetic Music”.⁶ Huxley’s name games are primarily facetious (“the Arch-Community-Songster of Canterbury”) for all their easy satirical gestures. Orwell’s use of the device is sardonic and bitter. And for his largest stroke in this area, Orwell adopted Wells rather than Huxley. In *The Sleeper Awakes* Wells looked forward to flying machines ten years before aircraft existed, and drew on contemporary theory that aircraft would need “Flying Stages” for take-off:

The Flying Stages of London were collected together in an irregular crescent on the southern side of the river. They formed three groups of two each and retained the names of ancient suburban hills or villages. They were named in order, Roehampton, Wimbledon Park, Streatham, Norwood, Blackheath, and Shooter’s Hill.⁷

In this future totalitarian society with its centralized slave-based economy, London’s suburbs have vanished and have become mere “flying stages” for aircraft. In 1984, though the name of London survives, that of England is forgotten. “This was London, chief city of Airstrip One, itself the third most populous of the provinces of Oceania” (p. 6). Now the whole of England itself has become metaphorically a “flying stage”, an airstrip, for the world of perpetual war.

The drabness, decay and physical ugliness of 1984 have their further immediate sources in Orwell’s projecting the perpetuation of conditions in England during and immediately after World War II—houses shored up after bomb damage, lifts that won’t work, sinks that block—everyday breakdowns that are expanded into a total and seemingly irreparable condition. And he borrows too

6 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1932 (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1955, 1972), p. 67. All subsequent page-references are to the 1972 reprint.

7 H. G. Wells, *The Sleeper Awakes*, 1899, revised in *The Atlantic Edition of the Works of H. G. Wells* (Fisher Unwin, London, 1924), ii.356. All subsequent page-references are to this edition.

from accounts of conditions in Eastern Europe and Russia—drawing on Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* for Rubashov's bitter indictment of how conditions after the revolution are worse than before—an indictment lying behind Goldstein's account of the failure of the utopian vision, his comment that "the world is more primitive today than it was fifty years ago" (p. 153). Rubashov declaims to Ivanov

Acting consequentially in the interests of the coming generations, we have laid such terrible privations on the present one that its average length of life is shortened by a quarter. In order to defend the existence of the country, we have had to take exceptional measures and make transition-stage laws, which are in every point contrary to the aims of the Revolution. The people's standard of life is lower than it was before the Revolution; the labour conditions are harder, the discipline is more inhuman, the piece-work drudgery worse than in colonial countries with native coolies; we have lowered the age limit for capital punishment down to twelve years; our sexual laws are more narrow-minded than those of England, our leadership-worship more Byzantine than that of the reactionary dictatorships.⁸

Again, this "source" is not simply borrowed but critically reinterpreted and rewritten. Rubashov sees the reasons for the privations as "in the interests of the coming generations . . . in order to defend the existence of the country". No such motivations exist in *1984*. The future generations will certainly not be more comfortably off, probably they will be worse off; the continual war is not to defend the existence of the country—the three super-powers never make major onslaughts on each other—but to achieve and perpetuate these privations, to absorb surplus production for ever. And to absorb it in as negative, uncreative a way as possible.

Orwell is more concerned with squeezing a further negative twist from anti-utopias than with exposing utopias in *1984*. Utopias are inconceivable. Writing about Koestler, he remarked

As an ultimate objective he believes in the Earthly Paradise, the Sun State which the gladiators set out to establish, and which has haunted the imagination of Socialists, Anarchists and religious heretics for hundreds of years. But his intelligence tells him that the Earthly Paradise is receding into the far distance and that what is actually ahead of us is bloodshed, tyranny and privation. (*CE* iii. 280-1)

The Earthly Paradise is present in *1984* only as an absurdity. The visions of William Morris are cited only to be dismissed. Goldstein's book states

To return to the agricultural past, as some thinkers about the beginning of the twentieth century dreamed of doing, was not a

8 Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, trs. by Daphne Hardy, 1940 (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1947, 1964), pp. 129-30. All subsequent page-references are to the 1972 reprint.

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practicable solution. It conflicted with the tendency towards mechanization which had become quasi-instinctive throughout almost the whole world, and moreover, any country which remained industrially backward was helpless in a military sense and was bound to be dominated, directly or indirectly, by its more advanced rivals. (p. 154)

With a world picture of military aggression, a shift to a non-industrial society is for Orwell an impossibility. Urban industrial society is terrible, but there can be no alternative since urban industrial society creates military strength.

In *We* and *Brave New World* the natural, primitive rural life is presented as an alternative to the organized urban industrial society. Huxley's *Savage* offers an individualistic critique, but can make no impact on the society. In *We*, however, the rebels from behind the green wall infiltrate the society, find increasing numbers of allies, and at the end of the novel are presenting a serious challenge to the stability of the urban society. Zamyatin presents an untamed jungle world, excluded from the ordered society by a glass wall, "the green wall" through which its seething variety can be seen. He beautifully captures the magic of this natural world through the stumbling, traumatized perceptions of D-503:

From beyond the Wall, from the infinite ocean of green, there arose toward me an immense wave of roots, branches, flowers, leaves. It rose higher and higher; it seemed as though it would splash over me and that from a man, from the finest and most precious mechanism which I am, I would be transformed into . . . But fortunately there was the Green Wall between me and that wild green sea. (pp. 88-9)

Orwell borrows the structural opposition of urban society and natural freedom, and reduces and Anglicizes it. He had a strong tradition in English fiction, anyway, of opposing the city of corruption to the life-enhancing countryside; and the countryside he presents is southern English woodland, not the vital protean primitivism of Zamyatin. Yet without that primitive impulse, Orwell's countryside is a very inert, Edwardian pastoral:

Winston picked his way up the lane through dappled light and shade, stepping out into pools of gold wherever the boughs parted. Under the trees to the left of him the ground was misty with bluebells. The air seemed to kiss one's skin. It was the second of May. From somewhere deeper in the heart of the wood came the droning of ring-doves. (p. 96)

For a moment Orwell leaves it undamaged. Soon, however, we find that there may be concealed microphones and that the bluebells have a "faint sickly scent"; but it is one of the few areas of the novel left comparatively unscathed by Orwell's obsessive distastes. Julia and Winston visit it only once, however. Other times they make love in a deserted church tower which is "hot

and stagnant, and smelt overpoweringly of pigeon-dung" (p. 106), or in the seedy room over Mr Charrington's shop.

The countryside, Winston's recurrent dream of the "Golden Country", is a curiously fragile, undynamic image. It is a brief touchstone of nostalgia for a world of private relationships; but it has no active force in the opposition to the totalitarian regime. In contrast, Zamyatin's nature was a much more forceful, disturbing, living presence, forcing D-503 to question his assumptions:

The blunt snout of some unknown beast was to be seen dimly through the glass of the Wall; its yellow eyes kept repeating the same thought which remained incomprehensible to me. We looked into each other's eyes for a long while. Eyes are shafts which lead from the superficial world into a world which is beneath the surface. A thought awoke in me "What if that yellow-eyed one, sitting there on that absurd dirty heap of leaves, is happier than I, in his life which cannot be calculated in figures!" I waved my hand. The yellow eyes twinkled, moved back, and disappeared in the foliage. What a pitiful being! How absurd the idea that he might be happier! Happier than I he may be, but I am an exception am I not? I am sick. (p. 89)

It is from beyond the green wall that the conspirators come. It is the blowing-up of the green wall that lets in the forces that may undermine the society of *We*. Primitive nature bursts in, conditioned restraints break down:

The city seemed foreign, wild, filled with the ceaseless, triumphant hubbub of the birds. It seemed like the end of the world, *Doomsday*.

Through the glass of the walls in quite a few houses (this cut into my mind), I saw male and female Numbers in shameless embraces—without curtains lowered, without pink checks, in the middle of the day! (p. 205)

But Orwell's case is that the society of 1984 is permanent, immovable. He sees nature from that traditional, urban English standpoint—as a place for Sunday walks, not as a dynamic force. It is recreational parkland to catch a few fish in, not a repository of energy. The Party does not need to be shown to control nature in 1984—Orwell's own cultural conditioning has already discounted it.

So the magical challenging force of nature is rewritten from *We*. And there is another functional reason for the dismissal of nature as an alternative: Winston and Julia are the only two conspirators. In *We* there is an increasingly growing band of rebels who meet beyond the green wall. In *The Iron Heel*, the romantic pastoral hiding-place near Glen Ellen in Sonoma county is functional—the plutocracy is hunting down the socialists, who have to hide out in such surroundings. But with Orwell there is no

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primitive challenge from nature to encourage rebellion; and there are no rebels who need to seek out natural hiding-places.

Orwell's review of *We* makes no mention of the glass wall, of the vision of Nature that Zamyatin presents. What was a major term in Zamyatin's vision was unimportant to Orwell. Orwell did, however, remark on another of the major terms, sexuality. As Orwell summarizes the novel:

At stated intervals they are allowed for one hour (known as "the sex hour") to lower the curtains round their glass apartments. There is, of course, no marriage, though sex life does not appear to be completely promiscuous. For purposes of love-making everyone has a sort of ration book of pink tickets, and the partner with whom he spends one of his allotted sex hours signs the counterfoil. (*CE* iv.96)

As Orwell remarks, there are strong resemblances to *Brave New World*. Huxley takes the ration-book promiscuity further into a total freedom that becomes a total compulsion. "Everybody belongs to everyone else", "Orgy-Porgy" is institutionalized. And in the earlier anti-utopia of Wells, *The Sleeper Awakes*, there are explicit sex-shows on film, and "Pleasure Cities" offering luxurious guilt-free sexuality to the upper classes.

Orwell offers a total regressive opposite in his rewriting of these utopias. In 1984 promiscuity, though not technically illegal, is nonetheless punished by imprisonment; marriage is normative, though party members have to have their proposed marriage vetted for approval or disapproval; and within marriage sex is for breeding, not pleasure. If Orwell needed a source other than the expressed norms of English society, there was one in *Gulliver's Travels*. The Houyhnhnms, Orwell wrote in his essay on the book, practise strict birth control, each couple producing two offspring and thereafter abstaining from sexual intercourse. Their marriages are arranged for them by their elders, on eugenic principles, and their language contains no word for "love", in the sexual sense. (*CE* iv. 225)

Orwell believed that the Houyhnhnms were presented as an ideal, and it was an ideal that horrified him. He projects what such Houyhnhnm attitudes would be like in actuality in his account of the relationship of Winston and his wife, "the frigid little ceremony that Katharine had forced him to go through on the same night every week . . . 'Our duty to the Party'" (p. 109). The aim of the Party, O'Brien tells Winston, is to remove even the small amount of sexuality remaining:

No one dares trust a wife or a child or a friend any longer. But in future there will be no wives and no friends. Children will be taken from their mothers at birth, as one takes eggs from a hen. The sex

instinct will be eradicated. Procreation will be an annual formality like the renewal of a ration card. We shall abolish the orgasm. (pp. 214-5)

In *We* the sex instinct is controlled; in 1984 "the Party was trying to kill the sex instinct, or, if it could not be killed, then to distort it and dirty it" (p. 56). Consequently in both *We* and 1984 a fully sexual love affair is in opposition to the norms of the societies. Zamyatin beautifully captures the love of D-503 for I-330; and the strength of the portrayal is in the dynamic quality of the love: D-503 initially resists, fearful of the illegality of his behaviour; in love he is consumed by terrible jealousies; and ultimately the jealousy is something he adapts to, accommodates and transcends. The protean, dynamic, developing quality of the love is in contrast to the static quality of official sexuality in the society of *We*.

Orwell predictably seizes on the negative features. He borrows the promiscuity motif. D-503 is tormented by jealousy and tormented by the absurdity of this throwback to old styles of feeling—but nonetheless through the jealousies the poignancy of ancient romantic love is re-established. Orwell, however, turns the motif into a sex-hate eroticism:

Scores of times she had done it: he wished it had been hundreds—thousands. Anything that hinted at corruption always filled him with a wild hope. Who knew, perhaps the Party was rotten under the surface, its cult of strenuousness and self-denial simply a sham concealing iniquity. If he could have infected the whole lot of them with leprosy or syphilis, how gladly he would have done so! . . . "The more men you've had, the more I love you . . . I hate purity, I hate goodness! I don't want any virtue to exist anywhere. I want everyone to be corrupt to the bones." (p. 103)

Zamyatin, and Huxley too, are concerned with the irrational power of jealousy. But this does not involve their seeing sexual freedom as impure, corrupt. That is Orwell's particular rewriting—though whether it is his conscious rewriting of utopian motifs, or whether it is the product of his own personal obsessions is unclear. Certainly, it has its function in a rewriting of the future context:

In the old days, he thought, a man looked at a girl's body and saw that it was desirable, and that was the end of the story. But you could not have pure love or pure lust nowadays. No emotion was pure, because everything was mixed up with fear and hatred. Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act. (p. 104)

In *We* the love of D-503 for I-330 threatens the state because it is something private between them. It transpires that I-330 is part of the conspiracy, and D-503's confidence in the personal meaning

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of their love is shaken when the Well-doer suggests that she was merely using him since he was the Builder of the rocket ship. But D-503's own motives have been entirely romantic and sexual.

The pure love that D-503 feels is impossible in *1984*. The highest expression of love Winston feels is immediately transformed into hatred (of purity), disease (thoughts of leprosy and syphilis), political instrumentalities (infecting party members). Though both Julia and Winston are hostile to the regime before their affair, they are not members of any "conspiracy", and try to join the Brotherhood only after their affair has begun. But their affair inevitably leads to an attempt to join the conspiracy, because in the world of *1984* love-making is a political act. In *We* the state has controlled sexuality by its ration-book promiscuity, but it has not removed the possibilities of romantic love; and it is the individualism of romantic love that leads D-503 into the romantic individualist rebellion. In *1984* however, though the sex instinct has not yet been eradicated, it has been transformed, "dirtied"; in *1984* there never is any romantic love; the affair is immediately a political act, its emotion is immediately transformed. The state has permeated this last individual area. The very fact that Julia and Winston plunge into rebellion against the state when they begin their affair, is the mark of the permeation of the state into sexuality; sexuality is immediately political. It does not allow a free, individualistic development for the lovers. In both *We* and *1984*, sexual activity that deviates from the social norms draws the lovers into political opposition. But in *1984* political opposition is the same as political conformity—firstly because the individual emotion is immediately sacrificed to the political; secondly, because the opposition, the Brotherhood, seems to be run by the state itself as a way to catch deviants. There is no way to escape the state.

The third term of the complex of opposition to the state in *We* is History. Orwell makes no mention of this in his review of *We*, but the role of History as a potential critique of the contemporary state is central to *1984*. Part of the beauty of the love-making of D-503 and I-330 in *We* results from its setting in the ancient house, the museum of past ages; and of the ancient style of her dress there:

I turned around. She was dressed in a saffron-yellow dress of an ancient style. This was a thousand times worse than if she had not been dressed at all. Two sharp points glowing with rosiness through the thin tissue; two burning embers piercing through ashes; two tender, round knees. (pp. 51-2)

There is a closely comparable scene in *1984* when Winston turns round to Julia

and for a second almost failed to recognize her. What he had actually expected was to see her naked. But she was not naked. The transformation that had happened was much more surprising than that. She had painted her face.

She must have slipped into some shop in the proletarian quarter and bought herself a complete set of make-up materials. Her lips were deeply reddened, her cheeks rouged, her nose powdered; there was even a touch of something under the eyes to make them brighter. It was not very skilfully done, but Winston's standards in such matters were not high. (p. 116)

Of course in Orwell's fiction it could not be very skilfully done; it had to be tawdry; and the scent Julia wears has to be the same scent that the fifty-year-old prostitute had used, another of Winston's traumatic memories. All the potentially high, erotic, magical moments in *1984* are intruded upon by tawdriness, by the nausea of one sex fear or another, by corruption, decay, disease or debasement. And the setting for most of the love-making, the room above Mr Charrington's shop, is Orwell's ramshackle equivalent to Zamyatin's Ancient House, that beautifully evocative museum of the past where I-330 takes D-503. Even though the Ancient house is "covered all around with a glass shell, otherwise it would undoubtedly have fallen to pieces long ago" (p. 25), and described through the initially hostile perceptions of the mathematical, tabulating D-503, an extraordinarily powerful vision of historical beauty is created to set against the aesthetic of the twenty-sixth century:

She opened a heavy, squeaking, opaque door and we found ourselves in a sombre, disorderly space (they called it an "apartment"). The same strange "royal" musical instrument and a wild, unorganized, crazy loudness of colors and forms like their ancient music. A white plane above, dark blue walls, red, green orange bindings of ancient books, yellow bronze candelabra, a statue of Buddha, furniture with lines distorted by epilepsy, impossible to reduce to any clear equation.

I could hardly bear that chaos. (p. 26)

And though Mr Charrington's shop contains the relics of the past, embodies the missing history of the society of *1984*, it is inevitably a reduced and tawdry history:

In the fender was a battered tin oilstove, a saucepan, and two cups, provided by Mr Charrington. Winston lit the burner and set a pan of water to boil. He had brought an envelope full of Victory Coffee and some saccharine tablets. The clock's hands said seven-twenty; it was nineteen-twenty really. (p. 112)

The past has been so obliterated in *1984* that only these relics from the scrapheap remain. They are the nearest Winston gets to

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recreating historical conditions; when he tries to interrogate the old man in the pub he can recover nothing. Orwell has taken over Zamyatin's structure of oppositions in *We*—nature, sex, society—and rewritten them to show how absurdly optimistic Zamyatin was. How could a future society let history remain even in a glass-enclosed museum? Winston's job is to destroy documents and write new ones.

The location of nature, sex and history as the major forces opposed to the regimented state indicate *We* as a major source for 1984. Orwell takes over and "corrects" the emphases, removes the dynamic significance from those three terms. But they are, of course, terms that exist elsewhere in political fiction. The romantic sexual bond between Ernest Everhard and Avis in *The Iron Heel* is one of the forces that keep them strong in their rebellion against the state; it is the romantic archetype that Orwell reverses when he has Winston and Julia betray each other; and though the betrayal has its immediate source in *We*, Zamyatin was familiar with London's works, as he was with Wells's; so that D-503's betraying I-330 can be seen as a reversal of the strong romantic bonds of the rebels in *The Iron Heel* and *The Sleeper Awakes*. The state's hostility to history was something that Orwell found also in Huxley. The society of *Brave New World* dates from the year of the mass-production of the Model-T Ford, A.F.-1. And Our Ford's revered saying "History is bunk" is the ethos of the society. The past has been systematically obliterated:

Then came the famous British Museum Massacre. Two thousand culture fans gassed with dichlorethyl sulphide . . .

Accompanied by a campaign against the Past; by the closing of museums, the blowing up of historical monuments (luckily most of them had already been destroyed during the Nine Years' War); by the suppression of all books published before A.F.150. (pp. 50-1)

But there is also a less facetious, closer model in historical realities for the rewriting of the past—the rewriting of official histories and encyclopaedias in Stalinist Russia that Koestler refers to in *Darkness at Noon*:

The official version of the events of the Revolution had gone through a peculiar change in these ten years, the parts played in it by the chief actors had to be rewritten, the scale of values reshuffled. (p. 161)

A caste society is a common enough prediction for a future society. Orwell rejects Huxley's biologically controlled caste system; the possibility of non-sexual reproduction is raised by O'Brien—but in order to destroy sex, to remove family and personal attachments, not to breed uniform children. And the horrors of

1984 are horrors that could be applied immediately, not future horrors depending on as yet untested scientific hypotheses.

In *The Sleeper Awakes* and *The Iron Heel*, however, the hardening of the society into plutocracy and labour castes provides Orwell with his structure. In *The Iron Heel* the proletariat are abandoned to their own wretched life:

Common school education, so far as they were concerned, had ceased. They lived like beasts in the great squalid labour-ghettos, festering in misery and degradation. (p. 198)

Orwell draws on London's people of the abyss, and derives, too, from the Yahoos in *Gulliver's Travels*. The Yahoos are called the "Houhyhnhnms' cattle", and Orwell applies that metaphor to the proletariat. It is a metaphor that indicates how they are treated; they are not beasts but they are treated by other people as beasts:

Left to themselves, like cattle turned loose upon the plains of Argentina, they had reverted to a style of life that appeared to be natural to them, a sort of ancestral pattern . . . Heavy physical work, the care of home and children, petty quarrels with neighbours, films, football, beer and above all gambling, filled up the horizon of their minds. To keep them under control was not difficult. A few agents of the Thought Police moved always among them, spreading false rumours and marking down and eliminating the few individuals who were judged capable of becoming dangerous. (p. 60)

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Gulliver is expelled by the Houhyhnhnms because they fear he will lead a rebellion of the Yahoos. In *The Sleeper Awakes* the workers rebel. In *The Iron Heel*, though we see the defeat of the proletariat's rebellion in the Chicago Commune, their ultimate successful rebellion is predicted. But the idea of the proletariat rising is a hollow absurdity in 1984. Orwell's rewriting has removed that possibility totally from the future. "If there is hope, wrote Winston, it lies in the proles" (p. 59). It is his desperate catch-cry, and its repetition only confirms its hollowness. Goldstein's book asserts "From the proletarians nothing is to be feared" (p. 168). Orwell has accepted the caste society prediction of the future and rewritten it as a totally undynamic structure, in which there is no possibility of change.

In the rebellions of the future, the fictional protagonists are usually involved in some sort of conspiracy. The sleeper wakes to find himself leading a secret movement in *The Sleeper Awakes*. In *The Iron Heel* there are spies, counter-spies, double agents—a complex and terrifying system of *agents provocateurs* and of repression attempting to cope with the organized underground of the revolutionary socialists. In *We*, D-503 is lured into a conspiracy by I-330.

But in Orwell's rewriting of this scenario, Winston and Julia join the Brotherhood to conspire against the state—and fall directly into the hands of the Thought Police. During his interrogation afterwards, Winston asks O'Brien, "Does the Brotherhood exist?" And O'Brien replies, "That, Winston, you will never know . . . As long as you live it will be an unsolved riddle in your mind" (p. 209). This is one of the blackest of Orwell's rewritings: a totalitarian organization so dominant that it even controls the only "opposition" to it. Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* postulates something approaching this horror. Rubashov confesses to conspiratorial activities he took no part in—yet the possibility is floated that his attitudes, his casual cynical asides, his diplomatic conversations, may have encouraged others into some sort of semi-organized rebellion. Certainly in *Darkness at Noon* the allegations of large conspiracies and organized saboteurs seem to have little objective basis; Gletkin indeed concedes that the society needs to create a myth of saboteurs to explain industrial errors and to motivate the workforce. But nothing in *Darkness at Noon* or *We* or *The Sleeper Awakes* or *The Iron Heel* is as final as *1984*—a conspiracy created by the secret police as a way of forestalling any dissent, a deviant book critical of the regime actually written by the regime's Inner Party. The dynamic for any revolutionary change is totally blocked.

The literary precedents for static, totalitarian societies operate very differently from *1984*. *Brave New World* has none of the brutal repressive apparatus Orwell delights in:

"In the end," said Mustapha Mond, "the Controllers realized that force was no good. The slower but infinitely surer methods of ectogenesis, neo-Pavlovian conditioning, and hypnopaedia." (p. 50)

The society of *Brave New World* has a much more efficient and much less obtrusive apparatus of social order. Its effectiveness is demonstrated by the lack of any suggestion of rebellion. There is no need for surveillance procedures. The rare dissidents are sent to remote island communities; the Savage's rebellion is purely private, internalized and futile. But a society kept stable by genetic control and the drug *soma* was too benevolent for Orwell. He feeds his proletariat alcohol to keep them as unrevolutionary as the *soma*-fed worker castes of *Brave New World*, but the stress is on the brutalization this causes, not any peace.

Writing of *Gulliver's Travels*, Orwell pointed to "the totalitarian society of the Houyhnhnms, where there can be no freedom and no development" (*CE* iv.253). It is a totalitarianism that operates without any obvious brutalities. The language is limited, as in

1984, and this is one of their major instruments of control:

They had apparently no word for "opinion" in their language, and in their conversations there was no "difference of sentiments". They had reached, in fact, the highest stage of totalitarian organization, the stage when conformity has become so general that there is no need for a police force. (*CE* iv.252)

But Orwell rejects this sort of order and control. This is not the form totalitarianism will take in his vision. A large part of the world of *1984* is disorder and chaos—war, rocket bombs, crumbling buildings. The rationale of the Party is not one of power demonstrated in efficiency. Efficiency would fail to consume the surplus generated by industry in that sort of society; the surplus would have to be distributed amongst the people—as in *Brave New World*. No, O'Brien's stated aim is the exercise of power for its own sake; the pleasure of seeing how power is demonstrated through the suffering it can create. Those highly organized static totalitarian systems that are shown to work efficiently, are rewritten for Orwell's future.

The futuristic architecture of *We* has its other non-aesthetic purposes for a totalitarian society. "We live beneath the eyes of everyone, always bathed in light. We have nothing to conceal from one another; besides, this mode of living makes the difficult and exalted task of the Guardians much easier" (p. 19). So the Guardians watch through the glass walls of the buildings, peering through the observation tubes of their aircraft as they fly slowly past. Aerial surveillance is a motif in *The Sleeper Awakes*, too—aircraft with their occupants searching through field glasses for the escaped Sleeper. So it is with a deliberate air of familiarity that at the opening of *1984*

a helicopter skimmed down between the roofs, hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, and darted away again with a curving flight. It was the police patrol, snooping into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered. (p. 6)

It is a deliberate allusion to Wells and Zamyatin; but an allusion to stress that in this rewritten future, the most obtrusive surveillance Zamyatin or Wells could think of is now insignificant. Orwell borrows Zamyatin's "street membranes" in his microphones concealed in the bushes. But it is the telescreen that has rendered obsolescent all earlier forms of surveillance. With the telescreens, the Thought Police have a control undreamed of in the worst projections of earlier writers. They are now omnipresent.

The Guardians are ubiquitous in *We*. But they do not set the total note of the society. Other components of the world are shown us. And the Guardians are still called by their euphemistic

name, "protectors", rather than oppressors. Orwell borrows the euphemistic nomenclature as a basic structure of Newspeak: Minipax or Ministry of Peace for the War Ministry, Ministry of Love for the Thought Police headquarters, joycamp for forced labour camp. Zamyatin's dictator, variously translated as Benefactor or Well-doer, becomes Orwell's Big Brother.

But in the borrowing an ambiguity is introduced. "Big Brother is watching you" can mean the protective elder sibling looks on protectively, or the bullying bigger brother is looking for a chance to punch you. And with the Thought Police the adaptation is even greater, and the ambiguity is removed. They are no longer labelled euphemistically as "Guardians". Unusual in the nomenclature of *1984*, their identity is given explicitly, menacingly. In this future the forces of repression, interrogation and brutalization are explicit, open and dominant. They set the tone of the society—the diametric opposite of the covert conformity pressures in *Gulliver's Travels*. Writing of Koestler, Orwell remarked

England is lacking . . . in what one might call concentration camp literature. The special world created by secret-police forces, censorship of opinion, torture, and frame-up trials is, of course, known about and to some extent disapproved of, but it had made very little emotional impact. (*CE* iii.272)

1984 is Orwell's attempt to rectify this situation. *Darkness at Noon*, set almost totally in prison, provides the model for the imprisonment and interrogation of part III of *1984*.

In dealing with the Thought Police we have also to deal with the rationale for the society of *1984*—not the ideology of Ingsoc but the rationale for the structure of power and control. For in *1984* the Thought Police are not simply the means of maintaining a social end—they become pretty well the social end in themselves. Orwell complained of *Brave New World* that

the hedonistic principle is pushed to its ultimate . . . But though . . . a brilliant caricature of the present . . . it probably casts no light on the future. No society of that kind would last more than a couple of generations, because a ruling class which thought principally in terms of a "good time" would soon lose its vitality. (*CE* ii.46)

And O'Brien tells Winston

Do you begin to see, then, what kind of world we are creating? 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. Progress in our world will be progress towards more pain. (p. 214)

Writing of *We*, Orwell picked out the public executions as the intuitive grasp of the irrational side of totalitarianism—human sacrifice, cruelty as an end in itself, the worship of a Leader who is

credited with divine attributes—that makes Zamyatin's book superior to Huxley's. (*CE* iv.98)

Orwell borrows public executions for *1984*. And rewrites them as even crueller. The "guillotine" in *We* is a model of scientific execution—barbaric, but with the barbarism of science:

The prone body, covered with a light phosphorescent smoke; then suddenly, under the eyes of all, it began to melt—to melt, to dissolve with terrible speed. And then nothing; just a pool of chemically pure water which only a moment ago had been so red and had pulsed in his heart. (p. 46)

Orwell regresses to eighteenth-century English style:

"It was a good hanging," said Syme, reminiscently. "I think it spoils it when they tie their feet together. I like to see them kicking. And above all, at the end, the tongue sticking right out, and blue—a quite bright blue. That's the detail that appeals to me." (p. 43)

Orwell avidly draws on the available hints of brutality in his sources to elaborate them for the horror of *1984*. The motif running through *Darkness at Noon* of being shot in the back of the head walking along a prison corridor recurs throughout *1984*. But *Darkness at Noon* provides as few physical tortures as *We*—as Orwell complains of Rubashov's confession:

He has not even been tortured, or not very severely. He is worn down by solitude, toothache, lack of tobacco, bright lights glaring in his eyes, and continuous questioning, but these in themselves would not be enough to overcome a hardened revolutionary. The Nazis have previously done worse to him without breaking his spirit. The confessions obtained in the Russian state trials are capable of three explanations:

1. That the accused were guilty.
2. That they were tortured, and perhaps blackmailed by threats to relatives and friends.
3. That they were actuated by despair, mental bankruptcy and the habit of loyalty to the Party. (*CE* iii.276)

Orwell complains of Koestler's choice of the third explanation. "2 is the common-sense explanation," and 2 is the explanation Orwell uses for the Party's retaining power in *1984*. More than that, he gives it as the motive for the Party's wanting power:

The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. (p. 212)

How does one man assert power over another? . . . By making him suffer. Obedience is not enough. Unless he is suffering, how can you be sure that he is obeying your will and not his own? (p. 214)

This becomes the extraordinary explanation for the society of *1984*. This is the rewriting not only of the hedonistic utopias but of even the bleakest political novels like *Darkness at Noon*. In *We*, in *Darkness at Noon*, individuals suffer because the individual is dispensable for the greater good of the society. O'Brien ex-

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presses this same contempt for the individual: "Can you not understand, Winston, that the individual is only a cell? The weariness of the cell is the vigour of the organism. Do you die when you cut your fingernails?" (p. 212). But in 1984 the disregard of the individual is for the common ill. The sufferings of the individual are to increase the sufferings of the society.

Orwell argued against Koestler's interpretation of the Moscow trials, claiming Koestler's explanation was one that removed all political hope for mankind:

One must answer the question, "Why did the accused confess?" and which answer one makes is a political decision. Koestler answers, in effect, "Because these people had been rotted by the Revolution which they served," and in doing so he comes near to claiming that revolutions are of their nature bad. If one assumes that the accused in the Moscow trials were made to confess by means of some kind of terrorism, one is only saying that one particular set of revolutionary leaders has gone astray. Individuals and not the situation are to blame. (*CE* iii.277)

"Rotted" is Orwell's metaphor for the very intellectual process Koestler is at pains to describe. At one level Rubashov confesses to crimes he did not commit because those crimes were the logical consequence of attitudes he held; believing what he did about the state, he might as well have performed those actions—indeed, morally maybe he even should have. Orwell borrows this motif for Winston's confessions:

It was easier to confess everything and implicate everybody. Besides, in a sense it was all true. It was true that he had been the enemy of the Party, and in the eyes of the Party there was no distinction between the thought and the deed. (p. 195)

But Rubashov also confesses because he believes in the revolutionary experiment, and believes that by surrendering to the party, he will avoid weakening the new society. He accepts the rationale of the society's repressions—as being necessary for an emergent society developing a new social structure, rapidly industrializing, and so on. Rubashov accepts the ideas of the party, retains his ideals, and is willing to take the risk that the society that will execute him still holds to those same ideals. In no sense can this conclusion make the case that revolution is a corrupting process, as Orwell claims. It concedes that things may go wrong, that the wrong ideology may triumph—but it is the expression of a conflict of ideologies.

Whereas in Orwell ideas mean nothing. Although O'Brien discusses things with Winston during the interrogation, there is none of the tension of debate that we see between Rubashov and his interrogators. All O'Brien ultimately does is tell Winston why ideas

are unimportant, why physical torture, brutality, have become the total rationale of the party. Once power is achieved by those who have no other aim than to keep power by the most brutal, repressive means possible, mere ideas can never shake the society. Orwell here embodied the fullest expression of his hatred of intellectuals—the ultimate situation in which ideas stand for nothing against immutable physical violence. “If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—for ever” (p. 215).

The image has a couple of sources. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Gulliver envisions the Houyhnhnms resisting an invading, colonizing army: “Imagine twenty thousand of them . . . battering the Warriors' faces into Mummy, by terrible Yerks from their hinder Hoofs”. Orwell picks out the phrase in his essay, seeing it as a mark of Swift's hostility to England and to Marlborough's troops. But a more specifically relevant source is *The Iron Heel*. The minor plutocrat Wickson, enraged by Everhard's predictions of the inevitable victory of the proletariat, expresses the plutocracy's intention to hold on to its power and privilege and resist change:

We will grind you revolutionists down under our heel, and we shall walk upon your faces. The world is ours, we are its lords, and ours it shall remain. As for the host of labour, it has been in the dirt since history began, and I read history aright. And in the dirt it shall remain so long as I and mine and those that come after us have the power. There is the word. It is the king of words—Power. Not God, not Mammon, but Power. (p. 69)

The image and the ethos are both contained here—the ethos of power for its own sake, not for any ethical or even economic advantage.

That the source of O'Brien's philosophy is so clearly to be found here would seem to contradict the contention that Orwell does not simply borrow materials for *1984* but critically adapts them. However, Wickson's statement is not the full expression of the rationale for repression in *The Iron Heel*. There was another crucial component, as Orwell himself noted. The society of *Brave New World*, he wrote,

would soon lose its vitality. A ruling class has got to have a strict morality, a quasi-religious belief in itself, a mystique. London was aware of this, and though he describes the caste of plutocrats who rule the world for seven centuries as inhuman monsters, he does not describe them as idlers or sensualists. They can only maintain their position while they honestly believe that civilization depends on themselves alone. (CE ii.46-7)

Jack London explores the ideology of the Iron Heel plutocracy, their retention of power and privilege under the guise of an ethical

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system, their belief

that they alone maintained civilization. It was their belief that if ever they weakened, the great beast would engulf them and everything of beauty and wonder and joy and good in its cavernous and slime-dripping maw . . . they alone, by their unremitting toil and sacrifice, stood between weak humanity and the all-devouring beast; and they believed it, firmly believed it. (pp. 196-7)

But this ideological rationale of saving society from anarchy is removed from Orwell's vision of the power élite of the future. All that is left is the "boot stamping on a human face—for ever", not claiming to preserve or better society, but just from the pleasure of power.

There is no doubt of the persuasive power of Orwell's vision of the future in *1984*. Its images and phrases have entered into a wide and popular circulation—the telescreens, Big Brother is watching you, double-think and such like. The novel encapsulated central aspects of the mood of its time; it found a ready acceptance in the cold war climate, and helped foster that very set of attitudes. It suited, too, the Tory propaganda against the English Labour party, and though Orwell claimed that English socialism was no part of his target, his naming of the official doctrine of the 1984 society as "Ingsoc" let readers draw their own conclusions. *1984* supported the English right wing propaganda that Stalinist totalitarianism was but the next step from the English Labour Party.

Doublethink particularly captured qualities of intellectual leftists that Orwell hated: the capacity to believe two contradictory things simultaneously; the capacity to denounce fascist atrocities and fail to see anything disturbing in Stalin's purges. "The sin of nearly all left-wingers from 1933 onward is that they have wanted to be anti-Fascist without being anti-totalitarian", he wrote in his essay on Koestler (*CE* iv.273). In isolating this habit of thought Orwell did something immensely valuable. But he extended his insights into less useful propagandist conclusions. It is one thing to attack the contradictions of those who denounce fascist atrocities yet ignore the Stalinist purges; but to go on to identify fascism with communism or state socialism is to draw a conclusion that obscures as much as it illuminates. It is a conclusion that is possible only if you totally reject the political beliefs or political ideologies; it is a position, indeed, that involves a rejection of the political. Paradoxically, it is a recurrent position in English political fiction. Swift pours scorn in *Gulliver's Travels* on the "two struggling Parties . . . under the names of Tramecksan, and Slamecksan,

from the high and low Heels on their Shoes”, and on the war between Lilliput and Blefuscu over the issue of which end to break their eggs: for Swift, political confrontations are reducible to such absurdities. Issues of economic power, parliamentary representation, governmental responsibility, class struggle have no place in his political analysis. Similarly Lawrence in *Kangaroo* has Somers reject the political world: “As for politics, there was so little to choose, and choice meant nothing. Kangaroo and Struthers were both right, both of them.” In the previous chapter they were both wrong: it was “a choice of evils, and I choose neither”. Both right or both wrong, it doesn’t matter to Lawrence; his protagonist rejects political involvement and sails away.⁹

Looking at Orwell’s use of other political and utopian fiction, we notice the way in which he is consistently making two basic changes in them for *1984*. Events, images, actions are drained of their political dynamic, and they are made nastier, crueller. The emphasis is on the horror—at times reaching the grotesque, as in the rat torture threatened to Winston. And yet the grotesque is the inevitable outcome of the 1984 ethos—an ethos devoted to realizing its own power through the suffering it causes. Economic advantage, pleasure, ethics, religious zeal—none of these are allowed as important factors in the politics of *1984*. Just as Swift denied that any of these motivations was significant in any political position, and reduced all political action to absurdity, so Orwell denies them all and reduces all political action the expression of cruelty.

Orwell’s fictional absorption of James Burnham’s thesis in *The Managerial Elite* is important here: the postulate of a new power élite without hereditary privilege or wealth to preserve, without even a strongly economic or pleasure motivation, but concerned with the exercise of power.¹⁰ Orwell rejected the concept when he first reviewed the book in 1946 (*CE* iv.192-215). By the time of writing *1984* he had come to accept it. But as with his adaptation

9 I have elaborated the arguments of this paragraph in “‘A New Show’: The Politics of *Kangaroo*”, *Southerly*, XXX (1970), 20-40, and “The Politics of *Gulliver’s Travels*”, *Studies in the Eighteenth Century II*, ed. R. F. Brissenden (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973), pp. 303-22.

10 See George Kateb, “The Road to 1984”, *The Political Science Quarterly*, LXXXI (1966), 564-80, reprinted in Samuel Hynes ed., *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of “1984”* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs N.J., 1971); and Michael Maddison, “1984: A Burnhamite Fantasy”, *Political Quarterly*, XXXIII (1961), 71-9.

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of the literary materials, he gave the thesis a further twist into horror. The rationale of the Party in *1984* is not simply the exercise and preservation of power; it is the exercise of cruelty by which it demonstrates to itself that it has power. That there are other ways of demonstrating power, Orwell does not bother to consider. Power in *1984* is simply the ideology for the practice of cruelty.

The depoliticization of supposedly political motivations encourages a non-political explanation of Orwell's own motivations in writing the novel. The excess of horror, the reduction of all political motivations to the horrific, have encouraged some commentators to explain the novel in terms of Orwell's own psychopathology.¹¹ Indeed the novel might have been more persuasive had some psychopathological motivations for the cruelty imperative been offered—something like the sexual explanations for fascist commitments in Sartre's story "Boyhood of a Leader" or Moravia's *The Conformist*. But Orwell leaves the cruelty imperative totally unmotivated—as if the exercise of cruelty were in itself a basic drive.

The other major depoliticization at work in the novel is the removal of any dynamic from political and utopian themes. Orwell allows us no reason for challenging O'Brien's statement that this reign of terror will persist "for ever". There is no active conspiracy as far as we can see. The only individual rebellion of Winston and Julia is easily and totally crushed. Orwell has created a non-political political fantasy—a world in which stasis can be achieved, in which the last revolution has occurred. This is a belief that is derided in *We*. When D-503 voices the official belief that "our revolution was the last one. No other revolutions may occur", I-330 asks him to "name the last number":

"But I-330, that's absurd! Since the number of numbers is infinite, how can there be a last one?"

"And then why do you think there is a *last* revolution . . . their number is infinite . . . The "last one" is a child's story. Children are afraid of the infinite, and it is necessary that children should not be frightened, so that they may sleep through the night." (p. 162)

Orwell's child's story is designed to frighten—to make his readers believe that certain social trends could result in a revolution that will be the last one. He eliminates all hope; he eliminates all the dynamic that existed in *We*, *The Iron Heel* and *The*

11 See, for example, Gerald Fiderer, "Masochism as Literary Strategy: Orwell's Psychological Novels", *Literature and Psychology*, XX (1970), 3-21.

Sleeper Awakes. He has created a future society from which the political has been rejected. *1984* is a fantasy of hatred against the political—it is designed as a warning against the political. Like Swift, like Lawrence, like Conrad (who called the setting of his political novel *Nostramo* “Costaguana”, shit-coast, to express his contemptuous rejection) Orwell sees the political as corrupting, destructive, evil. His final stance is an a-political anarchism, with strong reactionary leanings: a writer as politically involved for as long as Orwell had been could not but have known the use to which the reactionary cold-war propagandists would put his novel. What Orwell wrote of Swift applies closely to himself. He saw Swift as “a Tory anarchist”, and claimed that “Politically, Swift was one of those people who are driven into a sort of perverse Toryism by the follies of the progressive party of the moment” (*CE* iv.243).

The follies of English socialists, their blindness to the realities of Stalinism, are in the forefront of Orwell’s consciousness in *1984*. But he does not stop there; he has been driven beyond criticizing the progressives he has so long felt himself allied with from a position close to theirs, and moved into a stance of virulent hostility towards them. And the hostility is all the more fierce because of Orwell’s sense of his impotence. Having been “political” for so long, he can see no other world. He cannot simply reject the political world and offer rural anarcho-communalism (as in Morris’s *News From Nowhere*), or domestic privatism (as George Eliot does for Felix Holt) or Christianity and the hope of a better after life (as in Swift) or the unorganized tribal primitive (which Huxley considers in *Brave New World*) or simply sail away to another country (as Lawrence does in *Kangaroo*). Fiercely patriotic, Orwell allows himself no alternative to England; immersed in the political, he sees no other life but the political. He ends up with a statement that is in part shared by so many of the English novelists—politics are disgusting, degrading, destructive. But his vision is the blacker because, unlike them, he is compelled to add the rider: yet everything is political.

University of Sydney

MICHAEL WILDING