

THOU ART UNREAL, MY IDEAL: NOSTALGIA AS IDEOLOGY IN THE NOVELS  
OF EVELYN WAUGH, ALDOUS HUXLEY AND GEORGE ORWELL

By

ZACHARY E. SHOWERS

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of English  
in the Graduate School of  
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2010

Copyright Zachary Elijah Showers 2010  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ABSTRACT

The satirical novels of Evelyn Waugh, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell share a sense of nostalgia for an imagined past as well as a fatalistic and entropic view of the future. Rather than advocating a wholesale reformation of society, these novels instead argue in favor of the *status quo* and regard change as counterproductive. In this way, the novels reflect certain ideologies strongly held in England during the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial period. Through an examination of their treatment of class relations, social norms and outside influences, this study argues that Waugh, Huxley and Orwell maintained the superiority of English culture and civilization instead of questioning it, and focused their satire on elements they believed threatened this established hegemony. In doing so, they each used a nostalgic and idealized portrait of English society to challenge elements of their present that they found unsatisfactory.

The production of the idealized past challenges commonly held perceptions of the way these satires function. They are not critiques of the establishment but rather supporters of it; they call for a static society rather than a dynamic one. Evelyn Waugh's novels *Decline and Fall* and *Black Mischief* support a presumed English ideology over that of its colonial peripheries. Aldous Huxley's novels *Brave New World*, *Ape and Essence*, and *Island* deal with questions of overpopulation and stereotyped attributes of perceived non-intellectuals in their relationship to Huxley's preferred class structure. George Orwell's novels *Burmese Days*, *Coming Up For Air*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* each presuppose an idyllic but nonexistent English society and use this construct to critique the future of Englishness.

## DEDICATION

To Natalie, my lovely wife, without whom none of it matters.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>1984</i>	<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>
<i>AE</i>	<i>Ape and Essence</i>
<i>AF</i>	<i>Animal Farm</i>
<i>BD</i>	<i>Burmese Days</i>
<i>BM</i>	<i>Black Mischief</i>
<i>BNW</i>	<i>Brave New World</i>
<i>BNWR</i>	<i>Brave New World Revisited</i>
<i>CUA</i>	<i>Coming Up For Air</i>
<i>DF</i>	<i>Decline and Fall</i>
<i>LL</i>	<i>A Little Learning</i>
<i>RWP</i>	<i>Road to Wigan Pier</i>
<i>WA</i>	<i>Waugh in Abyssinia</i>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Patti White, James McNaughton, Emily Wittman, John J. Burke and Madeleine Gregg for their patience and understanding. Thanks to Carol Appling, whose hard work on the particulars of submission and defense made this project possible.

Special thanks to my colleagues at Enterprise State, especially Phyllis Tanner for her tireless work helping me find numerous obscure sources, and Don Crook for his invaluable encouragement.

God bless y'all for sticking with me.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
1. INTRODUCTION: NOSTALGIA AND ENGLISH SATIRE.....	1
2. INDEPENDENT SYSTEMS OF ORDER: EVELYN WAUGH AND THE VERY BRITISH IDEOLOGY.....	17
3. OUTSIDE YAHOOOS: ALDOUS HUXLEY AND THE TEEMING ILLITERATES.....	63
4. NO TAIL AND NO FLIES: GEORGE ORWELL AND THE HOME-GROWN UTOPIA.....	123
5. CONCLUSION.....	175
6. WORKS CITED.....	179

## CHAPTER 1:

### INTRODUCTION: NOSTALGIA AND ENGLISH SATIRE

The period of British history from the end of the First World War to the middle of the 1960's—when former African colonies began gaining independence by the dozens—is the long, slow, end of an era, a *fin de siècle* in the middle of a century. It is in this period, much discussed by cultural theorists, that the Empire becomes a Commonwealth, and questions resound about everything from the idea of nationhood to the definition of literature itself. Usually the literature produced in the British Empire during this time of change falls into two major divisions. The first of these is the English literature as it existed in England itself, in what Simon Gikandi calls the “metropole.” The second is of course the colonial/postcolonial literature, represented by a myriad of writers from India to Jamaica and primarily associated with cultures and discourses that were—at least until the Empire began dissolving—largely marginalized by the English literary establishment. As Simon Gikandi puts it in his book *Maps of Englishness*, colonialism “was not something one associated with the culture of Great Britain or with its monumental literary works” (xii). Indeed, despite much evidence of crossover, colonial writings and English writings are often discussed separately, even though—to quote Gikandi again—“Englishness [is] a cultural and literary phenomenon produced in the ambivalent space that separated, but also conjoined, metropole and colony” (xii). In other words, to discuss the literatures of the British Empire as disparate or evolving divergently is incorrect; the culture of metropole and colony were blending and in some ways becoming

indistinguishable. Therefore, when change comes to the colonies it also comes to England, and change brings with it cultural conflict, resistance, and questions of ideology.

To Gikandi and other postcolonial theorists, “imperialism enters its terminal phase in the period after World War I” (164) and the postcolonial world is very different from that which preceded it. First and foremost, the power of England around the world is broken, but with this change came many other challenges to the once-Imperial establishment. Not only was the Empire slipping away—it seemed to many as if the homeland would go with it. One prevailing opinion “assumed that England’s ability to manage and control her colonial spaces was a commentary on the character of the nation itself” (Gikandi 192). As the Empire dissolved, and subjected people became conscious of their own political freedom, so too did the once-disenfranchised classes in England gain more political power. Stuart Hall points to a slightly earlier and overlapping period of English history, “between the Reform Act of 1867 and the Representation of the People Act of 1928” as the time when “Britain became for the first time a fully-fledged, formal, mass democracy” (8). Even though “British society and economy remained capitalist in the very period when the state was becoming democratic” (Hall 9), there was nevertheless a shift away from the oligarchic capitalism of the Victorian Era and towards a more modern cultural pluralism. According to Hall, “British society . . .—not without strong resistance, but yielding ground at the eleventh hour—was able to absorb the challenge of mass democracy and reform itself without precipitating a breakdown or overthrow of the whole system” (8). Mass democracy—bereft of the Empire that once made oligarchy so lucrative, but still dictated by a capitalist economic system—is the

final product of this upheaval and the primary political force in the postmodern age. The system does not break down. It becomes what it is today, a more representative and multicultural democracy. There is nevertheless “strong resistance” from many quarters.

In this study I want to focus on Stuart Hall’s “eleventh hour,” the time of final resistance to the political and cultural changes affecting English society. This eleventh hour is also, I contend, the “narrative or discursive moment that could be considered to represent the break from colonial to postcolonial narratives” (Gikandi *xiii*). Of course, the change from colonial to postcolonial does not happen quickly—my “eleventh hour” is spread over about thirty-four years—and it is also important to note that it does not occur only in the former colonies, but also in the metropole itself. In the former colonies, literature functioned as a way to explore and solve the problems of the postcolonial world. It “provided the medium through which the crises of both colonial and domestic identities were mediated” (Gikandi *xix*). Literature also satisfies a need for cultural verification in the former colonies by giving a voice to the previously voiceless. Though the metropole is hardly voiceless at any point, it does share the need for mediation between colonial and domestic identities, as well as the need for a new cultural relevance. Thus, questions of English identity, of relationship to the resurgent lower classes and to the formerly colonized, and most especially questions about how the ruling classes adapt to this coming upheaval are explored in the literature of the time. Gikandi is very clear about what happens in the former colonies during this period:

Nationalist intellectuals and writers positioned themselves in this space of crisis—what I have termed the postimperial aporia—and reinvented their national identities either as a self-willed return to precolonial traditions or as a conscious rejection of an imposed European identity. (194)

During this “postimperial aporia,” many intellectuals and writers in England had a similar desire to reinvent their national identity by returning to precolonial traditions. Not all English writers and intellectuals in this time of crisis shared this aim, but for some it was important to reinvent national identity in this way while rejecting the seemingly inevitable multicultural, democratic, and pluralistic new world. When such great changes are afoot, it is no surprise that the culture experiencing them—England, in this case—experiences a sort of cultural backlash, a fear of the future combined with nostalgia for the way things were and, so it was thought by many, should still be.

This cultural backlash and nostalgia for the good old days is most evident in popular satirical novels of the period. For the most part, satire is as Jonathan Swift described it, “a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets with in the world, and that so very few are offended with it” (Preface to *Battle of the Books*). In addition to providing an explanation for why satire is fun to read and fairly popular, Swift’s idea of satire as a glass has yet another meaning. Satire reflects ideology, even if the readers or writers do not wish to see such ideology in themselves. It “confirm[s] contemporary moral standards [and is] based on shared cultural values” (Griffin 38). Rather than being a lone voice speaking against a majority opinion, satire usually shows us what Leonard Feinberg calls “attitudes strongly held by large numbers of people” (256). These “attitudes strongly held” are the fundamental ideologies of a society.

The word *ideology* is often the Proteus of criticism; pinning down its exact shape in any specific instance is extremely difficult and open to interpretation. Perhaps one of the better definitions of ideology is given by Terry Eagleton as “the product of the

concrete social relations into which men enter at a particular time and place; it is the way those class relations are experienced, legitimized, and perpetuated” (*Marxism and Literary Criticism* 6). In other words, ideology can be seen as the way in which an observer defines himself in relation to his surroundings; ideology represents “attitudes strongly held” that are created, refined, or challenged by the environment, by parental or cultural indoctrination, by stereotypical assumptions about class or race, or by any number of other outside influences. In essence, Eagleton gives us a brief, Marxist definition of ideology; it is comprised of the thought processes and behaviors that keep a particular class in power. Other Marxist critics, such as Adorno and Horkheimer, see ideology as a sinister agent of control, one that is both enslaving and static. Consider their views on capitalist production as ideology:

Capitalist production so confines them [the proletariat], body and soul, that they fall helpless victims to what is offered them . . . the ruled always took the morality forced upon them more seriously than the rulers themselves . . . they insist on the very ideology that enslaves them. (133-134)

To Horkheimer and Adorno, ideology is inescapable and “enslaving,” but also inherently an incorrect way of looking at the world. If the enslaved could escape this ideological view, they imply, they could see things as they really are. But ideology does not have to be enslaving, nor does it have to be a contrived outlook that is somehow separate from reality. Ideology “has a whole range of useful meanings, [and] to try to compress this wealth of meaning into a single comprehensive definition would thus be unhelpful even if it were possible” (Eagleton, *Ideology* 1). It is better therefore—more useful, in fact—to tailor the meaning of ideology to the argument presented. Marxist critics have their own

definition, as do all other social and political theorists. While these often stand in opposition to each other, each is nonetheless useful in its own context.

In *Ideology*, Terry Eagleton lists sixteen different definitions of the word, including his own aforementioned Marxist definition. Not all of these “are compatible with one another,” and many turn the word *ideological* into an insult (2). Eagleton claims the most common use of the word *ideology* in conversation makes a distinction between what is reality and what is “just ideological:”

To claim in ordinary conversation that someone is speaking ideologically is surely to hold that they are judging a particular issue through some rigid framework of preconceived ideas which distorts their understanding. I view things as they really are; you squint at them through a tunnel vision imposed by some extraneous system of doctrine. (*Ideology* 3)

The problem with this usage, as Eagleton asserts, is that no one is without ideology and therefore cannot look upon the phenomenon as peculiar to someone else. This mistake—saying that the views of others are “merely ideology” while our own views are somehow more credible—happens often in British satire, and in this way Swift’s mirror reasserts itself. Oftentimes the satires I will discuss do indeed see everyone else reflected in them—often grotesquely—but at no point are they meant to be self-referential, despite the fact that they, more often than not, reflect the author’s ideology as well. It is often incorrectly taken as a given that the satirists are somehow outside of ideology themselves, acting as critical observers of flaws in other people. In actuality, whatever definition of ideology is used, it is an incontrovertible fact that everyone, including the writer, is affected by ideology in some way. Despite the nuances of meaning, all definitions of ideology hold their genesis in common: ideology is, at its heart, a set of ideas used by a person or group to try to make sense of the world.

For my own discussion of the British Empire's "eleventh hour," the most useful way of thinking about ideology is consistent a definition given by Louis Althusser in his essay "Marxism and Humanism":

Ideology, then, is the expression of the relation between men and their 'world', that is, the (overdetermined) unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence. In ideology the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that *expresses* a *will* (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality.

In Althusser's view, ideology is a way for people to make sense of their world or "relate" to it, but it is also the product of two separate phenomena, the "real relation" and the "imaginary relation." It is also clear, in Althusser's definition, that the "real" way in which people react to their conditions is in some ways subordinate to—"invested" in—the imaginary, so that the imaginary relationship takes precedence in determining their reactions. To further unpack Althusser's statement, his "imaginary relation" does not describe an actual reality, but instead "a hope or a nostalgia." *Nostalgia*, as the Oxford English Dictionary defines the term, is "Sentimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual's own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past." Nostalgia is "sentimental imagining," meaning that it is not a wholly accurate remembrance of the past, but a remembrance colored by personal desires and prejudices. Althusser uses the word *nostalgia* to describe the imaginary component of ideology, and nostalgia is especially important in a discussion of British ideology because it is the primary force driving the resistance to ideological change in Stuart Hall's "eleventh hour." Those writers and intellectuals during this period who resisted the coming postcolonial pluralism often took refuge in descriptions

of a previous era—specifically the height of Empire and colonial control—that was remembered nostalgically as superior to the present and far superior to the imagined future.

The remembered English ideology—which dominated during most of the Victorian and Edwardian eras—is one of upper-class English superiority, rigid hegemony, and imperial control. It is hard to think about the possibility of a satirist looking back nostalgically to the Victorians—indeed, the modern period is replete with works that are especially scathing in their treatment of the earlier generations. But while the Victorians represent a stuffy moralism to some, to others the Victorians represented stability. I contend the stable ideology of Empire looked all the more attractive when nostalgically regarded from a modern period in which nothing seemed to be stable or predictable at all. In England’s “eleventh hour,” ideology was changing, and there was no way to effectively tell how good or how terrible this change would turn out to be. For the most part, “terrible” was the default belief; it is easy to see why many modern authors were not optimistic about the future after witnessing two catastrophic world wars and countless other atrocities. In fact, the demise of colonialism along with global conflict shook the foundation of British ideology—political power changes hands, capitalism is more vigorously disputed—but it does not “topple the whole class system” (Hall 9). According to Hall, “those who lacked political or social rights can be enfranchised”—and indeed are enfranchised—without the society and hegemony themselves coming to pieces (9). At the time, however, this eventual result was not yet known, and for many inhabitants of the metropole, the coming change was a dire prospect.

The authors I have chosen for this study—Evelyn Waugh, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell—differ in social background and political affiliation, but they share a common culture and a common ideological starting point. Even as their novels reject certain aspects of the previous English power framework—the one that changes with the advent of a postcolonial world—this previous framework functions for each of them as ideology. In other words, the nostalgic remembrance of Empire functions, in the Althusserian sense, as the imagined relation that helps Waugh, Huxley and Orwell to both understand reality and comment on it. Throughout their ridicule of the upper classes, their critique of current power structures, and even (with Orwell especially) their rejection of imperialism as it exists at the time, a nostalgic and mostly imaginary view of the past is the standard against which all these imperfections are measured. Most importantly, these three authors share a specific prejudice that Simon Gikandi attributes to the Victorian writer Anthony Trollope. Despite their various political differences and the eclectic nature of their writings, Waugh, Huxley, and Orwell “cannot escape from a hegemonic discourse that assumes the superiority of English culture and civilization” (108). In their novels, the superiority of English culture and civilization is taken for granted; even though aspects of it are challenged, even though imperialism itself is often questioned, the ideology that produces the Empire is inviolable. Also, while they seem to agree that saving English culture and civilization is well-nigh impossible, the remembrance of how it was once paramount is seen as the only bright spot in an ever-darkening world. “Ever-darkening” is an awful pun in this case, because these authors also rejected the coming multiculturalism that, in their view at least, threatened the very ideology they held dear.

To combat this multicultural new world, or at least speak out against it, Waugh, Huxley and Orwell satirized the change in similar ways. As Stuart Hall defines his “formative period” as the time between Acts of Parliament, so I will define my period of focus with the publication dates of important satirical novels, namely between the 1928 publication of Evelyn Waugh’s *Decline and Fall* and the 1962 publication of Aldous Huxley’s *Island*. I do this because the satirical novels of this period best represent a redefinition of Englishness as consistent with earlier ideals and as incompatible with multiculturalism. They also emphasize the importance of English imperial ideology, and they have a shared trepidation about the emerging power of the “colonial other” and the resurgent lower classes in the metropole.

This is not to say that Waugh, Huxley and Orwell were overtly or belligerently attempting to defend England from outside influence, though they did hold some very strong negative views of non-aristocratic, non-intellectual, or simply non-English populations. But when discussing the decline and fall of English civilization, of the hegemonic colonialism that constitutes their principle ideology, Waugh, Huxley and Orwell were using satire in a very specific way. Usually, *satire* is a fairly broad term; the OED says satire is a poem or prose composition “in which prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule.” In modern times, the definition has been expanded even further to include other media—*satire* can refer to anything from a political cartoon to a Youtube video. But in this particular instance, satire is not simply ridicule, nor is it simply a commentary on the foibles of modern life. Satire, as used by Waugh, Huxley and Orwell, highlights the difference between an imagined, nostalgic ideal from the past and a currently reality that is regarded as degenerate or insufficient.

Again, this satire functions much like Swift's mirror. It is used to reflect the problems and inadequacies of the modern age. For the most part both the writer and the reader see everyone but themselves as flawed and worthy of the ridicule. However, these satirical novels also make a comparison between whatever is reflected—in various instances this can be individuals, groups, or even other, newly formed ideologies—and what the author considers to be the lost ideal. The satires I will discuss therefore also remind me of another mirror, the one in Sylvia Plath's poem of the same name:

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me.  
Searching my reaches for what she really is  
....  
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish. (174)

In Plath's poem, there is a great gulf between the ideal, the "young girl," and the reality of old age rising toward her "like a terrible fish." The change from young girl to old woman is inevitable, but it is certainly not as terrible as the woman in the poem clearly believes it to be. In fact, the remembrance of the young girl is colored by nostalgia, by a relation that incorrectly supposes the *imagined*, in the Althusserian sense, to be the same as the *real*. In the same way, Waugh, Huxley and Orwell satirize the changes in their society, and the changes in the prevailing ideology, as far more terrible than they actually are, especially when compared to imaginary perfection.

Evelyn Waugh's imaginary perfection involves defining *Englishness* as a monolithic code of morality and class structure, one that actually never exists universally and is mostly idyllic, but is nevertheless the standard to which society should be held. Invariably, Waugh's Englishness is a hegemonic, stratified and rigid phenomenon; there is a deep distrust in his novels of the ascendant lower-class and what Raymond Williams

called “[England’s] Celtic and colonial peripheries.” Englishness is what separates Waugh’s cultural compatriots—those that share his deeply conservative, moralistic and hegemonic ideology—from those Waugh derides as pretenders to the same. Waugh also uses his satire to point out the inadequacies of the postcolonial world, as well as the inability of colonial subjects to effectively govern themselves. As I will show in two of his novels, *Decline and Fall* (1928) and *Black Mischief* (1932), Waugh is doing much more than simply making fun of the wealthy and clueless; he is also blaming them for abandoning a perfect past in favor of a shoddy future. The upper-class characters he portrays are often woefully out of touch, immoral, even reprobate, but their primary failing is an abandonment of tradition in for an unsatisfying modernity. Waugh is, as the title *Decline and Fall* suggests, watching the gradual disintegration of what he believes to be a great society. He shows it as beset on all sides by people who simply do not belong.

For Huxley, the two most distressing things about the people who do not belong are their ignorance and their birthrate, both of which are threatening the intellectualism that Huxley most admires. Huxley’s own definition of Englishness is tied to intellectual and racial snobbery; people of his own race, status, and level of intelligence count as “English,” and he believes they are rapidly being overwhelmed by people of inferior quality from Asia, the Americas and the former colonies. Huxley’s two dystopian novels *Brave New World* (1931) and *Ape and Essence* (1948) ostensibly satirize runaway technology and government control, but the nostalgic ideal of white, English superiority is also very much evident. Each novel focuses on Huxley’s prediction of horrible consequences when an ascendant lower class gains control. His valedictory novel *Island* (1962) shows us his contrasting vision of a perfect society, in which the non-white and

non-“intellectual” masses are kept at bay and eugenics is practiced for the betterment of the desired remnant. Huxley was a noted intellectual, from a family of cultured academics, and he espoused the educated aristocracy such as himself as indispensable to civilized society. Huxley’s character Quarles says in *Point Counter Point*, “The chief defect of the novel of ideas is that you must write about people who have ideas to express—which excludes all but about .01 per cent. of the human race” (351). Huxley insists this .01 percent of the human race is in mortal danger, and it is vitally important for them to “undertake the task of restating, revivifying and preserving spiritual values. If they compromise with the world, in the Christian sense of the word, they lose not only their artistic souls but also the souls of a whole potential elite” (Canton 43). Thus the upper classes, those with several rooms of their own and time and money to spare, are seen by Huxley as essential to the continuation of proper art and spirituality. Huxley unfairly maligns the rest of society, all 99.9 percent of it, as the cause of all that is reprobate and animalistic. *Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence* portray societies that have lost that which Huxley believes the intellectual elite protects—culture, tradition, and intelligence—and he does not allow the idea that the masses have the ability to be in contact with any of these. Nearly all of this predicted destruction is caused by simple overpopulation, at least in Huxley’s view, and he fears that the culture wars are being won by the masses simply because they are *massive*. Huxley’s solutions to society’s ills are almost completely expounded in his last novel *Island*, a portrait of a utopian civilization just before it too is subsumed by the less worthy or less intelligent. In *Island*, perfection is achieved by combining the “rational and scientific” ideas of a choice few British intellectuals with Eastern philosophy and, of course, providing a way to make

sure that the lower classes never even exist at all. But *Island* ends on a depressing note as the perfect society succumbs to martial outsiders. Paradoxically, the invaders are brown people; the formerly colonized overrun the colonizers and destroy the utopia. In this way, Huxley's *Island* hearkens back to another small island, Great Britain, which he believes will likewise be overrun and changed utterly.

Finally, there is the strange case of George Orwell. Depending on the circumstances and the prejudices of the observer, Orwell is both a defender of British-style capitalism and an advocate of democratic socialism. He admires the coming postcolonial change *and* fears it. Orwell's seemingly contradictory politics can best be integrated if they are seen as indicative of his almost overwhelming nostalgia for a romanticized, small-town, Edwardian England, which he believed was somehow removed from both the bad influences of the Empire and the terrible effects of class injustice. In *Burmese Days* (1934), Orwell is anti-imperial, but his reasons for this stance are colored by ideological racism and rooted in a love for a static, pre-Great War England. For Orwell, this static England is, to paraphrase Voltaire, not the best of worlds, but certainly the best of all *possible* worlds. Nostalgia for a less complicated time is also the primary theme of Orwell's *Coming up for Air* (1939), which basically argues that the great things about socialism existed in rural, class-divided England, and the bad things associated with socialism will come about because of an abandonment of these small-town values. For this reason, *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) are both depressing and fatalistic, because they acknowledge the superiority of former times when compared with both the present and the future, but they do not offer any way to avoid the change. These former, better times are nostalgic constructions of

English country life, and in Orwell's final two novels the new urban centers are the primary victims in this comparison.

My main objective in completing this project is to argue that certain modern English satirical novels should not be regarded as the product of Socratic gadflies seeking to goad society into changing for the better. Rather, for these authors, change is the enemy. The *status quo ante* is the preferable state. They are, like many in the society that produced them, rejecting Gikandi's "new, imposed identity" in favor of an older identity, whether it be real or simply a nostalgic construct. Especially in the examples I will discuss, there is no real optimism for the future, nor is there any real hope of stopping the coming change. Rather, these satirical novels glorify the past, misremembered as it may be. Whether the tone be lighthearted, as in *Decline and Fall*, or frightening, as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, all these novels adhere to the belief that things were much better yesterday—when the hierarchy was rigidly defined and the influence of both the colonial and the domestic "others" was not as powerful—than they can ever be tomorrow.

Waugh, Huxley, and Orwell each approach their satire in different ways. There is no universal aim that unites them, any more than there is one universal definition of *satire* or *ideology* that works in all cases. Waugh looks to the past for justification of his admittedly conservative views on religion and society. Huxley is less conservative religiously, certainly, but he also looks to the past as a time when the power structure was correct and there was little danger of the ruling classes being overrun. Orwell's writings differ from both of these men in that he wished for a more egalitarian, less class conscious society, but he nonetheless saw the best example of this in the past.

Paradoxically, the past was perhaps more stratified and unfair than Orwell remembers, but it still seemed to him to be superior to what was on the horizon. In all three cases, the ideology espoused by these satirical novels is generated by nostalgia, and to recognize the role of nostalgia in them is to come to a better understanding of what Swift's mirror was reflecting during England's "eleventh hour."

## CHAPTER 2:

### INDEPENDENT SYSTEMS OF ORDER: EVELYN WAUGH AND THE VERY BRITISH IDEOLOGY

Evelyn Waugh began his autobiography *A Little Learning* with a reflection on H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*:

I longed for the loan of the Time Machine—a contraption with its saddle and quartz bars that was plainly a glorification of the bicycle. What a waste of this magical vehicle to take it prying into the future, as had the hero of the book! The future, dreariest of prospects! Were I in the saddle I should set the engine Slow Astern. To hover gently back through centuries (not more than thirty of them) would be the most exquisite pleasure of which I can conceive. (1)

Waugh published *A Little Learning* in 1964, less than two years before his death. It begins a reminiscence that stops abruptly at 1925; unfortunately, Waugh died before he could finish what he conceived as a multivolume work. His reference to *The Time Machine* is apt for the beginning of an autobiography, but his dream to go “Slow Astern” and watch thirty centuries of the past is especially interesting. Waugh is apparently sure that the last thirty centuries are more interesting than the next thirty will be, and certainly more worthy of observation. From the beginning, we see Waugh preferring the past to the future, something that H.G. Wells and his protagonist never consider, as the plot of *The Time Machine* takes place entirely in the future.

Strangely, *A Little Learning* ends with a suicide attempt, as the young Waugh swims out into the ocean intending to drown himself, only to be driven back by a swarm of jellyfish (230). In this case, it seems that the young Waugh saw the future as something to be avoided at all costs. When he gained the shore again, the book reads, he

“climbed the sharp hill that led to all the years ahead” (230). Waugh is not able to avoid the future, however much he might wish to do so, and it is no understatement to say that someone who attempts suicide must often struggle with an acute fear of “all the years ahead”. Of course, not long after this episode, Waugh publishes *Decline and Fall* (1928), his first novel, which sets him on the road to fame and fortune. Despite a rocky beginning in some respects, Waugh’s future does not turn out to be the “dreariest of prospects,” but throughout most of it Waugh continues to dream about the past.

*A Little Learning* was the last of Waugh’s books, and it is not uncommon for a man of sixty to be nostalgic about the past or fearful of the future. However, unlike many who write autobiographies in their later lives, Waugh was not especially nostalgic about his own time period. In fact, Waugh tended to regard the twentieth century as a time of rapid and irrevocable decline. For instance, Waugh especially laments what he called the modern “obliteration of English villages,” writing that

The process is notorious and inevitable. Expostulation is futile, lament tedious. This is part of the grim cyclorama of spoliation which surrounded all English experience in this century and any understanding of the immediate past (which presumably is the motive for reading a book such as this) must be incomplete unless this huge deprivation of the quiet pleasures of the eye is accepted as a dominant condition...To have been born into a world of beauty, to die amid ugliness, is the common fate of all us exiles. (*LL* 33)

Waugh’s “world of beauty” exists before he is born in 1903, but, he implies, not very long after. Waugh says “I was instinctively drawn to the ethos I now recognise as mid-Victorian” (*LL* 48). He says he loved visiting his aunts when he was a child because their house “belonged to another age which I instinctively, even then, recognised as superior to my own” (*LL* 48). Repeating the words “instinctively” and “recognised” within two paragraphs of each other emphasizes Waugh’s dependence on the past for the formation

of his own ideology. Even as a small child, Waugh was already comparing the present unfavorably to what he considered the Victorian past, and this comparison follows him throughout his literary career.

Many critics, both when Waugh was alive and today, tend to over-generalize his respect for the old, for the Victorian, and for a world that has passed, as class snobbery. Waugh is often blamed for a predilection towards the aristocracy and contempt for those outside his social circle. In a 1946 article in *Time*, Waugh is described in a way that would define him for decades:

Evelyn Waugh is a devout Catholic. He is also a devout esthete and a devout snob. This week, in LIFE, he wrote an open letter to U.S. readers of his best-selling *Brideshead Revisited*, which showed that these three traits are inseparable parts of his fastidious revulsion from the godless, uncivilized age in which he finds himself.

In 2008, a writer in *The Economist* agreed wholeheartedly, saying that “Evelyn Waugh was a world-class snob and social climber, an aesthete whose rigid religious convictions were rarely matched by their practical application.” Waugh himself agreed with this characterization, at least partly. He wrote a letter to an Irish newspaper in 1947 declaring “I think perhaps your reviewer is right in calling me a snob; that is to say I am happiest in the company of the European upper-classes” (*Letters* 255). While Waugh did indeed prefer what he considered the finer things and the finer people, this did not have as much bearing on his writings as some people like to believe it did.

To call Waugh’s *writing* snobbish, or to claim that he is advocating the aristocratic over the proletarian and simply being unfair, misses the mark somewhat. Donald Greene implies that Waugh was far more of an equal-opportunity satirist whose aristocratic characters are hardly portrayed as superior. “Of the great majority of

Waugh's upper-class characters, there are few who cannot be described as either nonentities, fools, dupes, figures of fun, insufferable, crooked or cads" (Greene 454). Ann Pasternak Slater says simply "When people repeat the familiar, the comforting canard that Waugh was a snob, it is the stale half-truth of prejudice" (38). This is indeed a half-truth, because Waugh's novels are not consistently snobbish about people—very few of his characters are portrayed as superior—but they *are* consistently snobbish about *ages*.

It is no great revelation to say that Waugh considered the age in which he lived to be, as the title of his first novel suggests, declined and fallen. His ideology was formed at a young age in his aunts' stuffy parlor; it is dominated by a nostalgia for a better time, a "world of beauty," in which Englishness is virtually homogenous and unaffected by the influences of modernity, class conflict and surging colonial identities. This Golden Age to which Waugh compares modernity is somewhat Victorian in character but not completely; much of it is imaginary. Waugh's best description of the "world of beauty" occurs in a 1952 letter to his close friend Nancy Mitford. Waugh writes,

I am afraid you are right when you say that there are no ladies & gentlemen now. It was a most important distinction basic to English health & happiness. You see we are the most elaborately stratified people in the world but no one, unless he makes it his special hobby, knows [anything] about the strata except those immediately above & below his own. Everyone was convinced that there was a great impassible line between 'gentlemen' and 'the lower classes' and everyone drew that line immediately below his own feet....In the nineteenth century there was a universal common accent for all the educated. Also a moral code attached which the 18<sup>th</sup> century knew nothing of, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the high aristocracy seldom observed. The great thing was that *everyone* thought himself a gentleman and closely allied with Dukes, and everyone below him contemptible. So there was a stable, contented society. (*Letters* 364)

The England of the past, according to Waugh, consisted of three important things, each responsible for “health & happiness” as well as “a stable, contented society.” First, there was a clear distinction between “ladies & gentlemen” and everyone else, and it was easy for an outside observer to determine who was a gentleman and who was not, such as by a universal, educated accent. Secondly, there was a moral code that, even though it was not always followed, was nevertheless the standard of comparison. Finally, there was a shared delusion among everyone that the line separating “gentleman” from common existed “immediately below his own feet.” To illustrate this final point, Waugh says “‘You’re no lady’ was the traditional battle cry between two drunken charwomen scratching out each others eyes in a pub” (*Letters* 364). In other words, when Englishness was what Waugh believed it should be, even the lowest of the low thought themselves gentlemanly even when they clearly were not. This lower-class delusion, Waugh contends, was useful in order to keep the society stable and content.

When Waugh says there are no ladies and gentleman “today” he is referring to the twentieth century and most especially to the England he observes around himself. Not only have the lower classes ceased to regard themselves, albeit incorrectly, as ladies and gentlemen, but the upper classes have ceased as well, and the once homogenous moral code of the nineteenth century is, in Waugh’s view, universally ignored. As we will see in two of Waugh’s novels, the metropolitan *Decline and Fall* and the colonial *Black Mischief* (1932), Waugh passes specific sorts of blame onto all aspects of society. The upper class, in Waugh’s view, casts away their better nature in favor of hedonism and ludicrous modernity, thereby erasing the class distinctions he believed to be necessary. In addition, upstart colonial and lower-class identities are also threatening this view of

Englishness. For Evelyn Waugh, maintaining the division between gentleman and common man, between English and colonial, also means retaining ideology, culture, and all that makes Englishness what it is.

Thus, while his satirical novels are tremendously funny, they also echo a fear of coming darkness and issue a warning against the dissolution, or perhaps the *dilution*, of traditional Englishness as he sees it. Joan Acocella, in a recent book review for *The New Yorker*, says that Waugh “sees the world as fallen . . . he took sin seriously and wondered how goodness could survive against it.” “This problem,” she continues, “underlies all his novels” (69). James Carens, writing forty years earlier, agrees; Waugh’s satire is concerned with “the decay of a civilization, futile sensuality leading to boredom, [and] the poverty of spiritual life” (13). Carens goes on to call Waugh a modernist and compare him to T. S. Eliot, because he “shared the disillusionment and disgust to which *The Waste Land* gave quintessential expression” (13). The reasons for modernist “disillusionment and disgust” are varied; for some the problem is war, for others the decay of liberalism, and still others are more concerned with spiritual decay. Waugh is disillusioned and disgusted, certainly, but he is most bothered by changing ideology and a rapidly eroding class structure, because these are outward symptoms of the change from a stable and moral society into what he sees as an unstable and immoral one. Stephen Greenblatt says that “in Waugh’s satiric vision, seemingly trivial events. . . are symbols of a massive, irreversible, and terrifying victory of barbarism and the powers of darkness over civilization and light” (4). Evelyn Waugh, therefore, is a sort of Jeremiah, lamenting over a wasted Jerusalem, joining his fellow modernists in a funeral dirge for the civilized world. The key word here is “civilized;” there is an implicit call in Waugh’s

novels for a return to what he sees as English morality and hierarchy. Since such a return is impossible, there is no hope for a New Jerusalem, and the hopeless comparison of new to old is the basis of Waugh's satire.

Though Evelyn Waugh famously admits his prophecy of destruction, at the same time he denies that he is a satirist. In his essay "Fan-Fare," Waugh contends

Satire is a matter of period. It flourishes in a stable society and presupposes homogeneous moral standards—the early Roman Empire and eighteenth century Europe. It is aimed at inconsistency and hypocrisy. It exposes polite cruelty and folly by exaggerating them. It seeks to produce shame. All this has no place in the Century of the Common Man where vice no longer pays lip service to virtue. The artist's only service to the disintegrated society of today is to create little independent systems of order of his own. I foresee in the dark age opening that the scribes may play the part of the monks after the first barbarian victories. They were not satirists. (*Essays* 304)

Satire, according to Waugh, only works when the society in which it is produced is moral enough to take a stand against immorality. This does not mean that the society *itself* was moral but, as Waugh credits the nineteenth century, they *did* have an agreed-upon moral code to use as a comparison. Waugh's template for comparison with the fallen modern era, the Eden-like *status quo ante* compared to the Land of Nod, is a "stable society" with "homogenous moral standards." The early Roman Empire and eighteenth-century Europe were hardly stable and moral, but they did produce Petronius, Catullus, Pope and Swift because they could at least *conceive* perfection in a moral and hierarchical sense. Waugh contends that the age in which he lives, and to which he gives the tongue-in-cheek name "the Century of the Common Man," has no such definite moral compass and therefore cannot produce satire.

But Waugh *does* produce satire, great, hilarious piles of it, and in doing so he compares the modern world to a pseudo-Victorian ideal that never worked perfectly, even

in the Victorian Age. Waugh uses the term “Century of the Common Man” ironically, to show that all men have become “common” in the modern age, whereas all things gentlemanly were abandoned not long after Victoria died. This is, of course, an overgeneralization of both ages, but stereotype is often very useful for satire. Waugh is judging society against his own ideology, a nostalgia constructed with bits of Victorian morality, traditional views of both the domestic and colonial Others, and even a bit of the snobbery for which he is often blamed. Waugh’s ideology, as seen in his novels, glorifies an ideal moral code and a rigid power structure. Though the actual past was hardly as moral or peaceful as Waugh’s version of it, and the present is not nearly as awful as he makes it out to be, the Swiftian mirror he holds up distorts both until they fit his independent system of order.

## *DECLINE AND FALL*

Waugh claims he is neither a satirist nor a modernist, but his early novels fit into established definitions of satire and modernism whether he likes it or not. As Jonathan Greenberg writes,

Located between the high and the low, he fits awkwardly into a narrative of the modernist “great divide”; conservative but not extremist, his politics, unlike those of Lewis or Marinetti, have rarely proved interesting to dialecticians. But it is precisely as a satirist, I maintain, that Waugh is important to accounts of modernism. (115)

It is interesting that Greenberg should point out that Waugh’s politics are not interesting to dialecticians. Perhaps this is because his earlier novels are often seen as “frivolous [because] they betray little in the way of overt philosophical content” (Lynch 373). Parts of these novels are frivolous, but Waugh’s work can also convincingly be read as disillusioned and reactionary, and both of these terms are associated with modernism, at least Eliot-esque modernism. The title of his first novel, *Decline and Fall*, directly alludes to Gibbon’s expansive history *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Like the Romans, the English have produced an Empire that reached its height, is declining, and will eventually fall. Hindsight proves that this is true enough, but the argument lies in the reasons for this decline and fall. Gibbon’s fundamental reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire were the decadence and immorality of the patrician and plebeian classes, coupled with the rising power of non-Roman barbarians. In a way, Waugh’s *Decline and Fall* is focused on the same things. *Decline and Fall* makes fun of the English upper classes (patricians) for being decadent and immoral, but it is not too soft on the plebeians either; the middle and lower classes are portrayed as just as bad. Waugh also stages a barbarian

invasion of sorts, as moral weakness and apathy on the part of the establishment allow the non-English hordes such as the Welsh or the Africans to presume too much and exacerbate the situation. In both cases, Waugh blames the decline and fall on a lack of focus, an abandoning of a moral center in favor of the periphery.

People were always immoral in one way or another despite their class; Waugh has no delusions that the populace was more consistently moral in Victorian times. But the Victorians had something Waugh believed the moderns do not: a common ideology based on shared morality and shared Englishness. Though not everyone measured up to the ideal in the time before the Century of the Common Man, the ideal existed and people strove for it. In essence, even gentlemen who did not act gentlemanly nevertheless knew what “gentleman” or “Englishman” was supposed to mean. In his book *Pax Britannica*, James Morris defines what Englishness meant at the time of the Jubilee:

Plain Englishness, in those days [1897], was a principle. The British Empire was most decidedly British....there were specifically British ways of doing things. There were emotions no proper Englishman would display. There were tastes and taboos so pungently British that the whole world knew them, and expected them to be honoured. *The Times*, the club, leaving the gentlemen to their cigars, the stiff upper lip, hunting halloos at midnight by tight young subalterns on guest nights, bacon and eggs, walking around the deck a hundred times each morning, cricket, *Abide with Me*—all these were imperial emblems, symptoms of Britishness, parodied and envied everywhere. (509)

Of course, this does not accurately describe *all* British people in either the colonies or the metropole; in fact, very, very few British adhere to all of these idiosyncrasies. But acting “English,” or behaving in a “British” manner, “was a principle.” Englishness was an accepted rule of conduct, and

The British liked this tart image of themselves, recognized its force and astutely lived up to it. It was an upper-class image, fostered by the public schools and encouraged by artists as different as Kinglake and Henty: it

was an image so totally different from any other, so pronounced of character, so difficult to match or imitate, so rooted in many centuries of national integrity, that in itself it was an instrument of government. It bolstered the unassailable aloofness of the British. It made them seem a people apart, destined to command. (Morris 510)

The Englishness to which Morris says people aspired to in the Victorian Era is similar to Waugh's idea of Englishness. To Waugh, this Englishness did indeed make its adherents seem "a people apart, destined to command." The idea of the English as a superior people, as a people separated from the rest of the world, is what keeps the Empire powerful, or ensured—in Waugh's words—"a stable, contented society." Stereotypical Englishness functions as Althusser's "hope or nostalgia" version of ideology, and it is this stabilizing ideology that Waugh believes has changed beyond repair.

According to Louis Althusser, ideologies as important or as far reaching as "Englishness" have their defenders, institutions whose job is to protect and perpetuate a specific way of looking at the world, thereby maintaining tradition and order. Morris says the image of Englishness was "fostered by the public schools," and in this case the public schools are examples of what Althusser called an "ideological state apparatus," or ISA. ISAs are "social institutions [that] produce in people the tendency to behave and think in socially acceptable ways" (Fiske 1269). The power of the public schools, as well as the power of other ISAs such as family, language, the media, or the political system, lies in their ability to instruct people in the proper ways of behavior within an ideology. This instruction is not limited to visible methods such as lectures or classroom activities; it is both active and passive instruction. As an example, Althusser refers to

one Ideological State Apparatus [that] certainly has the dominant role...This is the School. It takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most

‘vulnerable’, squeezed between the Family State Apparatus and the Educational State Apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of ‘know-how’ wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy).

Althusser tends to blame the ISA’s for propagating what he sees as an oppressive, capitalist ideology, but Waugh is more interested in traditional English ISAs as preservers of Englishness. For Waugh, schools perform an important function by retaining tradition, or by maintaining “the ruling ideology in its pure state.” In *Decline and Fall*, especially, ISAs are portrayed as not as effective as they once were, and in fact Waugh sees them as contributing to the decline.

When Waugh went up to Hertford College, Oxford, in January 1922, he brought with him many ideas about what college life should be. In *A Little Learning*, Waugh writes “it seemed to me that there was a quintessential Oxford which I knew and loved from afar and intended to find” (167). In some ways Waugh *did* find it; he is very positive in his descriptions of Hertford:

“Hertford was also agreeably free both from the schoolboyish ‘college spirit’ which was the bane of many small colleges and of the hooliganism which on occasion broke out against the eccentrics in the larger....It was a tolerant, civilised place in which to lead whatever kind of life appealed to one. (*LL* 164)

However, Waugh is not so complimentary of other Oxford Colleges, and despite his high opinion of Hertford his descriptions of Oxford tend to revolve around heavy drinking and silliness. This would not be so bad—indeed Waugh heartily participates in such revelry—provided that the institution itself retained its dignity, its Englishness, and its status as an ISA. Waugh describes Oxford in 1922 as “very much closer to my father’s

(and, indeed, my great-grandfather's) university than to my children's" (*LL* 167), and he no doubt hopes it will stay that way.

By 1928, however, when Waugh publishes *Decline and Fall*, his opinion of Oxford had deteriorated from his 1922 opinion, and it had not yet been tempered by the thirty-six years it would take to produce the remembrances in *A Little Learning*. *Decline and Fall* begins with a farcical scene of hedonism and vandalism by members of an aristocratic group called the Bollinger Club. "Waugh has been suspected of distorting live models, particularly in *Decline and Fall*" (Feinberg 31), and the Bollingers themselves are a distortion of a real Oxford social group called the Bullingdon Club (Doyle 4). The Bollinger Club, like the Bullingdon, is made up of people with beautiful, important sounding names who behave abysmally. They are certainly not behaving like gentlemen; a better description of the party is to say they are acting "common," as in Waugh's *Century of the Common Man*. Whatever dignity Oxford held—whatever influence it had on "proper" decorum—is lost in the moment.

The opening Bollinger episode is Waugh's unabashed ridicule of the upper-class—after all, he terms these partiers "epileptic royalty" and "illiterate lairds"—and it also speaks out against the shocking tolerance of this by an important institution. Oxford as an ISA is not working as it should. The faculty is not shocked by the smashing of grand pianos and the throwing of a Matisse into the lavatory. Instead, they hide and dream about Founder's port, "only brought up when the college fines have reached £50" (*DF* 228). Fines such as these are of course meaningless to the wealthy, so the only one punished in the whole affair is Paul Pennyfeather, who is expelled not for vandalism but for having his trousers stolen. The faculty members call him "some one of no importance

[who] is not well off” and a person who could not be counted on to pay a fine (*DF* 230-231). The satirical bite of the passage happens when the hiding faculty members discuss whether or not to rescue Pennyfeather from his detrousering:

“Dear me, can it be Lord Rending? I think I ought to intervene.”  
“No, no no. It would be unwise. . . we must at all costs avoid an *outrage*.”  
(*DF* 230)

Thankfully for the faculty, the accosted man turns out to be “only Pennyfeather,” and so they are able to let the scene play out without compunction. Thus, even though the “illiterate lairds” are witnessed to be the ones at fault, it is Pennyfeather that “does the College no good” (*DF* 231). Pennyfeather’s crime is that of being less important than those who attack him.

To see what is generally regarded as a venerable faculty act with such selfishness and complicity is shocking. The Oxford of *Decline and Fall* bears no resemblance to Waugh’s “quintessential Oxford.” *Decline and Fall* assumes an ideal that is not present; the great Oxford is thus portrayed as utterly fatuous. The judgment against Pennyfeather is unfair, and readers recognize this, but the authority of the judges to make such a judgment is never called into question. Much ideological faith is placed in Oxford, and Waugh suggests that, in 1928 at least, this faith is very much misplaced. The fact that the Oxford faculty has such terrible judgment shows how far from ideal the ISA has fallen.

What cements Oxford as a failed ISA, as an authority over what is and is not acceptable that does not properly act on the authority, is the fact that everyone else accepts the judgment without question. The declining and falling spread like a cancer. Pennyfeather’s guardian uses “indecent behaviour” as the perfect excuse to cheat Paul out of five thousand pounds (*DF* 234). Mr. Levy the scholastic agent advertises only the

worst sort of jobs for a person who has euphemistically “discontinued [his] education for personal reasons” (*DF* 234). Dr. Fagan lowers Paul’s already laughable salary for the same reason (*DF* 236). Paul Pennyfeather himself, the person with the most reason to contest such a judgment, never makes a peep about it, merely accepting his expulsion as the order of things. The point here is that Oxford, the lairds, the faculty, indeed the rest of society, are in agreement about this flippant verdict against Pennyfeather and the lenience against the true malefactors. The objects of derision in Waugh’s novel are those who are not acting as they should, but it is important to understand that *he does not attack the system itself*. The problem is not with fundamental arrangements, but how these fundamental arrangements have been lately ignored. Waugh indicates that the Oxford ISA should enforce morality, but it has not done so, even though adherents to the ideology believe it has.

Oxford is not the only formerly stalwart ISA that Waugh satirizes; the long-suffering Pennyfeather is victimized by a number of them, whereas those that should be punished never are. From Oxford Pennyfeather proceeds to Llanabba, a public school in North Wales, variously described as “pretty bad” and “smelling obscurely of all ghastly smells” (*DF* 235, 238). Llanabba is a second-rate example of the public-school ISA, a poor representation of an institution that should, as Morris put it, “foster” Englishness. Lansing, the fairly reputable school Waugh attended as a boy, is light-years ahead of Llanabba. Waugh describes the headmaster of Lansing in friendly terms: “His outstanding gift was in the choice of subordinates. We were very fortunate in almost all the masters he appointed” (*LL* 99). In the actual North Wales school where Waugh was a master for two terms, the worst he says of headmaster Mr. Vanhomrigh is that “he

procrastinated and he improvised” (*LL* 223). But the headmaster of Llanabba is another story entirely.

Augustus Fagan, headmaster of Llanabba, is presented as a self-righteous fool. He is obsessed with protocol and social graces and exhibits a sort of celebrity-worship of the aristocracy. As Dr. Fagan laments before his Annual School Sports extravaganza,

Frankly I am at a loss to understand my own emotions. I can think of no entertainment that fills me with greater detestation than a display of competitive athletics, none—except possibly folk dancing. If there are two women in the world whose company I abominate—and there are very many more than two—they are Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde and Lady Circumference. (*DF* 275)

Nevertheless, Fagan is “filled with a wholly delightful exhilaration” at the thought of the festivities. He throws himself into the preparations, ordering what he considers to be the best of everything, including flowers and fireworks, in an attempt to impress those he believes to be his social betters. He hates sports, he hates the most aristocratic of his aristocratic guests, but he still believes his party thrown under the guise of children’s sport is “too good an opportunity to be missed” (*DF* 265). Waugh characterizes him as a sycophant and a hapless social climber, and neither he nor the masters he employs affect the students in any positive way. Nevertheless, in the world of *Decline and Fall*, Fagan prospers no matter what happens. When Llanabba school is shut down, he turns up again as the proprietor of a “Home Secretary Approved Private Sanatorium” (*DF* 404). He is well-off enough, in fact, to give an impassioned dinner speech in praise of “Fortune, a much-maligned Lady” (*DF* 407). It is interesting that Fortune should favor Fagan thusly; his pretension and cluelessness should cause him to fall fast and hard. But the world has fallen instead, and nothing is like it was before. In Waugh’s imagined *status quo ante*, when the upper classes adhered to correct ideological practices, and the schools

functioned correctly, a man like Fagan would have conceivably been exposed as the fraud he is.

The school that has fallen the farthest in *Decline and Fall* is probably Harrow. Along with Eton, Harrow is traditionally regarded as the best of England's public schools; it has long been a producer of what many people would call "gentlemen." In *Decline and Fall*, Harrow is only mentioned as the school that produced Captain Grimes, a man whose exploits prompt Prendergast to describe him by saying simply "He isn't a gentleman" (*DF* 240). Truly, Grimes is no gentleman; he is a drunk, a bigamist and a pederast, certainly not the best example of a quintessential "Old Harrovian," but instead perhaps a common example in both senses of the word. Harrow still maintains a reputation as a fine and upstanding ISA, which is why a thoroughly odious character like Grimes can do what he wishes and suffer no enduring consequences. He is a "public-school man" who, by virtue of his inclusion in the elite ranks of English public schools, "[has] been put on [his] feet more often than any living man" (*DF* 247). Grimes' faith in the English social system has not been mislaid, because his social connections save him from a forced suicide, a court-martial, and various unmentionable indiscretions as a schoolmaster.

For some critics, the question of Grimes's success is confusing:

The early novels of Evelyn Waugh, although uproariously funny, make puzzling reading for those who feel that it ought to be possible to identify, in a satire, the moral point of view of the author. This is perhaps especially true of his first novel: *Decline and Fall*. Since its publication in 1928, many readers have commented on the difficulty of discovering any 'secure system of values' in a novel where the innocent suffer and the vicious go unpunished. (McCulloch 30)

The reason why Waugh's sense of values is difficult to discover in *Decline and Fall* is because it seems to be contradictory; the good-hearted Pennyfeather suffers, while morally reprobate Grimes gets off scot-free. But *Decline and Fall* is a satirical approximation of the way Waugh sees the world, and the correct way of things has both declined and fallen. To Waugh, success *should* be given to Old Harrovians, but Old Harrovians should also be deserving of what their status attains. The reason they are not is because the tenets of Englishness, as Waugh defines them, are no longer being followed. Grimes might be identified as a Harrovian, but his description makes it clear that he is not fit to bear the name. Again, this idea assumes that there exists a quintessential Harrovian, an idea of the public school man that is widespread enough to see Grimes as a travesty disrupting a long line of excellence.

In a perfect world, Harrow and Llanabba would produce only gentlemen, but in the Century of the Common Man Harrow produces Captain Grimes. Though the boys at Llanabba are upper class and even peers in some cases, it is likewise difficult to see them as gentleman. Their parents are even worse; not even Jay Gatsby has a more shameful source of income than Lady Metroland, whose wealth and status are predicated upon white slavery and a chain of South American brothels. Lord Circumference is merely inconvenienced by “[running] over a fool of a boy” (*DF* 281), and Lady Circumference is likewise inconvenienced by the death of her own son, which merely serves to keep her from snubbing someone properly (*DF* 356). Because of aristocrats like these, the line between gentleman and common is so confused as to be nonexistent.

As Englishness is being abandoned by those presumably steeped in it, it is also being overrun by the Other. People who were never considered part of the establishment

are overstepping their assigned boundaries in the modern age. Waugh laughs at the upper classes, but his treatment of the outsiders who are not worthy of entrance into the circle is vitriolic at the very best. James Carens calls these characters “grotesque” and says they belong “to a social group that somehow fails to be a part of the aristocracy” (61). The “somehow” that Carens alludes to is not as amorphous as one might expect; they fail to be a part of the aristocracy because they are simply not a part of it. Most of the outsiders in *Decline and Fall* are present at Dr. Fagan’s Annual School Sports. The Sports are a good example of what Althusser termed “practices. . . within the material existence of an ideological apparatus [such as] a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports club, a school day [or] a political party meeting.” Normally, such a function within an ISA would fortify hierarchies and instruct the participants in social practices, but such things are fallen, so the social aspects of the School Sports turn out to be simply confused.

For example, the sometime clergyman Prendergast aspires to similar social standing as Fagan, or perhaps Pennyfeather, but fails miserably. Prendergast had his chance to be a member of the clergy, therefore transcending class to some degree and becoming part of a very powerful ISA. But, as he himself admits, “my *Doubts* began” (*DF* 249), and so that social standing is denied him. Grimes, odious as he is, can claim Harrow, but Prendy’s attempt to identify himself with a prestigious school involves wearing “a blazer of faded stripes” (*DF* 274) which no one recognizes. Prendergast is an example of the lower-class Other who has no business at such an event but nevertheless attends. Nothing good comes from this. At the Sports, Prendy gets drunk, embarrasses himself tremendously, and accidentally shoots little Lord Tangent in the foot (*DF* 284).

In scenes that would not normally be included in a comic novel, Prendergast causes the death of a child and then is himself murdered by having his head sawn off. Interestingly, nobody else dies in the book.

The butler Sir Solomon Philbrick is yet another example of a lower-class individual who crashes the party. He shows up in “a mustard-coloured suit of plus-fours and a diamond tie pin” (*DF* 275) and, with his skills as a pathological liar, inserts himself “as one of the guests” (*DF* 289). Like Grimes, Philbrick’s excesses meet with no punishment, and at the end of the novel he is still masquerading as a lord and getting away with it. If such a person is likewise allowed into polite society—and indeed Philbrick seems to move about in whatever circles he wishes—then it is impossible to satisfactorily determine if anyone is truly a “gentleman.” Philbrick therefore cuts at the heart of what Waugh believes constitutes Englishness—a strict and unchangeable hierarchy.

Philbrick offers to shoot the Llanabba Silver Band when they first arrive, and Fagan, who invited them to the Sports, is so revolted by their appearance that he remarks “I refuse to believe the evidence of my eyes...these creatures simply do not exist” (*DF* 278). The band are Welsh, and Welshmen are traditionally thought of and portrayed by English writers as childlike, uncivilized buffoons. As Waugh describes them, the Welsh are “of revolting appearance... low of brow, crafty of eye and crooked of limb... they slavered at their mouths, which hung loosely over their receding chins” (*DF* 278). In 1920, about eight years before the publication of *Decline and Fall*, Edward Snyder exhaustively searched through the extant English canon and found prejudice abounding against the Welsh. He writes, “The Welsh were most frequently attacked for their

dialectical peculiarities, their undue pride in genealogy, their marriage customs, their habits of eating, and the ignorance and poverty of their clergy” (184). Snyder cites Shakespeare as making Welshmen the butt of the joke “in at least ten cases . . . usually through [their] overwhelming stupidity” (155). In the 1970s, native Welshman Raymond Williams speaks of Wales as always oppressed and subordinated by England and Englishness,

[the Welsh] have had to put up with a version of who they are, what their interests are, what their energies and their resources should be used for, in the name of this unity called `England' . . . not just the version abroad, but the more effective version at home. (*Are We Becoming More Divided?* 187)

Williams’s imposed identity went even further than this; in a different essay he speaks of Welshness becoming synonymous with proletarian, mainly because of Anglicization and exportation of the Welsh upper classes. As he writes in “Wales and England” (1983):

English law and political administration were ruthlessly imposed, within an increasingly centralized `British’ state. The Welsh language was made the object of systematic discrimination and, where necessary, repression. Succeeding phases of a dominant Welsh landowning class were successfully Anglicized and either physically or politically drawn away to the English centre. Anglicizing institutions, from the boroughs to the grammar schools, were successfully implanted. All these processes can properly be seen as forms of political and cultural colonization. (22)

In effect, Wales was one of England’s very first colonies, and the Welsh were often treated as an oppressed and colonized people, always lower on the social scale than their English counterparts.

This is a strange characterization of the Welsh to say the least. History tells us plainly that the Welsh were *not* always considered proletarian; kings and queens of England trace their lineage through Wales, as do prominent politicians, prime ministers and other notable personalities. But according to Dr. Fagan, who considers himself

enough of an expert to write a monograph on the subject ironically entitled *Mother Wales*, even these notables are part of a dangerous Other:

“I often think,” he continued, “that we can trace almost all the disasters of English history to the influence of Wales. Think of Edward of Carnarvon, the first Prince of Wales, a perverse life...and an unseemly death, then the Tudors and the dissolution of the Church, then Lloyd George, the temperance movement, Non-conformity and lust stalking hand in hand through the country, wasting and ravaging.” (DF 280)

Fagan’s audience agrees with his pronouncements fervently; at the end of *Decline and Fall* Fagan’s book has become a bestseller. Stubbs calls it “most illuminating” and even Pennyfeather says it is “eloquently written” (DF 413). The Welsh themselves seem to prove the veracity of Fagan’s claims, not only with their seemingly revolting physical appearance but also with their willingness to blaspheme for an extra pound and cheat each other out of money. The presence of the Welsh, whether in the form of the Llanabba Silver Band or as historical royalty, merely add to the chaos of a fallen ideology. Waugh adheres to this tradition, this ideological treatment of the Welsh, and his descriptions of the Llanabba Silver Band also prefigure his treatment of other colonized people.

The African and colonial Others are represented in *Decline and Fall* by Sebastian Cholmondley, or “Chokey” the Negro. Here is a man who, in his study of literature, architecture and other facets of English culture, attempts to assimilate himself into a social realm where, as an African, he is clearly not welcome. Were Chokey an Oliver Twist, or a Becky Sharp, it might be possible for readers to have some sympathy for his attempts at social acceptance. However, this is no feel-good *Bildungsroman*, and Chokey is portrayed without any sympathy whatsoever. At first glance, with the eyes and sensibilities of a twenty-first century reader, the brunt of the parody seems to be directed

towards the aristocratic characters, who seem absurdly racist. Sam Clutterbuck says “niggers...have uncontrollable passions,” which he blames on “their nature. Animal, you know” (*DF* 291), while both the Clutterbuck governess and Colonel Sidebotham tell horrible stories of an African propensity for violence. The Vicar is the worst of all: “The mistake was giving them their freedom,” he says, “They were far happier and better looked after before” (*DF* 294). By having the upper-class characters refer to Chokey in this way, Waugh runs the very real danger of being too mean and causing satire-killing sympathy. However, Chokey is portrayed in such a manner that *he actually seems to deserve it*. Rather than being a sympathetic character, Chokey is a minstrel-show stereotype. “Waugh occasionally permits himself a parody of attitudes which strike him as absurd, and there is an element of racial snobbery which prompts him to turn this technique against Negroes” (Carens 63). This “racial snobbery” is a logical extension of Waugh’s theories of Englishness. It is absurd for Chokey—as he is described—to think he can belong to the ideology Waugh portrays as antithetical to him.

Chokey is laughably ignorant, asking people if they had ever “read Shakespeare [or] heard of a writer called Thomas Hardy” (*DF* 293, 297). He gives an “impassioned speech, savoring of the rhetoric of revivalism” (Carens 63) about the “poor coloured man,” but this is peppered with self-derogatory comments of which he seems to be unaware. Chokey says his race “[has] the child’s love of song and colour and the child’s natural good taste” (*DF* 293) echoing the same racist sentiment that makes the word *boy* a racial slur. He says he likes cathedrals because “I sure am crazy about culture” and then offers to *sing a song* to endear himself (*DF* 292)! Chokey is then proven to be violent, just as was predicted by the party-goers, when Margot offhandedly tells Lady

Circumference that he “shot a man at a party the other night” (*DF* 295). As if this was not enough, he then shows his “uncontrollable passions” by asking Flossie “to go to Reigate with him for the week end” (*DF* 297), a thinly veiled indecent proposal indeed. In effect, Chokey is set up as a straw man against racial-superiority arguments, and is thus the most extreme victim of Waugh’s satire.

Chokey cannot succeed. He leaves the novel right after the Sports scene, presumably because Margot has become “rather bored with colored people” (*DF* 294), but his influence remains. Though he has been unsuccessful in his attempt to be included, he nevertheless considers English literature and English cathedrals to be the best the world can offer in terms of culture. Chokey says “I’d give all the jazz in the world for just one little stone from one of your cathedrals” (*DF* 292) and there is little doubt that he means it. Nevertheless, Waugh implies, the beauty and order represented by cathedral-stones is long gone, replaced by a world in which Lady Metroland can bring a Negro to a party as her romantic consort. Jazz has therefore replaced cathedrals, and modern multiculturalism has effectively destroyed what Waugh considers necessary to preserve.

Perhaps the best symbol of this destruction of the beautiful past is precipitated by Lady Metroland on her own lavish residence. Waugh sets up King’s Thursday as a symbol of lost English beauty, a final holdover from a less complex and more genteel age. Its beauty, and subsequent descent into modern ghastliness, represents Waugh’s claim that he was “born into a world of beauty [and destined] to die amid ugliness” (*LL* 33). Rather than preserve “the finest piece of domestic Tudor in England,” (*DF* 326) Margot Beste-Chetwynde turns it into a modern, glass-and-steel monstrosity. In effect,

King's Thursday represents the final destruction of the past, the *status quo ante* in which gentlemen existed, the lower classes behaved themselves, and Victorian morals dominated Englishness.

The novel ends with Paul thinking about the "ascetic Ebionites," an ancient group of outsiders who committed the sin of "turn[ing] towards Jerusalem when they prayed" (*DF* 416). Paul says it was "quite right to suppress them," those pretenders to the true faith. He might as well have been talking about Chokey, Prendy, or the Welsh stationmaster, each of whom were either willing or unwilling iconoclasts and were punished for it. By satirizing those people who are either too immoral or too Other to be representatives of Englishness, Evelyn Waugh effectively endorses a homogenous English ideology and perpetuates the idea that the Englishman is an attractive stereotype. The English class system, in Waugh's view, is disintegrating, and the new world coming is one of lower class pretension and upper class degeneracy. Though his novel chronicles the decline of this system and not its outright fall, it is difficult to believe that the system was ever as healthy as Waugh seems to believe it was when situated in Victorian stability. In Waugh's satire, where presumably anything can happen, not one of the fictional characters lives up to the impossibly high standards he sets for them. Nevertheless, Waugh contends that only by achieving these standards and perpetuating the ideology can the decline and fall be avoided.

## *BLACK MISCHIEF*

Evelyn Waugh made three trips to Ethiopia in his lifetime; after the first one he wrote *Black Mischief*, and after the second and third came *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936).

Waugh is not usually very complimentary towards Africans in general, and the Abyssinians offended him greatly.

The essence of the offence was that the Abyssinians, in spite of being by any possible standard an inferior race, persisted in behaving as superiors....the Abyssinians saw us as a people to be suspected, delayed, frustrated in our most innocent intentions, lied to, whenever truth was avoidable, and set against one another by hints of preferential treatment. (WA 35, 76)

At a time when most of the non-Fascist world had a soft spot for Ethiopia, especially in their conflict with Mussolini's Italy, Waugh was conspicuously pro-Italian. As one publisher said, "Waugh seems to like the Italians and I don't and I don't imagine very many other people do—at least as regards their adventuring in Empire" (*Essays* 157).

When it became clear that World War II was around the corner, Waugh publicly disavowed his pro-Italian stance (WA xxix), which leads me to believe that he was not so much pro-Italian in 1935 as he was anti-Abyssinian.

It would be easy to call Waugh a racist or an imperialist and be done with it; indeed, many of his views did lean in that direction. But Waugh's experiences in Ethiopia were not all bad; one in particular complicates both his view of Abyssinia and his own ideology considerably. On the road to the Ethiopian town of Dessye, Waugh finds himself enjoying the hospitality of a local ruler called Dedjasmach Matafara.

Waugh was enchanted with this foray into ancient Abyssinia, and dismayed at the prospect of such a culture dying out. He writes

It had been more than a pleasant interlude; it had been a glimpse of the age-old, traditional order that still survived, gracious and sturdy, out of sight beyond the brass bands and bunting, the topees and humane humbug of Tafari's regime; of an order doomed to destruction. Whatever the outcome of the present war [with Italy]: mandate or conquest or internationally promoted native reform—whatever resulted at Geneva or Rome or Addis Ababa, Dedjasmach Matafara and all he stood for was bound to disappear. But we were pleased to have seen it and touched hands across the centuries with the court of Prester John. (WA 202)

Waugh finds himself terribly nostalgic for an ancient, and wholly African, way of life. Compared to the tackiness and “humbug” of the Ethiopian capital, the ancient ways of Dedjasmach Matafara are deeply impressive. As Waugh laments the fact that change will destroy this fine old world, the comments about race and superiority are set aside.

Four years earlier, in 1932, Waugh published *Black Mischief*, and this silly satire involving the fictional African kingdom of Azania also shows Waugh's conflicting beliefs about race, Empire, and the past. The action of the novel is driven by the force-feeding of European ideas and sensibilities to a native culture, and it shows the catastrophe that occurs when this culture is abandoned in favor of a poor imitation of Europeans. *Black Mischief* is a satire that advocates separation, a return to a time when Africans were being African instead of imitating Europeans, and the Europeans themselves were divested from Empire and all its negative influences. “Satire,” writes Edward Bloom, “best makes its points by attending to sources and instances of failure in human behavior or institutions” (33). Bloom's definition works well in the case of *Black Mischief*, because the Azanians are made ridiculous in their pursuit of modernity,

whereas the Europeans are made undeservedly proud of themselves by their interaction with what they see as a presumptuous and clearly inferior people.

There is no doubt that Waugh has Ethiopia in mind when he writes *Black Mischief*, and there is also no doubt that Waugh is very rarely impressed with the place. His interaction with the country first begins in the fall of 1930, when he witnesses the coronation of Haile Selassie as Emperor of Ethiopia. Addison Southard, a *National Geographic* reporter assigned to the coronation, speaks of the ceremony in glowing terms:

For five hours then we witness the unfolding of the ancient and traditional Hebraic-Christian ceremony of the crowning of a ruler of the Empire of Ethiopia....This is a day when [Ethiopia] may, and does, show its impressive might and splendor....The Emperor, whose name may be Anglicized as Power of the Trinity, is vested first with his sword of gold studded with precious stones. (681-682)

Waugh is predictably more cynical. He records in his diary simply “Coronation Sunday interminable service, 6:30-12:30. Ritual made ludicrous by cinema operators” (*The Diaries* 332). Selassie’s crown, called “magnificent” by the American author, is made cheap and pitiful by Waugh, who says “It had never been very beautiful or very valuable. Now it was a pathetic, commonplace thing” (WA 230). Waugh calls much of what other reporters write about the coronation “extravagant fables,” writing that

It was customary for apologists to liken the coronation of Ethiopia to that of medieval Europe....[In Europe there was] metal, stone, ivory and wood worked in a tradition of craftsmanship which makes succeeding generations compete for their humblest product. It was significant to turn from that to the artificial silk and painted petrol cans of Addis Ababa. (WA 141)

It seems like Waugh goes out of his way to deride the attempts of the Ethiopians to be solemn or glorious; all looks to him like a cheap European imitation. Waugh is

exasperated with people who pretend that Ethiopia is in any way modern or the equal of any other sovereign nation. In a *Times* dispatch in 1930, he says “It is absurd to pretend that Ethiopia is a civilized nation in any Western sense of the word” (WA xv).

However, despite Waugh’s insulting depiction of Addis Ababa and surrounds, the most thoroughly modern and Western-imitating part of the country, he found redeemable qualities in the hinterland. Despite being utterly vicious to the pretenders, Waugh sees beauty in the primitive outliers. He describes tribal chiefs as aesthetic wonders; “The old chiefs, almost without exception, looked superb...in their general effect...those old warriors were magnificent” (WA 145). The main idea of Waugh’s commentary is that the Africans are perfectly fine *as Africans*, provided they dress up in lion skins and eat raw meat. It is when they presume to modernity or, worse, Englishness, that he gets upset. This anger is clear enough in *Waugh in Abyssinia*, but it is in the satirical descriptions of Azania that Waugh becomes truly vicious.

*Black Mischief* paints Waugh as a sort of ideological snob, a man whose “real allegiance is to an ideal of aristocratic life which exists only in his imagination” (Carens 136). This aristocratic ideal is Waugh’s *status quo ante*, and the principal antagonism in *Black Mischief* is the attempt by certain people (Africans, Arabs, the French) to cultivate the same sort of English ideal that is, *by nature*, beyond them. “The way things ought to be” is written into the code at the very beginning: Africans are barbarians, be they educated, be they emperors, be they anything else. To Waugh, it is important to believe that only the English are civilized, and only they bring civilization with them wherever they go. In this way *Black Mischief* can be seen as “a tribute to the English capacity for

recreating England in unlikely places” (Garnett 89) as well as proof that the “lower orders” have no capacity to create a similar tranquility.

There are two major assumptions Waugh makes in *Black Mischief* in order to drive the action of the novel. The first is that the *status quo ante* British ideology was superior to all others and any attempt by Africans to duplicate it was destined to be ridiculous. Secondly, “Waugh is apparently convinced that everything meaningful—the British Empire as a civilizing force, the English aristocracy, Western civilization, the English language itself—is threatened, near dissolution, or dying” (Carens 136). While Carens is correct both in this estimation of Waugh’s pessimism and his adherence to an imagined ideal, he does not give enough attention to the solution Waugh offers in *Black Mischief*. Instead, Carens lumps the novel in with Waugh’s earlier satires and looks to later novels as proof of Waugh’s belief in spiritual development and Catholicism as solutions. However, Waugh’s spirituality has nothing to do with preserving his imagined ideology in the face of African influence. He suggests in *Black Mischief* that the influence of the African pretenders is so corrupting that there *is no* solution other than complete separation. In other words, *Black Mischief* illustrates Waugh’s belief that African barbarism infects all those who come in contact with it. It is this contact, this attempt by Africans to be civilized and by the Europeans to civilize them, that Waugh believes causes both sides to be made worse.

First and foremost, *Black Mischief* is a critical satire of Africans in general and their cultural inability to be civilized. Waugh’s treatment of this subject of fun begins and ends with the Emperor Seth, his caricature of Haile Selassie. In terms of class dynamics, Seth is at the very tip of the nobility in his little Empire, but among Europeans

he is hardly as admired. At Oxford he is “an undergraduate of no account ... amiably classed among Bengali babus, Siamese and grammar school scholars as one of the remote and praiseworthy people who had come a long way to the University” (*BM* 146).

Nevertheless, Seth thinks enough of his experience at Oxford to include it in his official name; he is “Emperor of Azania, Chief of the Chiefs of the Sakuyu, Lord of Wanda and Tyrant of the Seas, Bachelor of the Arts of Oxford University,” (*BM* 21). His BA from Oxford is as important to him as the rest; he was “dazzled by the enlightenment he received at Oxford” (McCartney 137). Unfortunately, it is virtually certain that Oxford remembers him only minutely if at all. Ian Littlewood points out that

what Waugh does by inserting the definite article in Seth’s academic title, Bachelor of *the* Arts, is to undermine the very claim it is making: Seth has not acquired the cultural refinements of western civilization, he has not even understood the initials he is using as their symbol (30).

If Chokey is a straw-man set up to personify stereotypes, Seth is a straw-man further anthropomorphized with a crown and an ego large enough to declare that “I am the New Age; I am the Future” (*BM* 22) while he “builds railroads that go nowhere and equips his barefoot, spear-carrying army with a tank” (McCartney 25). Seth’s “persistent struggle to transform Azania into Europe provides the novel with its running gag” (McCartney 137). It is funny precisely because it is seen as so impossible. Waugh makes it clear that the Africans cannot be civilized, and for Seth to preach about modernization is ludicrous.

*Black Mischief* is a racist novel, and race is understood ideologically in much the same way in *Decline and Fall*. Race is a “significant producer of social difference” and is inextricably tied to ideas of class (Fiske 1268). It is all well and good to pretend that Azania (Ethiopia) is a sovereign country on equal terms with others, but even though it is not technically part of any European colony it is still seen as an inferior part of the

system. Though many at the time would be quick to deny it, ideas of racial superiority were integral to ideas of Empire.

In practice, however, it was a racialist Empire—what *was* Empire, Lord Roseberry had once rhetorically asked, but the predominance of race? Awkwardly lying between the lines of the Jubilee manifestos, with all their warmth of family feeling, were ineradicable instincts of racial superiority, inherited perhaps from the slave-masters of the earliest English colonies, and fortified in Victoria's day by pseudo-scientific theory and fuzzy-wuzzy wars. (Morris 132)

Waugh's ideology, based as it is on Victorian ideas of Empire, places Africans at the bottom of any social structure, so much so that the term "African Emperor" is treated as an oxymoron in *Black Mischief*. Waugh cements this idea with his descriptions of the African peerage. Seth's lords and ladies are all bone-in-the-nose, raw-meat eating savages, and their primary role in the novel is to show just how backward and how barbaric an African copy of a European court can be.

Stephen Greenblatt says that *Black Mischief* is *not* "a vicious, racist attack on the African Negro" and is instead about the "shabbiness of Western culture, the decline and fall of institutions, [and] the savagery underlying society" (16). In fact, it is both at once. David Wykes observes, "[Waugh's] African characters are objects of ridicule, a fact perhaps unmitigated by the fact that European characters are treated even more severely, since generalized judgments apply to blacks and not to whites" (82). While the English in *Black Mischief* are mocked for flaws in personality, or perhaps for being out of touch or overly concerned with trivial matters, the Africans are mocked for more serious offenses such as poverty, gross ignorance, and futile imitation of white culture. As in *Decline and Fall*, the morality, the pride, and possibly the intelligence of the upper class English is questioned in *Black Mischief*, but the hierarchy and the various ISAs that keep

them superior to the colonial Other is not. As for the Africans, not one is portrayed sympathetically.

This is not entirely true; some Africans *are* portrayed sympathetically, but they are relics of the past. Seth's grandfather Amurath the Great, for example, routs a European army that attempts to depose him, and "throughout the highlands his prestige became superhuman. 'I swear by Amurath' was a bond of inviolable sanctity" (*BM* 18). The Azania he builds is indeed impressive, on par with the real Abyssinian kingdom led by Menelik. But as soon as Amurath dies, modernism coupled with a European influx destroys his country:

Debra-Dowa [Azania's capital] gradually lost all evidence of national character. Indians and Armenians came first and continued to come in yearly increasing numbers. Goans, Jews and Greeks followed, and later...mining engineers, prospectors, planters and contractors, on their world wide pilgrimage in quest of cheap concessions. (*BM* 20)

As long as Azania (Ethiopia) maintains the culture and lifestyle of the Dedjasmach Matafara, Waugh implies, they may not be equal to Europeans but they are worthy of respect. Introducing them to modernism turns the noble into the absurd.

Of course, the Emperor Seth makes "modernizing" his Empire a primary aim, but he understands nothing; he is always lost in a sea of ideas that he cannot bring to fruition. Seth "suffers from the absurdities of cultural confusion" (Littlewood 50), meaning that he never realizes the fact that his people are incapable of behaving like Europeans. The tank Seth buys for his army is good only as a "punishment cell" because of the heat, and when he tries to equip his soldiers with boots they "thought they were extra rations...[and] ate the whole bag of tricks" (*BM* 55, 181). Seth's answer to the cannibal ways of the Wanda tribe proves his disconnection from reality. "I am afraid that as yet the Wanda are totally

out of touch with modern thought,” Seth says, “They need education. We must start schools and a university for them when we get things straight” (*BM* 57). The absurdity of building a university for cannibals is meant to be self-evident; the comedy in this scene hinges on this proposition being absurd. Therefore, this scene reinforces Waugh’s opinions of both the Africans and Seth: education is wasted on the whole lot of them. Nearing the end of his short reign, Seth’s proclamations range from the ignorant (printing millions of pounds of his own money) to the absolutely bizarre:

For your information and necessary action; I have decided to abolish the following:  
Death penalty.  
Marriage.  
The Sakuyu language and all native dialects.  
Infant mortality.  
Totemism.  
Inhumane butchery.  
Mortgages.  
Emigration.  
Please see to this. (*BM* 194)

It seems impossible for a man educated at Oxford to honestly believe he can abolish infant mortality, but this is exactly Waugh’s point. Seth *attended* Oxford but was incapable of drawing anything useful from the experience. Seth is the Emperor among a teeming proletariat, the first among the Africans, and yet he cannot seem to understand the simplest of concepts. Seth’s characterization as an African who cannot receive proper education—even when presented with it—helps Waugh point out and confirm a typical Victorian idea. “Nothing irritated the [Victorian] British more than a veneer of Western education without, as they thought, any real understanding of the values it represented” (Morris 140). The idea implicit to this portrayal is that, if Seth is the best among Azanians, then none of them have the skills necessary to be a modern leader. Seth

apparently believes his decree against mortgages *et. al.* is enough to fix all manner of unfixable ills and, with his request to Basil Seal to “Please see to this,” he also betrays a belief that any European has the power to set these fixes in motion. By over-exaggerating both his own power and that of the English, Seth puts himself right where Waugh thinks he belongs: at the bottom looking up.

Besides Seth, the rest of the Africans are bit players, flat characters, and comic stereotypes with the possible exception of Black Bitch, whose unique case I will discuss later. Seth *as the reader knows him* is indeed unlike the Seth perceived by his subjects. Connolly is able to convince the chiefs of Wanda and Sakuyu that Seth was Amurath the Great “come back in another form,” and Amurath was nigh to a god. (*BM* 56). The reaction of the Azanian peerage to their emperor is silly—“One elderly peer, a stickler for old-world manners, prostrated himself fully [before Seth] and went through the mimic action of covering his head with dust” (*BM* 222). Seth accepts the hero-worship and is comically egotistical; only the reader and Seth’s inner circle know him for what he really is, or what Waugh portrays him as, a “black lunatic” (*BM* 203). Seth is a lunatic primarily because of his belief that his people can be modernized, and “he represents the self-defeating attempt arbitrarily to impose Western culture on a non-Western nation” (Garnett 84). Through this portrayal, Waugh expects his readers to learn that Africans cannot be made Western, Azanians or any similar colonials cannot be dragged into the modern age, and Seth gets what he deserves for trying to do so.

Left to his own devices, we must assume, Seth would have been usurped and killed long before he actually was without the help of some clearly more competent white people. Seth practically admits as much himself:

My people are a worthless people. I give orders; there is none to obey me. I am like a great musician without an instrument...I can do nothing with these people...I must find a man of culture, a modern man...a representative of Progress and the New Age. (*BM* 133)

It is no accident that, at this very moment, “Basil again passed the window; this time in conversation with General Connolly” (*BM* 133), because these are the two men most responsible for Seth’s continued existence. This is one of Waugh’s best ironies, because neither of these men would amount to much outside of Azania. Connolly is “a middle-aged British soldier of fortune” (Doyle 136) whom Waugh first describes as a “stocky Irishman...[whose] appearance was rather that of a lost explorer than a conquering commander-in-chief” (*BM* 47). Connolly is a victorious general in Azania; elsewhere, he is a common thug, making a living as a bully in various gangs of bullies, namely the Black and Tans and the South African Police. Basil Seal is from a “moneyed upper-class family” but is nonetheless “rude, unreliable, undisciplined and caddish” (Doyle 187). Except, of course, while he is in Azania, where he displays a competence and a level head that few can match. The relationship of Seal and Connolly to Seth and the Azanians is similar to the old adage about the one-eyed man being king in the land of the blind. The unspoken ideological lesson here is that even the least of the British are head and shoulders above the Africans.

General Connolly proves his innate superiority in the first half of the novel. He preserves the Empire for Seth by winning the war with “two very ancient weapons—lies and the long spear” (*BM* 54). He tells thousands of predictably uncivilized and superstitious Africans that Seth is Amurath come back from the dead, and “it went down from the word go” (*BM* 56). Next, Connolly manages to convince his equally uncivilized and superstitious enemy that “half a company of guards” is his entire army, thereby easily

defeating them with a fairly simple ruse. There is no doubt such elementary ruses would never have worked in Europe—Connolly is dealing with people who are very much his intellectual inferiors. Connolly's victory has nothing to do with superior technology; he does not even use the tank Seth bought him. Rather, the only difference between the two armies is the wit of a mercenary Irishman, and the Irishman prevails.

Not only does Connolly's success reveal Waugh's opinions of the Azanians, but it also says a great deal about what he thinks of the Irish. Connolly garners the same level of respect Fagan gives to the Welsh in *Decline and Fall*, which is none at all. He is stereotyped as stage-Irish, as a hard-drinking, boasting buffoon, and yet there is no "Majesty" or "Highness" in his conversations with the emperor. Seth is Seth to Connolly, and in no other circumstances could he be as flippant to royalty. Quite simply, Seth is lower than Connolly in the hierarchy, emperor or not. He cannot even order Connolly to stop calling his wife Black Bitch, and instead has to ask nicely: "Don't you think that when she is a Duchess, it might be more suitable if you were to try and call your wife by another name" (*BM* 58). This, predictably, does not work, and Black Bitch never has any other name in the course of the story, excepting "Duchess of Ukaka," and the scatological reference in this title needs no expounding. Though Connolly says he loves Black Bitch, he is sometimes obliged to "thump her soundly on the head and lock her in a cupboard for some hours" (*BM* 177). Black Bitch's place in the class system is clear, Duchess of Ukaka or not. Connolly's abuse of her is justified by the Africans and ignored by the Europeans, and Waugh goes to great lengths to show how unsuitable she is for such a lofty-sounding title. She is washing Connolly's socks and spitting nut juice when she is officially invited to visit the French Legation, and is perhaps the only

Duchess in all of literature who “wiped her hands on her knickers” (*BM* 176). It comes as no surprise that the French ambassador is the first to ask to see Black Bitch socially; Connolly’s comment that “He’s the first person who’s troubled to ask Black Bitch to anything in eight years” (*BM* 177) summarily proves that the English would never dream of doing such a thing. Lady Courteney tries very early on to “break down these distinctions,” but Black Bitch frightens her with the statement “The General is drunk today and he doesn’t want any more ladies,” so the Connollys are not invited to anything again (*BM* 68-69). Soon, even the French ladies are calling the Duchess of Ukaka Black Bitch; like Seth, she remains what Connolly names her. In addition, the French invitation to Connolly and Black Bitch to join society is simply a ruse to gain Connolly’s help in a coup attempt. This coup succeeds mainly because of Connolly’s influence, proving Waugh’s point once again, that only among Africans can a low-class Irishman become a kingmaker.

Likewise, Basil Seal, a man who is also on first-name speaking terms with the emperor, is quite a different person in Azania. In London, Basil is “a flamboyant aristocrat, an adventurer, [and] a cad” (Garnett 86). Garnett goes on to say

One can speculate, in fact, that Waugh admired not only Basil’s aristocratic presence, but even his arrogance and caddishness. A compulsive liar, a thief, and an adulterer, Basil takes advantage of anyone who lets him, and Waugh seems to have derived second-hand gratification from Basil’s defiance of convention, his aggressive self-assertion, his exploitation of others. (86)

In other words, Basil Seal is a privileged and spoiled aristocrat in England; even as he is planning to leave for Azania his mother is trying desperately to turn him respectable, and

he is stealing her emeralds and sleeping with Angela Lyne for the money to make the trip. In Azania, Basil finds purpose. Though he exhibits many of his earlier failings as High Commissioner and Comptroller General of the Ministry of Modernisation, he is no longer aimless, and since “everything seemed to find its way to Basil’s table” (*BM* 158) he is the *de facto* ruler of the country. It is strange and ironic that an English cad would be “the man of progress and culture” for whom Seth was searching, but he is, and he spends much of the novel saving Seth from himself and his idiotic proclamations. In London, Basil has no qualms about stealing from his mother and abandoning her, whereas in Azania he shows a curious amount of loyalty for the Emperor after Seth is deposed. Prudence gives him the opportunity to escape when she says “Basil, give up this absurd Emperor, darling, and come with us” but he replies “Can’t do that” (*BM* 282).

Instead, Basil wages a sort of guerrilla war on behalf of the Emperor and, when Seth is killed, arranges for his killer to be brought to justice. Basil among the Africans is a leader of men. Azania has affected him to the point that he actually speaks the Wanda language “with confident fluency,” and at Seth’s funeral Basil is called “the highest man present” and gives a stirring eulogy (*BM* 298). The idea of Basil being the “highest man present” is laughable in his original upper-class London milieu, but among the Azanians he is the emperor’s most respected advisor and practically royalty in his own right. Sonia Trumpington inadvertently but correctly classifies Basil when he returns to England. “I suppose you ran the whole country,” she says, and Basil replies, “As a matter of fact, I did” (*BM* 304). It is no surprise that Waugh’s London characters ignore Basil’s claim entirely. Even though it is true, Waugh implies, ruling Africans is no feat worth bragging about.

Such undeserved ideas of superiority are dangerous for the Europeans in *Black Mischief*; it gives them both delusions of grandeur and a license to be apathetic and snobbish. With Seal and Connolly the idea is that they are made great in comparison to their surroundings, but they are hardly noble, and nothing much is expected of them. But the British Legation are representatives of His Majesty's Government, and should therefore ally more closely with the Imperial British ideal. There is a reputation to uphold among the natives, that of

the whole-hog archetypal Briton, reading his *Times* after his morning ride...[He] may not have been much loved, but stood as a kind of signpost. Everybody knew him. He was not easily scared. His word was, rather more often than most, reliable in small things, if sometimes dubious in large. He seemed to stand fair and square, freshly, shaven. The pound sterling in his pocket, the Royal Navy at his back, the rules the old school taught him: that was *his* ideology. (Morris 512)

Waugh makes it very clear with the antics of the British Legation that such an ideal is not being followed in this corner of the world. The Legation are notoriously apathetic and self-absorbed “while war and revolution rage outside, civilians clamor for protection and other legations disperse in panic, the British remain preoccupied with tennis and bagatelle, the growing of asparagus and the digging of the lily-pond” (Littlewood 40). Ian Littlewood calls this “total insouciance” bizarre, and indeed it is bizarre when compared to the stereotypical Victorian heroism the Legation are supposed to display.

Sir Samson Courteney, “his Britannic Majesty's minister,” flourishes in a way reminiscent of Captain Grimes. Like Grimes, Sir Samson always seems to be put back on his feet, despite his ineptitude. His “powerful family connexions in the Foreign Office” land him a succession of jobs and a “highly suitable” wife (*BM* 63-64). Though he is an atrocious civil servant—instead of working he devotes himself to model building or bicycling—he is granted a knighthood and a diplomatic position that “caused him the

keenest delight” (*BM* 64). He is also the stereotypical eccentric aristocrat, somewhat like Lord Emsworth in Wodehouse’s *Blandings* stories. Like Emsworth, Sir Samson’s attention rests only on what interests him, be it the india-rubber sea-serpent he finds in his bathtub or the dimensions of the Great Pyramid. The war raging around the Legation compound is less important to him than whether or not the American secretary can borrow the tennis marker. Such “insouciance,” to use Littlewood’s word again, should be deadly in a country like Azania. Indeed, Sir Samson seems to personify the rich, clueless foreigner that often comes to a sticky end in colonial/adventure novels.

Sir Samson refuses to ever get seriously involved with the Azanians. He even says it himself:

I’m so sorry—you were talking about the massacre. Well, I hardly know. I haven’t really thought about it... Yes, I suppose there might be one. I don’t see what’s to stop them, if the fellows take it into their heads. Still I daresay it’ll all blow over, you know. Doesn’t do to get worried. (*BM* 71)

Sir Samson has no reason to be worried about a massacre, simply because he and his family are so far above the fray, both in a literal and a hierarchical sense, that they are never in any danger. “It never occurs to [Sir Samson] to consider [being] bound by the regulations that govern everyone else or to bother about the consequences of ignoring them” (Littlewood 41). Sir Samson is so confident that his status as an upper-class Englishman will save him—and rightly so, in Waugh’s invented country—that he takes it for granted.

Though the very fabric of Azanian society is constantly torn apart in *Black Mischief*, and untold thousands of natives are killed in what is ostensibly a comic novel, the Legation has “a total, though quite unconscious, refusal to respond to the world according to customary notions of what is important and what is trivial” (Littlewood 40).

Trivial, to the Legation, is anything that does not affect them directly—the only reason Sir Samson is worried about the revolution is because of the influx of English refugees at his house (*BM* 261). However, the members of the Legation are allowed to think that the fighting in the city does not matter because, in their insular world, it does not. Rather than being critical of their apathy, “Waugh seems to delight in the dogged determination of the Legation members to pursue their own pleasures and in their total refusal to adapt to their surroundings” (Thomas 668). So, even while satirizing the people involved, *Black Mischief* praises the structured society that allows them to act that way. His satire is instead directed against “those who attempt to keep abreast of, or interfere with, local politics” (Thomas 668-669).

For example, the French Legate M. Ballon is constantly ridiculed for his interactions with the Azanians; his character “is totally expressed by his Freemasonry and his flair for melodrama” (Greenblatt 18). He is so needlessly afraid of attack that he surrounds his house with sandbags and “was keeping his last cartridge for Madame Ballon” (*BM* 70). Even Sir Samson, who would normally be in no position to make fun of anyone, is delighted to discover that Seth speaks English, because “That’ll be one in the eye for Ballon, after all the trouble he took to learn Sakuyu [the native language]” (*BM* 84). A running joke in the novel is well-meaning French incompetence—Ballon mistakes the chess notation *Kt to QR3 CH* for some sort of code, a silly game of consequences among the English legation leads to rumors of Madame Ballon having an affair with General Connolly, and Sir Samson sends a chain letter to Ballon because “it will puzzle him terribly” (*BM* 139). The implicit point made is that the French Legate’s “enthusiastic intriguing” mean nothing and count for even less than Sir Samson’s

preoccupation with tinned asparagus. M. Ballon is instrumental in deposing Seth, so it would seem that his schemes have achieved a victory of sorts, but in the end life in Azania does not change at all, and the British Legation is neither helped nor harmed. Indeed, as Robert Garnett observes, “as the novel proceeds... the British Legation more and more becomes an enviable island of pastoral calm amid a sea of chaos, as if Doubting Hall had been uprooted from Buckinghamshire and replanted in Azania” (89). Sir Samson and the rest recreate pastoral England and put their faith in the certainty of their superiority; this faith predictably sees them through, but with one notable exception.

The only real fly in this ointment, so to speak, is Prudence Courteney, Sir Samson’s ingénue daughter. She most certainly *does not* escape from Azania unscathed. In fact, she is the only white character who dies in the novel, and her death, like that of Prendergast, is particularly violent—she is killed and eaten by cannibals, and Basil Seal inadvertently takes part in the feast. It is practically a convention of adventure writing to have *somebody* eaten by cannibals, and for that victim to be young, white and female just adds to the effect. This is a shocking development; Jonathan Greenberg says it “darkly undercut[s] the raucous laughter of the novel” (120). It also produced quite a row in the Catholic press, which in turn caused Waugh some consternation (Greenberg 120). So why include such a scene in a comic novel? The reason, I believe, is to underscore the importance of remaining aloof and insouciant while among the barbarians.

In and among the Legation, Prudence is bored but safe; “the provincial tranquility of *Barchester Towers* is precisely the achievement of the British Legation, and it is in its absurd way an admirable achievement” (Garnett 90). Prudence is not satisfied with this tranquility and thus becomes Basil Seal’s mistress, not exactly the most respectable

position for a scion of the Courteney's. Unlike Lady Courteney, Prudence either does not recognize or refuses to follow class conventions, which require a certain amount of separation and snobbery. "[The] aloofness to the town was traditional to the Legation, being dictated partly by the difficulties of the road and partly by their inherent disinclination to mix with social inferiors" (*BM* 68). In other words, the Legation is very particular about its company, though Prudence clearly is not. At the first banquet in praise of himself, the new Emperor Seth dances with the American Mrs. Schonbaum, and she recognizes the unseemliness of this—"I often wonder what they would say back home to see me dancing with a man of colour" (*BM* 141) she says, though I am sure she knows full well what they would say. Prudence, in contrast, has no idea why this is wrong for someone of her station. She says "I do pray he comes and dances with Mum. Do you think it's any use me trying to vamp him, or does he only go for wives?" (*BM* 141). The very idea that Prudence would think about seducing an African shocks even the novel's narrator to such a degree that he abandons the scene. The next sentence reads simply "the evening went on," and so the reader is led to believe that the rest of Prudence's behavior is best ignored.

Though Prudence has already proved her vampishness by dallying with William, he at least keeps correct company. Basil Seal, on the other hand, keeps close to General Connolly, husband of Black Bitch, and when Lady Courteney demurs at the thought of "ask[ing] him to something," Prudence rebukes her with "Mum, don't be snobbish—particularly now Connolly's a Duke. Do let's have him [Basil] to everything always" (*BM* 143). The Courteney's seem to recognize this breach of proper behavior in Prudence, because they discuss "send[ing] her back to England for a few months" (*BM* 183). This,

presumably, would remove temptation and cause Prudence to behave more like the upper class girl she is. Unfortunately, before this can be realized, Prudence lapses completely.

It is perhaps the most sordid love scene in Waugh, the first “assignation” between Prudence and Basil. The entire passage is worth quoting:

The atmosphere of the room was rank with tobacco smoke. Basil, in shirt sleeves, rose from the deck chair to greet her. He threw the butt of his Burma cheroot into the tin hip bath which stood unemptied at the side of the bed; it sizzled and went out and floated throughout the afternoon, slowly unfurling in the soapy water. He bolted the door. It was half dark in the room. Dusty parallels of light struck through the shutters onto the floor boards and the few, shabby mats. Prudence stood isolated, waiting for him, her hat in her hand. At first neither spoke. Presently she said, ‘You might have shaved,’ and then, ‘Please help me with my boots’.

Below, in the yard, Madam Youkoumian upbraided a goat. Strips of sunlight traversed the floor as an hour passed. In the bath water, the soggy stub of tobacco emanated a brown blot of juice. (*BM* 185-186)

With this scene, Prudence has effectively lost all that class and ideology had given her.

High-class girls should not reduce sex to a furtive encounter in a dirty room; their feminine wiles should not include phrases such as “you might have shaved” and “please help me with my boots.” Prudence is, at first, “rooted in the Legation’s prelapsarian innocence [but] she is lured by the siren call of Basil’s worldliness” (Garnett 90). When Basil says “You’re a grand girl, Prudence, and I’d like to eat you” (*BM* 237), it comes true in a way neither of them expected.

*Black Mischief* is an interesting microcosm, a clear example of one of Waugh’s “independent systems of order.” It was written to entertain, and entertain us it does, but behind the action there is always Waugh’s insistence that change and modernization corrupt absolutely. Stephen Greenblatt says “The history of Azania, like the dance of the witch doctors and the life of the Bright Young People, is a savage, futile, comic circle” (22). *Black Mischief* circles like *Decline and Fall*; the end is much like the beginning,

with ideology restored and the *status quo* continued. The British, and to a lesser extent the French, are *still* in charge of Azania despite all that happened, and the Azanians are still fighting their petty little wars that mean nothing to anybody else. If anything, Azania and Llanabba perpetuate the incorrect idea that a perfect world existed at one time, when everyone acted as they should and the English were as admirable and as admired as Waugh believes they should be. By making these two novels circular, and having everybody end up in the same position they occupied at the beginning, Waugh underscores the impossibility of a similar happy ending in real life. Only in these independent systems of order can such things occur.

### CHAPTER 3:

#### OUTSIDE YAHOO'S: ALDOUS HUXLEY AND THE TEEMING ILLITERATES

Evelyn Waugh owes much of the action in the fifth and sixth chapters of *Black Mischief* to a chance discovery made by Aldous Huxley. Seth's birth control campaign, pageant, and most especially the poster so comically misinterpreted by his people find their genesis in a 1932 Huxley essay entitled "Japanese Advertisement" (Meckier 278). The advertisement Huxley describes in this essay bears a strong resemblance to Seth's birth control propaganda. As Huxley writes:

In the center of the page, surrounded by the columns of incomprehensible hieroglyphics, was the picture of a small box, whose contents, according to a manufacturer's label in very legible English, consisted of certain birth-control appliances. Above were two drawings, representing the interiors of two Japanese houses. Home Number One pullulated with howling children; the mother was weeping; the father seemed on the point of suicide; the dishes on the table were almost empty; the windows were broken; everything, in a word, testified to unhappiness and poverty.

Family Number Two had evidently invested in one of the little boxes, for there were only three children; the table was loaded with food; the mother smiled; the father (a most exquisite touch) was dressed, not in native costume like his unfortunate counterpart in the other picture, but in the nattiest white flannel trousers and tennis shirt. The final symbol of luxurious superfluity was a bird cage containing several canaries. (qtd. in Sexton 75)

The point of the advertisement is that "population control supplies the key to perfect health and an abundance of material goods" (Meckier 277). Mustapha Mond, the antagonistic World Controller in *Brave New World*, declares the same thing. Of course, Mond is the leader of a dystopian regime which is in power specifically because of population control. The population of Earth in the year AF 632 is almost entirely created

and regulated by the government, and the results are horrendous. It would seem, therefore, that population control is as distasteful to Huxley as wholesale genetic engineering, sexual promiscuity and subliminal conditioning, the other satirized values in the year AF 632. However, the “Malthusian belts” of *Brave New World* that prevent unnecessary pregnancies may be one of the very few Fordian values with which Huxley agrees. In *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley’s 1958 treatise exploring the unfortunate progress of society towards *Brave New World*, he talks at length about the horrors of overpopulation, writing that “Unsolved, that problem will render insoluble all our other problems. Worse still, it will create conditions in which individual freedom and the social decencies of the democratic way of life will become impossible, almost unthinkable” (*BNWR* 7). For these reasons, the Emperor Seth is not too far off Huxley’s idea when he considers birth control a harbinger of civilization, and quite possibly a solution to the grinding poverty and despair that he sees in his country.

Though Waugh used the idea of a birth control advertisement as a vehicle for satirizing Africans—who believe the poverty-stricken family to be the more desirable option—Huxley takes the idea far more seriously. The difference between the two pictures in “Japanese Advertisement” is not simply that one family has more children than the other. Instead, responsible and irresponsible breeding produce scenes strikingly similar to commonly held stereotypes about upper-class, intellectual and aristocratic life and the life of the proletariat. In the modern consumer age, extra children are not as beneficial and desirable as they were in ancient times, when landless Romans were called *proletaria*—literally the “offspring people”—whose only real use to society, so it was believed, was the number of children they produced. The advertisement uses time-tested

images of class and wealth to show that too many children clearly make things worse for everyone. The happy family even has an overabundance of food and a cage full of canaries representing conspicuous consumption. The unhappy family cannot even afford to replace broken windows. There is no concrete evidence of the respective *intelligence* of the two families, unless the unhappy family's inability to quiet their screaming children is a clue to their mental capacity, but it is not difficult to see the unhappy family as uneducated and without opportunity.

It is also interesting to note that the happy father dresses in the latest Western fashion, while the overburdened, unhappy father has to make do with “native costume”. Thus, the happier family is also imitating Europeans, while the unhappy family is much too native in dress and habits. In *Black Mischief*, the cultural divide between the two families is much more pronounced—the unhappy family lives in a “native hut of hideous squalor,” while the happy family sits in a “bright parlour furnished with chairs and table” (*BM* 192)—but the Japanese advertisement makes a similar distinction. To be happy, the picture implies, one must imitate Europeans in both style and reproduction.

Huxley calls the Japanese advertisement “absurd” because of its heavy-handed propaganda, and says “there is no Western country, so far as I know, where you can find such an advertisement in such a paper” (qtd. in Sexton 75). By “such a paper” Huxley means “cheap little magazines evidently intended for popular family consumption” (qtd. in Sexton 75). The advertisement does not appear in what he would consider intellectual or upper-class fare—the magazines were “uniformly shoddy”—and therefore it is directed towards the unhappy family or those resembling it, assuming that they would most likely wish to be more like the happy family. It is no accident, therefore, that

Huxley believes such an advertisement to be found only in non-Western newspapers. To Huxley, Westerners—Europeans, white people—need no impetus to use birth control, and in later writings he suggests it would actually be more beneficial if Europeans had *more* children rather than fewer. As we will see, Huxley’s definitions of “the lower class” or “the masses” are inextricably tied to ideas of racial and cultural superiority. It is not just that Huxley believes that the “Japanese Advertisement” has the right idea; he also contends that it is directed at the right sort of people.

Despite its absurdity, Huxley believes the advertisement to be useful. He writes that Japan, and by extension the rest of the non-European world, have only two choices on how to deal with an expanding population: birth control or “foreign conquest, leading to emigration and the creation of an export market” (qtd. in Sexton 76). Huxley concludes that “most of us [including himself] prefer lechery to murder” (qtd. in Sexton 76), *murder* referring to the inevitable killing caused by foreign conquest, and *lechery* referring to sexual promiscuity without procreation. Thus, Huxley suggests, such absurd advertisements might actually be beneficial in absurd little newspapers, if indeed they were able to convince non-European or lower class families that having fewer children is the key to a Western or upper-class existence. In fact, Huxley believes that a myriad of problems would be solved by convincing non-Europeans to self-regulate their own population, the most important of which is preventing “over-population [from] leading through unrest to dictatorship” (*BNWR* 9). In other words, Huxley contends that the *Brave New World* would be much easier to avoid if the old-world equivalent of *The Delta Mirror* can convince Deltas to stop reproducing.

Huxley satirizes a rigid, genetically engineered caste system in *Brave New World*, but he does not reject the idea of class separation. He certainly had a very clear idea about who counted as a Delta as compared to an Alpha in reality. Alphas are Europeans, people for whom such an advertisement is not needed. Apparently, the Japanese count as Deltas, even though Japan was already a world power in 1932, having defeated Russia, invaded China and set up an empire of its own. There is no measurable technological difference between Japan and Western countries, and it could be argued that the Japanese were the most “Westernized” in their sphere of influence, especially if military might is any judge of Westernness. As Huxley predicts, the Japanese do engage in “foreign conquest,” though it is doubtful that an expanding population was the primary reason for Japan’s militarism. Nevertheless, the fact that the Japanese have need of such an advertisement proves for Huxley that the Japanese are inferiors who are multiplying too fast.

However, Huxley later asserts, such advertisements are futile; he believes nothing will save us from a very crowded and far less intelligent future. Huxley makes it abundantly clear that, unfortunately, the intricacies of birth control are not understood by the people who need it the most (such as the natives in *Black Mischief*), and those that do understand and practice birth control are therefore being squeezed out by those of “biologically poorer quality” (*BNWR* 11) who continue to procreate. Birth control “demands more intelligence and will power than most of the world’s teeming illiterates possess” and therefore the “teeming illiterates” are multiplying, which causes “a decline of average healthiness [and] a decline in average intelligence” (*BNWR* 5, 12). Huxley fears for the welfare of the entire world because of overbreeding, and his reference to

“teeming illiterates” draws a clear distinction between those who should have children and those who should not. Huxley writes,

In an underdeveloped and over-populated country, where four-fifths of the people get less than two thousand calories a day...can democratic institutions arise spontaneously? Or if they should be imposed from outside or from above, can they possibly survive?

And now let us consider the case of the rich, industrialized and democratic society, in which, owing to the random but effective practice of dysgenics, IQ's and physical vigor are on the decline. For how long can such a society maintain its traditions of individual liberty and democratic government? (*BNWR* 12)

Huxley is referring to the former colonies when he talks about places in which democracy was “imposed”, and he suggests that the overpopulation therein prevented any positive, Western values from taking hold. Even worse, the “rich, industrialized, and democratic societ[ies]” are practicing “dysgenics.” They are allowing those people of lesser quality to reproduce with impunity, further adding to the population of teeming illiterates.

Huxley continues this train of thought in a letter to Alberto Bonnoli, in which he blatantly asserts such a view:

Moreover, in the highly industrialized countries, there is a tendency for the less gifted members of society to have more children than the more gifted. . . . but there is no prospect of governments renouncing their propaganda in favor of cannon fodder and no way of getting the majority of humans to adopt birth control. (*Letters* 550)

In Huxley's assessment, the situation is hopeless; the population that needs to be controlled is simply not gifted enough to do it themselves, and the people who could forcibly enact such a solution are more interested in fielding large armies. Huxley says that we as humans are “on the horns of an ethical dilemma” because, while we have learned how to extend and save life, we have not yet learned how to effectively control population.

To Huxley, “population control” did not mean simply condoms, diaphragms and responsible sexual practices; it also meant responsible breeding in order to preserve beneficial qualities in offspring and eliminate the potentially harmful qualities. Huxley therefore also advocates eugenics: “To help the unfortunate is obviously good. But the wholesale transmission to our descendants of the results of unfavorable mutations, and the progressive contamination of the genetic pool from which the members of our species will have to draw, are no less obviously bad” (*BNWR* 13). According to John Carey in *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, Huxley was “sympathetic” to the ideas of the Eugenics Education Society, which “hoped that by discouraging or preventing the increase of inferior breeds, and by offering incentives to superior people to propagate, the danger of degeneration inherent in the mass might be avoided” (13). Carey goes on to claim that “dreaming of the extermination or sterilization of the mass . . . was an imaginative refuge for early twentieth-century intellectuals” (15). Not everyone sees Huxley’s ideas about population control as negatively as Carey; Huxley biographer Nicholas Murray “wholly dissent[s]” with Carey’s suggestion, calling it a “passing media trend” and saying that those who give it credence are “leaden-footed heresy hunters” (10). Instead, Murray relates a quote by Huxley himself: “if the eugenicists are in too much of an enthusiastic hurry to improve the race, they will only succeed in destroying it” (207) and denies that Huxley did anything but “flirt briefly” with the idea of eugenics (200). I am not sure how long *briefly* actually is, but the idea of genetically desirable people being subsumed by great masses of the people he considered inferior bothered Huxley for most of his life. His later statements about the subject are contradictory. In *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley says he abhors the “insane philosophy” propagated by the Nazis (35), a

philosophy that contained within itself ideas and practices of selective breeding.

However, Huxley's idea that "children born with hereditary defects [should not] reach maturity and multiply their kind" (*BNWR* 11) seems perilously close to what the Nazis were preaching.

But Huxley was no Nazi, and he was vehement in condemning them. In "The Race Racket," (1929) Huxley writes that

One of the most effective . . . political nonsense conductors is the subject of race. . . .During the last fifty years innumerable kilowatts of moronic energy have flowed through it, and today it is still faithfully doing service as the electrode on to which millions of Germans are discharging the whole of their surplus nonsense. (qtd. in Sexton 227)

Huxley says the National-Socialist obsession with race is "nonsense"; he later claims Nazi ideas are good examples of the "herd-poison" he rails against in *Brave New World Revisited*. Herd-poison, quite simply, is something or someone, such as a militant ideology or a demagogue, that can fool the unenlightened but not people like himself, and it is what makes the greater majority of people very dangerous to the minority. In *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley divides the world into two broad categories, intellectuals like himself and the "masses". Huxley suggests that the masses cannot be trusted; like the hoodwinked members of the Nazi party, the masses can be manipulated by Hitler-types, because "their behavior is determined, not by knowledge and reason, but by feelings and unconscious drives. . . . [they are] capable of anything except intelligent action and realistic thinking" (*BNWR* 34). However, intellectuals are "resistant to the kind of propaganda that works so well on the majority. . . [because they] have a taste for rationality and an interest in facts" (*BNWR* 35). In a speech given in Paris in 1933, Huxley explains the difference:

But anti-intellectualism also flatters more dangerous passions. It is admirably well adapted to justifying the complex of hatreds and vanities that is the very essence of nationalism. National Socialist philosophy, for example, continually speaks of “particular truths” as opposed to the mundane objective truths of intellectuals. Then there are Nordic instincts, the infallible intuitions of blond men. (Canton 43)

Huxley sarcastically contrasts the visceral reactions of the uneducated—“particular truths”, “Nordic instincts”—with objective truth, that which cannot be rationally disputed. This “objective truth” is the sole property of the intellectual, and objective truth is what Huxley believes he is using when he frames his support of population control. To Huxley there seems to be two sorts of racism. The Nazi version is visceral, based on emotion and mass hysteria, but he considers his own racial ideas to be intellectual and scientific. Huxley believes that *intellectual* racism—which deals with numbers and facts and “science”—is a different matter altogether, and it is for this reason that Huxley can justify both his racist and his eugenic views without either of them being part of the Nazi herd-poison. Thus, Swift’s satirical mirror, held up by Huxley, is used to show racism and intolerance in other people without reflecting his own similar views.

In the summer of 1934 Huxley publishes an essay called “Cars and Babies” in which he predicts a sort of racial catastrophe due to the overbreeding of the non-European masses:

The more highly civilized white races will be declining in numbers while the coloured races are still rapidly increasing; and there seems to be no guarantee that the decline will stop anywhere this side of extinction. If Europe and America wish to survive, they must find means for keeping up their numerical strength in relation to Asia and Africa. Later, when and if the coloured populations begin to decline, the white races can permit themselves the luxury of having fewer children (qtd. in Sexton 351-52).

With this quote standing in opposition to the one about “Nordic instincts”, Huxley shows himself to be a racist who incorrectly believes that his own intelligence, and his

membership in the intellectual class, comfortably separates his ideas from more emotional, and therefore more dangerous, racism. To imply that there are different degrees of racism, and that one type is naturally better than another, is both dangerous and impossible to justify. Even though Huxley himself sees no conflict in condemning Nazism while supporting eugenics, the two philosophies are uncomfortably similar. Overpopulation, after all, is seen in “Cars and Babies” as a problem of the “coloured populations,” and despite Huxley’s fear of a crowded Earth he still calls for Europeans to “[keep] up their numerical strength” in order to combat this overpopulation.

Modern eyes can quickly detect racism in “Cars and Babies,” and from that infer that Huxley is more concerned with questions of race than questions of culture. At the heart of the matter, Huxley’s writings belie a fear of the colonial other and its power of numbers, though he continues to insist that the real danger is the triumph of “uncivilized” over the “more highly civilized.” The fact that white people are more civilized, as a rule, seems to Huxley to be a happy coincidence that can all too easily be cast aside if they do not maintain this power structure. Huxley believed in the superiority of the intellectual and cultured minority—as he defined them—over the non-intellectual majority, and he almost always separates these groups along racial and cultural lines. As he writes to Robert Nichols in 1926,

Or perhaps the truth is that they belong to a different species than us—the species that is just content to live, to whom the end of life is feeling and action, not thought, who are so sociable that the mere presence of other human animals makes them happy, and so easily amused that they can pass the time between the cradle and the grave playing games. (*Letters* 254).

Huxley’s “they” are the lower classes, the overwhelming majority of which are Africans, Asians, and other formerly colonial subjects. The “different species” also includes

anyone not sufficiently English enough; Huxley often chastises the populace of places like Germany and America for their distressing lack of culture and refinement. “The Bosch [German] is like the Eastern American,” Huxley writes to his brother Julian, “he suffers from a hearty decay; he is immature and blatant and at the same time decadent” (*Letters* 80). The Germans have among them “that worship of sheer beastly strength which induces some women to marry niggers and prizefighters” (*Letters* 80). Americans, he says, are even worse; both their conversation and their literature, “are just the same; the same interminable canting balderdash about high moral principles and ideals, couched in the same verbose, pseudo-philosophic, sham-scientific, meaningless language, the same pretentiousness then as now” (*Letters* 223). The Germans and Americans do share the virtue of being white, but they are wasting it by being “uncivilized” or pretending to an intellectualism that is actually beyond them. To talk about non-intellectuals—meaning the non-English or non-European masses—as a “different species” is to make impossible their learning of anything Huxley considers human.

Amazingly, Huxley has a reputation as a class warrior despite these prejudices; David Izzo writes that Huxley’s “abhorrence for the strictures of class divisions [became] the main target for his relentless pen” (56). But Huxley is instead interested in the preservation and propagation of what he deems the intellectual elite, and to preserve the elite is to preserve a class structure that is rapidly eroding due to the overpopulation of the “teeming illiterates” and the weakening of English or British control. Certainly Huxley himself is one of these elite; Peter Firchow says “in recent years, the Huxley name has become a kind of patent of intellectual nobility . . . [T]he Huxleys are probably the only fully, or almost fully, documented case (and this surely would have

pleased T. H. Huxley) of natural selection along intellectual lines: a living proof of the thesis of the great progenitor” (9). Aldous Huxley is not only descended from high intellectuals, but by virtue of his English upbringing he is also able to take advantage of a classical education in the English public schools (Izzo 87). Huxley effectively defines Englishness as the qualities possessed by people like himself, and he does not leave any room in this vision for other versions of Englishness.

During his formative years at Eton and Oxford, Huxley saw evidence of a growing threat against his own civilized and learned community, and fear of this change continues into his adulthood. The English students at Oxford, Huxley tells his father in 1915,

mostly have sense and are excellent souls—more especially in comparison with the black, yellow, brown, greenish and puce men who, with the Americans, make up the rest of the university—particularly Queens, where there are more men up than at any other college and where the population consists of Indians, and Americans of the name of Schnitzbaum, Boschwurst, Schweinsbauch, and the like. Not a jolly place, is Queens. (*Letters* 71)

Strangely, all the Americans have mock-Jewish names, which adds yet another level of prejudice to the idea. Americans are not Huxley’s only target, and it is quite possible that he is being anti-Semitic. Huxley gives a similar report about Oxford to his friend Lewis Gielgud that begins with “They [the Americans] swarm” and ends with Huxley deciding to join with his more civilized friends in “propos[ing] starting an English club, on the lines of the American club or Indian club. . . . chiefly for the purpose of self-protection against Queens” (*Letters* 74). In another swipe at the non-English, Huxley says that the Oxonians of his young adulthood “degrade themselves to the level of the third-class colonial college” (*Letters* 90). Swarming Americans, Indians and others do not, to

Huxley, foment a productive learning environment, and he points out a danger that is very real to him. Oxford, he says, and by extension the rest of England, is being swarmed by undesirables and will soon be no better than “third-class” and “colonial”. People who are not “black, yellow or brown” can be mostly counted on to be “excellent souls,” whereas the rest are portrayed as simply numerous.

In this way, Huxley sees European and most especially English culture, that which makes the intellectual and refined classes both intellectual and refined, and therefore acts as a sign of civilization, as jeopardized by the unchecked reproductive capacity of the “offspring people.” In a letter to Julian Huxley, Huxley echoes the fears of later-discredited scientist Sir Cyril Burt:

and as between classes—the more intelligent members of society [are] not reproducing themselves, so that [Sir Cyril] Burt sees a drop in the average intelligence of the British population (and of other Western populations) of 5 IQ points before the end of the present century. (*Letters* 552)

Huxley focuses on British and “Western” populations in making this pronouncement, and it is as if the rest of the world has already been lost as far as he is concerned. He says the smaller classes are the more intelligent classes, and the danger lies in the fact that overbreeding of undesirables will eventually do all the damage that class warfare never could; it will cause the destruction of the privileged minority through simple genetics. Huxley compares the current danger facing the intellectual class to that of a fifth-century Gallic saint,

Sidonius Apollinaris . . . is in so many ways analogous to ourselves—a highly cultured aristocrat living in the midst of barbarians, who don’t understand and take no interest in any of the things with which he is concerned, and by whom he is constantly menaced with liquidation. (*Letters* 558)

Huxley's ideology, which is hegemonic, Anglocentric and racist, is also terrifically depressing for those whom he considers intellectual equals and almost hyperbolically elitist for those he does not. There is, Huxley continues to assert, a danger present in the great numbers of "teeming illiterates," and he continually styles himself a Cassandra in the face of utter ruin.

Most people who read Huxley's three utopian novels *Brave New World*, *Ape and Essence*, and *Island* quickly recognize that they are issuing prophetic warnings that are supposed to, owing to the particular failing of Cassandras, go unheeded until it is too late. Exactly what they are warning *about*, however, is often missed. On the surface, *Brave New World* warns us about the dangers of technology and mind control taken to their ludicrous extremes. *Ape and Essence*, like many novels of its time, can be seen as anti-nuclear and anti-theocratic, and *Island* warns us about what we lose when consumerism replaces spirituality. All of these interpretations are correct, but what is often overlooked is the Cassandra-prediction shared by all three novels. The real danger, says Huxley, is the multiplying lower classes, which mostly consist of colonial subjects and other non-Europeans, whose power grows with their numbers. As the complexion of England changes in the early twentieth century, both in an individual and societal sense, Huxley speaks out against developments he believes will overrun the intellectual class entirely. *Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence* are portraits of what Huxley believes will happen if the non-intellectual, incorrectly-spiritual masses usurp the intellectual elite. Invariably, Huxley posits, the masses choose sex over intellect, transitory happiness over long-term fulfillment, and base appetites over higher ideals. *Island* is what happens if they do not, or if they are not allowed to exist in the first place.

Of these three novels, none end happily for Huxley, and he attempts to transmit this unhappiness to his readers. The societies described in *Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence* continue on uninterrupted, while *Island*, the one that Huxley believes *should* continue on, is destroyed in the end. Change is the enemy in all three cases—life was always better before, when there were not so many Epsilons and Deltas running around and the Alphas were firmly in power. Huxley contends that any deviation from the *Island* ideal, in which a small number of intellectuals are allowed to continue making art, making love and making decisions with minimal outside interference, starts a downward spiral. Like Waugh, Huxley does not see the real world as static, but rather disturbingly dynamic and tending towards a sort of intellectual entropy. These novels belie a fatalistic prejudice: anyone not as intelligent as Huxley is a lesser being, but because they are so promiscuous, the lesser shall inherit the earth.

The problem with Huxley's view of the future is that it is tainted by an oversimplified view of the past. As with Waugh, Huxley incorrectly sees the postcolonial world as the enemy, and he misidentifies his own intellectual class as a protector of order. The actual situation is far more complex; it is not as cut and dried as Huxley makes it out to be. The problems of society are not all caused by the so-called "teeming illiterates," but Huxley never entertains the idea that his own class is to be blamed for anything. As we will see, Huxley creates a dualistic world in all his novels that blames everything bad on the supposedly uneducated, especially those of "biologically poorer quality," and sets up the intellectual class as the only hope for the world.

Huxley shares this pessimistic view with Evelyn Waugh, and both of them see Englishness as essential and under threat. The old imperial ideology had effectively set up the English as a privileged minority, and perhaps—in Huxley’s view—an *intellectual* minority. This English minority is seen as superior when compared to the masses they ruled around the world. With the dissolution of Empire, the old hierarchy of control is destroyed, and in its place Huxley sees new and more horrible versions of control, versions in which the world is ruled by the majority rather than the white, English, intellectual minority. In effect, owing to the tumult of the twentieth century, Huxley’s novels call for reversion, back to the time when Englishness was monolithic and nearly unopposed.

## *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

*Brave New World* was written in 1931 and published in 1932, originally to be a pessimistic answer to what Huxley considered the noxious optimism of H.G. Wells' utopian novels. As early as 1916, Huxley was telling his brother Julian that "all's well that ends Wells" (*Letters* 92) and he describes Wells to Robert Nichols as a "rather horrid, vulgar little man" (*Letters* 258). Huxley characterized Wells—in some ways unfairly—as a Pollyannaish champion of scientific advancement who was convinced that technology could solve all the world's ills. Thus, as Huxley writes to Kethevan Roberts in 1931, "I am writing a novel about the future—on the horror of the Wellsian Utopia and a revolt against it" (329). Huxley "radically invert[s] utopian values, [and] suggests that being unhappy is better than being happy, that the irrational is better than the rational, and that almost anything is better than utopian harmony" (Ruppert 107). Above all, *Brave New World* is a paradise of the visceral, a playground for animal instinct and supposed lower-class desires, and Huxley contends that even the bad old world is better than that. The fact that Huxley chooses Wells to write against is relevant only as an impetus to his thoughts; in actuality, Wells' view of the future was far more varied than Huxley gave him credit for. The future *never* looks good or positive to Huxley, because it represents entropy, a gradual, or rapid in some cases, disintegration of the intellectual class. Huxley does not believe the "bad old world" is paradise, but he does believe that it at least carried with it the possibility of reformation. The future, Huxley contends, belongs to the lower class and their baser instincts, and therefore has no such possibility.

Huxley did not come to this conclusion in isolation; there was pessimism abounding in England in 1932. The metropole found itself in the grips of a global depression. A key concern during this time was unemployment, and many commentators bewailed thousands or millions of idle workers depending on the government dole. A 1930 editorial in *The Saturday Review* says that England “seems the only country in Europe in which [unemployment] becomes steadily worse week after week” (1), and a 1932 article by Douglas Jerrold declared that “the growth in unemployment continues and will sooner or later result in a strong wave of hostility to the National Government” (455). For some, the solution to England’s part of the global depression was population control in the metropole itself. A 1925 article blames the economic situation on overpopulation, “The present formidable figure of nearly a million and a quarter unemployed...testifies to the fact that...this country seems to be over-populated” (643). Spread out over six issues, this article goes on to claim that only by pervasive use of birth control among the “working classes” can total ruin be avoided. Coupled with this fear was a concern that increasing non-English populations also threatened to overrun the nation. The same journal gives Benito Mussolini a mouthpiece in 1931 to declare, “We cannot be too circumspect in saving and continuing that which has been handed to us for safekeeping if we want to prevent the fall of Western civilization and the doom of the white man.” Mussolini was predictably warning against communists, but many of his readers expanded this opinion to include non-Europeans of all types, and therefore feared “hungry Japan with its 404 persons to the square mile, or...India with its tens of millions dwelling ever on the verge of starvation” (Watkin 294). The general idea among many at the time was that England would soon either be bred out of its prominence in the world,

or forced out by the combined effort of starving millions. *Brave New World*, published four months before the “Japanese Advertisement” essay, shows Huxley agreeing with this idea in principle and emphasizing the danger posed by the up-and-coming masses.

*Brave New World* has government-regulated birth control as one of its more horrible future conditions, a primary example of advanced technology gone awry. It is ironic that an advocate for population control such as Huxley would write a dystopian novel in which total control of reproduction causes cultural destruction instead of cultural improvement. From the way Huxley pillories uncontrolled breeding in *Brave New World Revisited*, it would seem that he would criticize lack of government control of population rather than an increase of it. The paradox here has much to do with Huxley’s definition of Englishness as intellectual and highly refined. Rudolf Schmerl, writing during Huxley’s lifetime in 1962, says that Huxley worked under two main axioms,

One is the aristocratic ideal that everyone should be in his proper place, an ideal Huxley expressed most fully in *Proper Studies* (1927) and which he has never explicitly rejected since. The other is that desirable ends cannot be achieved by undesirable means. (331)

Though the rulers of the *Brave New World* have learned how to use technology to make sure no one is born without permission, in doing so they destroy civilization and turn people into mindless, overly-sexualized machines. The very solution Huxley proposes to humanity’s ills—the control of population—becomes a horrible mirror-image of itself in *Brave New World* simply because it has been applied for the wrong reasons. To Huxley, “birth control ranks foremost among the plausible solutions to pressing problems that the brave new world has misapplied” (Meckier 277). Instead of preserving the intellectual remnant by curtailing the breeding of undesirables, *Brave New World* takes population control to its illogical extreme. Englishness as Huxley defines it is nonexistent; instead,

the society that requires behavior Huxley considered to be beneath the “truly intellectual” replaces Englishness with universal monotony.

For the lower classes, indeed for *all* classes except for the very few individual Alphas cursed with atypical intelligence, AF 632 is a paradise. “People are happy,” says Mustapha Mond, “they get what they want, and they never want what they can’t get. They’re well off; they’re safe. They’re never ill; they’re not afraid of death; they’re blissfully ignorant of passion and old age. . . .And if anything should go wrong, there’s *soma*” (*BNW* 169). No one is born that is not supposed to be born; there are no squalid, overcrowded slums or really any miserable conditions at all, either physical or emotional. In his book *The Scientific World View in Dystopia*, Alexander Aldridge describes the world Huxley created:

Community, identity and stability are simply practical ends; they support nothing more than species survival—birth, copulation, and death in perpetuity. They are maintenance ends, not unlike those a good mechanic would claim as the goal of his vocation. (52)

For the greater majority of people reading *Brave New World*, it must first seem like the mechanic has done well. Misery and suffering have been completely eradicated. But there is only one culture in the Brave New World; even French and German are “dead languages” (*BNW* 16). This monoculture is held up for ridicule as completely vapid, as visceral rather than cerebral, and above all as lauding or perpetuating what Huxley believes to be the values of the masses. Recreational activities are the same for all castes, and everyone from Alphas to Epsilons are expected to behave exactly according to their conditioning. Without exception, the cultural activities in AF 632 are sports, movies, drugs and sex, none of which Huxley considers “higher pursuits.”

The main problem with the characterization of humanity in *Brave New World* is the almost offhand way in which Huxley dismisses “eight-ninths” of the population. In the words of Mustapha Mond, “The optimum population is modeled on the iceberg—eight-ninths below the water line, one-ninth above,” and those below sea level are “Happier than above it” (*BNW* 172). It is a sort of intellectual refuge for Huxley to assume that happiness for the lower classes includes total suppression of art, literature and spiritual development. His primary criticism of AF 632 is that sports, sex, drugs and movies—all supposed mainstays of the lower class—have replaced upper-class fare such as Shakespeare and Maine de Biran. Philosophy and literature have not only been replaced, but crushed—crushed by “the overwhelming weight of conformity and the simple satisfaction of all desire” (Greenblatt 110). Therefore, the premise of *Brave New World* is based on an inherent stereotype of lower-class values—those people want only gratification and existence—and the verification of this stereotype is what makes the *Brave New World* so awful.

*Brave New World* satirizes the already existing lower classes as hotbeds of iniquity and meaningless pursuits, places in which the vulgar aspects of humanity have taken root and will soon spread. In addition, the lower classes themselves are represented as wholly non-English. As Peter Firchow asserts, “Huxley almost certainly never intended his novel to be a satire of the future . . . The only meaningful future is . . . the future which already exists in the present” (119). It is not hard to determine the true target of the Savage’s diatribe against the feelies; the Fordian pornography is not far removed from the movies and television shows Huxley sees mass-produced in his own

time. In addition, the hyper-sexuality of the populace is very similar to prevailing 1930s attitudes about Africans and Asiatics, who are often unfairly blamed for sexual immorality and aggressiveness. Unlike upper-class, intellectual diversions, mass entertainment is nothing but “agreeable sensations [for] the audience” (BNW 169). Helmholtz Watson is gloomy and depressed because his own writing “*is* idiotic. Writing when there’s nothing to say. . .” (BNW 170). Unfortunately for Helmholtz and the society in which he lives, the masses dictate preference, and Huxley tells us the preference is for *Hustler* instead of *Hamlet*.

But it is not just Epsilons and Deltas who are soulless and base; all classes are interested only in sex, sport and sensation. Huxley implies that whether the one-ninth above knows it or not, the conquest of the iceberg’s tip by the lower eight-ninths, as portrayed in *Brave New World*, is already beginning and will soon be complete. The social order therein

involves the growth of sheer numbers with simultaneous retardation of the individual, [and thus] the operational code of adult life for the upper castes can be said to follow suit; the proliferation of sheer diversion results in trivialized, spiritually and emotionally retarded individuals. (Aldridge 55)

The lower classes are already spiritually and emotionally retarded, it seems, and the disease spreads quickly. The Alphas of the Fordian future have lost all that made them Alpha in the Huxleyan past; they are more closely related to the Deltas than they are to their upper-class progenitors. Alphas must act with “a proper standard of infantile decorum” (BNW 75), and this is a requirement of all classes, an important similarity between Alphas, who can conceivably choose otherwise, and Epsilons, who cannot. “Hence,” writes Alexander Aldridge,

the games and entertainment, the hallucinogens and consumerism and indefatigable sexual activity—all of which are sanctioned by society and sanctified in its tribal rites and with no higher purpose in evidence than self-gratification and self-maintenance on a massive scale. (58)

In other words, the entire world has become lower-class both morally and intellectually, or at least lower-class as Huxley defines it. The eight-ninths that Huxley rails against in his dystopian future has, by winning a culture war, come to rule the world.

Even those of Huxley's contemporaries who downplayed the importance of overpopulation nevertheless feared a cultural takeover by the postcolonial masses. A 1925 editorial in *The Saturday Review* entitled "The Colour Problem" declares that equality between the races should not be sought, because

Equality cannot mean anything short of the whites in Africa, Asia and elsewhere ranking...as a negligible minority of aliens, and not improbably an oppressed and downtrodden one...If the whites are to hold their world-dominion and consolidate it they must maintain the same material superiority compared with the coloured races which enabled them to win it last century....They must manage...to cope with an increasing knowledge and education, and above all a jealous and rebellious spirit among the subject races, and for that task no increase of fertility would be of any use at all. The peril of the white man is not lest he should be outnumbered—he has always been that—but lest he should be outclassed. (432-433)

For Huxley, the triumph of the Brave New World happens because of both eventualities. Overpopulation creates the environment necessary to build the society, and the society itself is run according to the baser instincts of the "coloured races."

Despite the fact that "all men are physico-chemically equal" (*BNW* 57), Huxley brings race and class assumptions to bear in the writing of *Brave New World*, thereby reinforcing stereotypes and commenting on English and European superiority. For example, every Alpha and Beta in the book is European, and owing to their mannerisms they are most likely all English Anglo-Saxons as well. It is no coincidence that the two

lowest castes are distinguished by the colors khaki and black—these are the same colors that distinguish lower class from upper class in Huxley’s own racial ideology. Indeed, whenever non-Europeans are mentioned, the context is always pejorative. “Negro ovaries” are especially good for breeding huge numbers of Bokanovsky twins (*BNW* 5), and the greatest advances in producing strong, fast-maturing and intellectually stunted people occur in Mombasa (*BNW* 10). The helicopter hangers are staffed by Delta-Minuses who are “identically small, black and hideous,” and “black” in this case is not referring to their clothes. Other instances include the “negro porter” (77), “Gamma-green octoroon” (81), and “Dravidian stewards” (121). The “gigantic negro” in the *Three Weeks in a Helicopter* feely is high-caste enough to be with a Beta-Plus female, but his portrayal as a “black madman” incongruously lusting after a blond woman shows a stereotype that needs no expounding.

Huxley’s assumption that any society ruled by the masses and not by the intellectual elite would be devoid of humanity betrays a deep prejudice, a “bias towards intellect, along with [one towards] purely cultural habits [which] disposed him to rebel against the gross passions and to satirise them” (Smith 1). Martin Green points out this bias towards intellect by commenting on Huxley’s assertion that “the last conservative statesman was the fifth Marquess of Lansdowne” (*BNW xvii*). He says

He [Huxley] of course knows that not one in a hundred of his readers will remember this name . . . and all will feel an incipient twinge of inadequacy; and by calling the statesman not Lord Lansdowne, but the Marquess, and the fifth Marquess, he spreads his peacock tail of insolent joy in his own superiority. (*vi*)

Cultured intellectuals like Huxley, the context suggests, would know exactly who Lansdowne was, and those who feel the “twinge of inadequacy” are those people who are

“subject to uncontrollable and often disgusting physical impulses and needs” (Greenblatt 108). Huxley’s “gross passions” are the affliction of the lower classes, Americans, Africans, and anyone not of his own breeding and education. It is America, after all, and specifically American cities,

in which the number of divorces is equal to the number of marriages. In a few years, no doubt, marriage licenses will be sold like dog licenses, good for a period of twelve months, with no law against changing dogs or keeping more than one animal at a time” (*BNW xx*).

Huxley continues his dog-license metaphor to the point that even the people involved become “dogs” and “animals,” and this is no mistake; the lower-class person is an animal swayed by urges as far as Huxley is concerned. Even more importantly, Huxley sees his own present day as being far more similar to *Brave New World* than people would like to admit, primarily because of the triumph of these so-called lower-class values. As Huxley writes in *The Devils of Loudun*, “a generalized and long-continued habit of overindulgence in sexuality may result . . . in lowering the energy level of an entire society, thereby rendering it incapable of reaching or maintaining a high degree of civilization” (316). This is exactly what occurs in the *Brave New World*; sexuality as a means of recreation becomes all-important, and all indicators of a high degree of civilization are lost.

Ironically, the animalistic modern civilization of the *Brave New World*, ruled as it is by the teeming illiterates, has segregated from itself groups of people it believes to be both animalistic and uncivilized. From these dirty pagans, trapped on an electrified Reservation, John the Savage strolls into the modern world as the representative of true civilization and the hero of the novel. Quite simply, John is Englishness in *Brave New World*. First and foremost, he knows his Shakespeare, the accepted patron saint of all

that is good and right with English intellectual culture. Though he is raised among pagan Indians, John is no pagan Indian, and Huxley carefully describes him as a blond, blue-eyed Anglo-Saxon (*BNW* 89), clearly set apart from his browner and less civilized brethren. It seems that the Savage is the perfect candidate for an upper-class, intellectual existence. He certainly has the pedigree—he is Anglo-Saxon, and the classes mixed to produce him are Alpha and Beta, not too far apart on the scale of genetically preferred individuals. He is as learned as he can possibly be under the circumstances of his upbringing. It is also interesting to note that Huxley allows the Savage “to speak more rationally than his upbringing among the practitioners of a religion that is half fertility cult and half *Penitente* ferocity would actually warrant” (*BNW* *xiv*). In other words, John is created artificially intelligent and rational, so that on the Reservation he may be a Crusoe surrounded by Fridays and then, when he comes to civilization, a last living Englishman surrounded by mindless automatons. In both cases he is the loner, the outcast, both reviled for his difference on the Reservation and patronizingly celebrated for his quaintness in London. In this way John represents the oppressed minority, surrounded on all sides by inferiors whose ignorance and sexual appetites eventually drive him to suicide. He is, like the heroes in many anti-utopian works, an “uprooted individual who struggles against a dehumanizing community,” and for whom “self-realization is a possibility that exists only in breaking away from a corrupt and deforming social order” (Ruppert 101). John struggles, and fails to achieve victory against the new social order. When he dies, the novel implies, Englishness dies with him, and never again will civilized culture exist on Earth.

The controlling masses destroy the Savage; the confederacy of dunces against him succeeds through sheer, overwhelming cultural pressure. Though the Savage is most disgusted by the Delta “identical midgets” he encounters in line for their *soma*, he eventually realizes that even the Alphas have only a sort of pseudo-individuality. Everyone in the Brave New World has the same desires, the same societal pressures to be infantile, and the same blatant lack of spirituality. Certainly Alphas are *smarter* than Deltas, but as for *intelligence*—not even Helmholtz Watson can keep from laughing at *Romeo and Juliet*. Huxley implies that Helmholtz, too, is infected—infected from when he was decanted—with a lower-class incomprehension. Helmholtz *tries* to understand, calling *Romeo and Juliet* a “superb piece of emotional engineering,” but even he is overcome by its “smutty absurdity” (141). Helmholtz laughs at Shakespeare because he cannot relate to it. If he could, the novel implies, hope would exist for the English ideology to be restored, Shakespeare and all. But Huxley cannot end his satire on a happy note and have it be as effective. For the Savage, and by extension for the reader, the only beauty to be found is in the past, within the complete works of England’s greatest poet, and the past dies when the Savage does.

In his 1948 forward, Huxley thinks about “offer[ing] the Savage a third alternative...the possibility of sanity” (xiv). In Huxley’s hypothetical new novel, this third possibility is “a society composed of freely co-operating individuals devoted to the pursuit of sanity” (xv). This is the premise of *Island* written long before the book itself; indeed, as Izzo writes, “in its way, *Island* is a refutation of *Brave New World*” (127). Huxley describes this sane choice in neo-socialist tones. He says the economics should be “Henry-Georgian,” which dictates common ownership of land but private ownership

of whatever is produced, and the politics should be “Kropotkinesque,” alluding to a sort of anarchic communism in which there is no central government at all. At first glance it seems as if Huxley is advocating socialism, but it is important to remember certain things about the people with which he intends to populate this Utopia. None of them are Epsilons; they are all intellectuals who spend their time doing intellectual things such as pondering “Higher Utilitarianism” and “the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos” (*BNW xv*). Much like those who do not catch the reference to the Marquess of Landsdowne, people who cannot talk about Tao or Logos or Utilitarianism have no place in such a society. Unlike the modern world, and its future incarnation the Brave New World, the masses would not hold sway at all in this third alternative. It is doubtful that they would even exist.

In many ways, *Brave New World* makes Huxley seem like a tremendous snob who delights in looking down on what he considers “lower-class” pursuits while also blaming the lower class for degenerating social structure. While the masses are pilloried in *Brave New World*, so-called intellectual individualists are unfairly praised. The Brave New World itself is created by mistaken technological intervention with what is actually a pressing problem for many people in the 1930s, and the fate of the Savage mirrors what Huxley believes will happen to his own Anglo-Saxon, Shakespeare-quoting minority. *Brave New World* is hopeless, but Huxley contends that a society ruled by cultured Europeans, a sort of Imperial *status quo ante*, has the possibility of being successful. After all, Huxley himself fills an *Island* with Alpha-Europeans and it works. At least, it works until it is overrun by the marching progress of anti-intellectuals and brown people.

## *APE AND ESSENCE*

But before Huxley could show us his *Island*, the great, impossible paradise in which Alphas live blissful Alpha lives, finding both transcendental peace and corporeal happiness, there was yet more horror from the teeming illiterates to predict. In 1948 Huxley publishes *Ape and Essence*, a frightening vision of a future even more horrible than that described in *Brave New World*, one that makes even *Nineteen Eighty-Four* look like a picnic (Thody 112). Sanford Marovitz says that *Ape and Essence* “echoes *Brave New World* [as] an alternate version of the future, a not-so-brave and ravaged old world, the consequences of a nuclear holocaust” (115). In some ways Huxley uses *Ape and Essence* to correct what he saw as a “vast and obvious failure” of *Brave New World*; the novel written sixteen years before had said nothing about nuclear weapons or the possible outcome of their creation, though Huxley insists he had enough evidence at the time to make such a prediction (*BNW xv*). Huxley is perhaps giving himself too much credit. He makes this claim in his 1946 forward to a *Brave New World* reissue, and the world of 1946 is very different from what it was in 1931, mainly because atomic weapons had become reality and were no longer simply speculative.

Certainly, Huxley was a proponent of nuclear disarmament, so his writing about an apocalyptic post-nuclear-war future could be seen as primarily concerned with warning humanity about the folly of a nuclear conflict. Strangely, however, Huxley is one of only a very few people writing post-apocalyptic nuclear fiction in the 1940's, and he was “the only generally well known author” to do so (Brians chapter 1). Richard

Schwartz hypothesizes that American cultural media avoided the subject because it was too imminent and too scary for the public to want to read books about it. He writes that “Although the threat of nuclear apocalypse certainly shaped 1950s military and foreign policies and promulgated angst throughout the world, it received surprisingly little direct treatment in American arts and letters and the popular culture of the decade” (406).

While many short stories in science fiction magazines dealt with the subject, these were not widely read or widely influential, and were generally marginalized (Schwartz 409). Huxley’s picture of a nuclear war-ravaged California is therefore breaking new ground. “In fact,” says Paul Briens, “few novels depicting nuclear war either outside or inside of science fiction were published before 1950. Those that were [published were] not well known or not widely reviewed or sold” (Chapter 1). It is not until later in the 1950’s that nuclear war becomes a prevalent theme, such as in Walter Miller’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959) or Pat Frank’s *Alas, Babylon* (1959). Huxley’s own treatment of nuclear apocalypse begins and ends with *Ape and Essence*; he never broaches the subject in his fiction again.

Both Miller’s and Frank’s novels are specifically about the aftermath of nuclear holocaust, but Huxley’s treatment of the subject is often seen as incidental. Paul Briens, writing about nuclear war in fiction, gives Huxley only limited credit for his apocalyptic themes:

Aldous Huxley[‘s] *Ape and Essence* was more of a restatement of the anti-utopian themes of *Brave New World* than a serious meditation on the probable consequences of a future holocaust. He did grasp the genetic danger, and remains one of the few writers to treat seriously the problems of radioactive soil for agriculture. (Chapter 1)

Therefore, though nuclear war creates the world of *Ape and Essence*, this is not the novel's primary concern. Nuclear weapons are not even the *only* weapons of mass destruction; biological agents such as glanders and tularemia are used to create Huxley's cataclysm as well. *Ape and Essence* is therefore not about nuclear war specifically; the use of nuclear bombs merely places the novel in the appropriate time period. In a 1945 letter to Victoria Ocampo, Huxley famously describes his fears of global warfare thusly:

National states armed by science with superhuman military power always remind me of Swift's description of Gulliver being carried up to the roof of the king of Brobdingnag's palace by a gigantic monkey: reason, human decency and spirituality, which are strictly individual matters, find themselves in the clutch of the collective will, which has the mentality of a delinquent boy of fourteen in conjunction with the physical power of a god. (*Letters* 505)

Huxley saw these tremendously powerful collective-will monkeys running around all over the place, threatening each other and the future of the world with their weapons. Exactly what the weapons *are* does not matter as much as the fact that they are superhumanly destructive and are wielded by people who have no business possessing them. These people, represented by the Brobdingnagian monkey, are swayed by the "collective will," or, in other words, the will of a large number of people. This characterization of the masses as nothing more than ignorant, angry and powerful monkeys—controlled by Huxley's herd-poison—pervades *Ape and Essence*.

Huxley writes a letter that suggests "aberrant sexuality rather than nuclear holocaust was his starting point [for *Ape and Essence*], an implication that gains strength when he speaks of composing the fiction as something not only 'interesting' but 'amusing' to work out" (Marovitz 123). Huxley uses the effect of "gamma radiations. . . to produce a race of men and women who don't make love all year round, but have a

brief mating season” (*Letters* 537). Thus, in the brief two weeks of mating that take place in *Ape and Essence*, sex can be even more tightly controlled while *also* being more uninhibited than anything the relatively tame *Brave New World* can produce. Instead of a World Controller, *Ape and Essence* has an

Arch-Vicar (also Lord of the Earth, Primate of California, and Servant of the Proletariat) [who] leads a hierarchy—Archimandrites, Patriarchs, Presbyters, Postulants, and Satanic Science Practitioners. More significant than their titles is the fact that they are gelded, for the efficient cause of evil to this society is sex. (Holmes 152)

Sex *is* evil in the new California, a gift from Belial to hasten the destruction of the human race, but it also totally preoccupies the people. As in *Brave New World*, sex glues the society together, though in this case its power comes from fear rather than pleasure. The Arch-Vicar himself credits the rise of Belial’s Kingdom to “the overcrowding of the planet” (*AE* 92), and women in this society are reviled as “vessels of the Unholy Spirit” for their reproductive capacities (*AE* 55). All in all, though the California of *Ape and Essence* seems in many ways more horrible than the London of *Brave New World*, both owe their creation to the perennial foes of Huxley’s “perennial philosophy”: overpopulation and the base sexual appetites of the lower classes.

In 1945 Huxley published a book entitled *The Perennial Philosophy*, in which he defines and discusses what he believes to be the paramount goal of human life. In this book he describes the perennial philosophy as

the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being; the thing is immemorial and universal. (*vii*)

Huxley's "perennial philosophy" is fairly mystical, but the idea is that introspection, self-knowledge, and above all personal growth in both the spiritual and intellectual realms should be the most important goals of humanity. He implies that these divine truths are accessible only through careful study and careful indulgence in psychedelic drugs. *Brave New World* has the necessary drug in abundance, but it no longer has any intellectuals capable of the "careful study" part. Because of the nature of the inhabitants of the Brave New World there is only stagnation and sexual immorality. In the case of *Ape and Essence*, there is a certain amount of spiritualism that could be used to explore the perennial philosophy, but it is twisted into uselessness by base desires, vicious tyrants, and graphic, animalistic violence.

In fact, *Ape and Essence* shares many ideas and themes with *Brave New World*; both are

totalitarian, although a grotesque irony pervades [*Ape and Essence*] in that it is allegedly a democracy that is being described; the inhabitants are persistently reminded that they have chosen to serve the state. Of course, if they choose otherwise, they become social heretics, traitors, and they are treated accordingly (Marovitz 120).

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, both novels describe what happens when the teeming illiterates multiply and become too large and too powerful, thereby changing everything markedly for the worse. Nuclear war and the subsequent holocaust are among many other symptoms of this disease. As in *Brave New World*, intellect and imagination are reviled and eventually subsumed in *Ape and Essence*. "This most appalling of all of Huxley's books," writes Charles Holmes, "depicts the future that follows (and some of the history) when the perennial philosophy is ignored" (150). It also betrays an almost fanatical obsession of Huxley's, mainly that the lower classes are utterly incapable of

following the perennial philosophy by themselves, and they seal their fate by doing away with the intellectuals.

*Ape and Essence* is written eight years before Huxley revisits AF 632 with his essay *Brave New World Revisited*, which I have already shown decries overpopulation in great detail and advocates eugenics as a way to a better humanity. In some ways the themes explored in *Ape and Essence* probably lead Huxley back to *Brave New World*, especially because his opinion of humanity seems to have soured even further. Huxley moved to the United States permanently in 1937, and the change of scenery did little to change his fatalistic view of modern society. *Ape and Essence* is written in Los Angeles about Los Angeles, and very little of it is complimentary. Huxley clearly regards his adopted home as being utterly wrecked by herd-poison and the types of pursuits that are socially mandated in *Brave New World*. Huxley gives us

the inanity and vulgarity of the civilization that had simultaneously produced Hollywood and the atomic bomb, erected statues of "Hedda Boddy" and blown itself to bits....[he is] describing not so much the malformed, ignorant, fear-ridden worshipers of Belial as the spiritually deformed and equally ignorant worshipers of Progress and the Nation in whose ruins the scene takes place. (Schmerl 333)

In effect, Los Angeles is both the center of movies—which act as an opiate of the masses—and also a center of the kind of multicultural crowding Huxley fears.

Not only is the setting unambiguous; the action of the novel is also dated very specifically. Unlike Huxley's other novels, *Ape and Essence* is presented as a frame story, and the frame story begins on the day of Mohandas Ghandi's assassination, 30 January 1948. This event is first treated cynically:

It was the day of Ghandi's assassination; but on Calvary the sightseers were more interested in the contents of their picnic baskets than in the

possible significance of the, after all, rather commonplace event they had turned out to witness. (AE 1)

Ghandi is thus compared favorably to Christ, and in both cases the death of the great man signals a worldwide change that the observers are either too ignorant or too self-absorbed to notice. Ghandi's assassination occurs just a few short months after India becomes the first of the Commonwealth nations with a non-white majority to gain its independence. For the nameless narrator of *Ape and Essence*, this single act has a wide-ranging significance. Ghandi, according to the narrator, is not killed by a single Hindu radical; instead,

We killed him because, after having briefly (and fatally) played the political game, he refused any longer to go on dreaming our dream of a national Order, a social and economic Beauty; because he tried to bring us back to the concrete and cosmic facts of real people and the inner Light.

The headlines I had seen that morning were parables; the event they recorded, an allegory and a prophecy. In that symbolic act, we who so longed for peace had rejected the only possible means to peace and had issued a warning to all who...might advocate any courses but those which lead inevitably to war. (AE 7)

In other words, Ghandi's death represents the last hope for a peaceful, spiritual world.

"We" kill him instead of a single assassin, and Huxley implies that after Ghandi's death there is no way to avoid World War III.

The actual text of *Ape and Essence* is presented as a movie script within the frame story, saved from the incinerator only by blind luck when it falls off the back of a truck (AE 10). William Tallis, the author of this script, receives a rejection notice on November 26, 1947 (AE 11). This date is also significant; November 1947 is the month in which news leaks about the Soviets having their own atomic bomb, and it is also the month in which the UN finalizes a resolution about the division of Palestine (*Long Beach Press-Telegram*). The period between November 1947 and January 1948 therefore

contains events which lead to the Cold War and many other modern conflicts. In addition, the British Empire begins to fragment during this period as well. In short, the world changes utterly and completely between the time when Tallis submits the script and the narrator of *Ape and Essence* finds it. By situating his novel thusly, Huxley hints that the changes will lead to war and destruction, the aftermath of which is portrayed in *Ape and Essence*.

Change on such a multinational scale is very harmful in Huxley's view; these historical events kick-start the Cold War in reality, and could very well lead to the future Huxley proposes. In many ways Huxley believes this future to be inevitable simply because of the nature of the teeming illiterates. "It was very unusual in 1948 for anyone to describe the relationship between man and his environment as a parasitic one, but Huxley did" (Thody 114). Whether they had nuclear weapons or not, Huxley is convinced these parasites would eventually kill their host. Even without the atom bomb, humanity would destroy itself, along with the Earth on which it feeds, "through over-industrialization, overpopulation, disregard for conservation and the environment, and through 'Progress and Nationalism'" (Marovitz 118). This is a horribly pessimistic view, even for 1948, but *Ape and Essence* takes as one of its fundamental truths that the greater majority of people are ignorant, panicky animals so concerned with their own needs that even the enlightened ones in their number are either ignored, cast away, or subjugated.

The first part of the script is an allegorical prelude to the nuclear war that is obnoxious in its simplicity: the teeming masses are all transformed into baboons doing pantomime versions of human activities. They are all, from the "baboon baby" to the "baboon financier" and the "baboon teen-agers," searching for "detumescence" a word

that in most contexts would simply mean *reduction of swelling*. However, Huxley makes *detumescence* as comically smutty a word as *pneumatic* was in *Brave New World*. In this case, *detumescence* is the fulfillment of any base desire, and the word refers to everything from the cessation of swelling after sexual release to the relief of a bowel movement (*AE* 28). The baboons/people are obsessed with it; like their simian counterparts, the pre-nuclear war society thinks of nothing but immediate gratification and personal satisfaction. Nothing else matters to them, and the Narrator rebukes the baboons' lack of spirituality and understanding:

The sea, the bright planet, the boundless crystal of the sky—surely you remember them! Surely! Or can it be that you have forgotten, that you have never even discovered what lies beyond the mental Zoo and the inner Asylum and all that Broadway of imaginary theaters, in which the only name in lights is always your own? (*AE* 28-29)

It is clear, especially after the glanders-bombs and nuclear warheads are dropping, that the baboon people indeed do not remember beauty, or subjectivity, or anything beyond their own selfishness. In this way they are as stunted as the Alphas and Deltas of the *Brave New World* but, like the monkey of Brobdingnag, nevertheless imbued with a terrible power that destroys the world, rather than remaking it in the bland, mindless style of the World Controllers.

This power—manifesting itself in chemical and nuclear weapons—comes from the baboons' subjugation of the intellectual class. The nightclub singer has Michael Faraday on a chain, Louis Pasteur is the pet of the chemical warfare specialists, and the great baboon-armies have custody of dueling Einsteins, each made to attack the other with twentieth-century science (*AE* 28, 30-31). The chains around the necks of these famous scientists show clearly who is in control of the pre-Judgment world. The simian

masses force the intellectual minority to serve them and, after world destruction is achieved, both Einsteins say cryptically:

FIRST EINSTEIN: It's unjust, it isn't right . . .

SECOND EINSTEIN: We, who never did any harm to anybody;

FIRST EINSTEIN: We, who lived only for Truth. (*AE 40*).

The reply from the narrator—"and that precisely is why you are dying in the murderous service of baboons" (*AE 40*)—mocks the very idealism that makes the Einsteins say such circumstantially pitiful things. To say this is a heavy-handed treatment of class relationships is an understatement; in the introductory scenes of *Ape and Essence*, all people and all scientists have been reduced to gross stereotypes. In fact, the scientists themselves are the only human ones, and theirs is a humanity of melodrama and helplessness.

The intellectuals in the world of *Ape and Essence*—such as the two Einsteins dying of glanders under an apple tree—are destroyed as effectively as those in *Brave New World*. The destruction of the intellectuals is just as permanent and irreversible in both novels; nuclear holocaust is simply a more violent way to do the job. Left to their own devices, the teeming illiterates that survive remake the world in their own image. In *Brave New World*, the masses embrace dehumanization and lechery, whereas in *Ape and Essence* society travels to the opposite end of the spectrum, and progress is usurped by a religious nationalism (Firchow 121). It is herd-poison in either case, and the primary vehicle of this herd-poison is once again prevailing attitudes about sex and population control. "In *Ape and Essence* the 'glassy essence' of the spirit has been denied; [only] angry apeness and simian cleverness remain" (Holmes 151). "Glassy essence" can be translated as that which separates man from animal; to Huxley, it is spiritualism without

religious constraints and wisdom without an equal helping of worldly ignorance. In other words, the “glassy essence” is what Einstein and Faraday have, but the baboons do not. In *Island* Huxley shows us the glassy essence operating perfectly, and many hundreds of people use it to explore the divine reality as the perennial philosophy dictates. In contrast, the people of new Los Angeles represent everything that is vile about humanity because the glassy essence is denied. They are grave robbers, torturers, book-burners and child-killers, all done in service to their highest creed:

My duty towards my neighbor is to do my best to prevent him from doing unto me what I should like to do unto him; to subjugate myself to all my governors; to keep my body in absolute chastity, except during the two weeks following Belial Day; and to do my duty in that state of life to which it hath pleased Belial to condemn me. (*AE* 70)

This perversion of the Christian Golden Rule is testament to how badly the masses can mismanage themselves; they have gotten it wrong on almost every level, their spirituality is only superstition and fear, and the crimson NOs festooning the tempting parts of women are “all the book learning they need” (*AE* 68).

The survivors of the nuclear holocaust are divided into two camps, one just as obviously heavenly as the other is obviously hellish. New Zealand is but the next example of a Huxleyan island paradise. Tallis describes it thusly,

And these are some of the survivors of that Judgment. Such nice people! And the civilization they represent—that’s nice too. Nothing very exciting or spectacular of course. No Parthenons or Sistine Chapels, no Newtons or Mozarts or Shakespeares; but also no Ezzelinos, no Napoleons or Hitlers or Jay Goulds, no Inquisitions or NKVD’s, no purges, pogroms or lynchings. No heights or abysses, but plenty of milk for the kids, and a reasonably high average IQ, and everything, in a quiet provincial way, thoroughly cozy and sensible and humane. (*AE* 35-36).

It is no surprise that happy, well-adjusted and “reasonably” intelligent people can be found on a remote island, isolated from the rest of the world’s utter insanity. We can

assume the iconoclast island-exiles in *Brave New World* live similar lives, and *Island* is certainly a utopia before the outside world invades it. Though we never actually visit New Zealand in the course of *Ape and Essence*, it is held up as a faraway land of peace and sanity, the antithesis to Los Angeles.

Huxley never visited New Zealand either during his lifetime, and it is just as well, because the New Zealanders he describes are far more English than Kiwi in their personalities and descriptions. They are English academic archetypes; they all wear tweed and their speech is peppered with phrases like “I really can’t imagine,” “Romance, indeed!” and “Professor Craigie will be so cross” (AE 38, 43, 44). Ethel Hook, protagonist Albert Poole’s fellow botanist, is described as “one of those extraordinarily wholesome, amazingly efficient and intensely English girls to whom, unless one is oneself equally wholesome, equally English and even more efficient, one would so much rather not be married” (AE 42). Albert Poole himself is described as a “good Congregationalist...on the liberal side” (AE 53) which places him in a Protestant religion that is English in both origin and temperament. Poole, Ethel Hook, and the rest of the passengers on the good ship *Canterbury* are all intellectuals with advanced degrees, and all look at the blasted land that was once Los Angeles with academic dispassion. The people on board the *Canterbury* are quintessentially English—the name of their vessel brings to mind both Geoffrey Chaucer and the Anglican Church. Their arrival in Los Angeles—as explorers in a sailing vessel—is reminiscent of many other first encounters between civilized English and barbarous natives. But Los Angeles is Belial’s kingdom, so this encounter ends with the civilizing professors being wounded and chased away, and even Poole barely escapes being buried alive.

Huxley uses the Kiwis/English to represent the last vestiges of both intellectualism and Englishness. Even though the novel takes place in the year 2108, the New Zealanders are throwbacks to a better time. They “survived and even moderately flourished in an isolation which, because of the dangerously radioactive condition of the rest of the world, remained for more than a century almost absolute” (AE 31). England itself does not survive into this future time, but rather than being obliterated by nuclear war it and the rest of Europe are instead overrun by Africans:

And meanwhile, on the other side of the world, the black men have been working their way down the Nile and across the Mediterranean. What splendid tribal dances in the bat-infested halls of the Mother of Parliaments! And the labyrinth of the Vatican—what a capital place in which to celebrate the lingering and complex rites of female circumcision! We all get precisely what we ask for. (AE 29-30)

This is, again, very heavy-handed satire, especially because Tallis ends his pronouncement with “We all get precisely what we ask for.” Huxley uses stereotyped, bone-in-the-nose Africans to drive home what happens when the white people lose control—Africans dance in Parliament, Americans worship the Devil and commit human sacrifice, and the last vestige of Englishness is chased away to remain insular and useless.

Impossibly, *Ape and Essence* is even less optimistic than *Brave New World*, even though none of the main characters die. At least Mustapha Mond participated in a discussion among supposed equals about the merits of the new society. The central conversation in *Ape and Essence*—the main exchange of ideas in this novel of ideas—is more the lecture of a terrifying dictator than a discussion. It is no Savage versus Mond by any means. Quite simply, the diabolic Arch-Vicar gives a brief history of the triumph of Belial, and Poole acts as his terrified sounding-board. The Triumph of Belial is predicated on doing the exact opposite of Huxley’s perennial philosophy and then adding

overpopulation to the mix in order to ensure the worst possible world. To modify Huxley's statement about the Savage for my own uses, the Arch-Vicar speaks more rationally than his upbringing among the practitioners of a religion that is half nihilism and half sensationalist sadism would actually warrant. Quoting Karl Marx and referring to Martin Luther might perhaps be excused, but the Arch-Vicar also mentions Benedict XV and Lord Landsdowne (*AE* 96), names that would have been obscure even to many of Huxley's readers in 1948. The reason for this is obvious—the Arch-Vicar is also the AntiHuxley, and his main purpose in *Ape and Essence* is to celebrate what Huxley believes to be damnable in his own time.

Most importantly, according to the Arch-Vicar, it is important to have unchecked population growth in order to build a world for Belial. The masses must get more and more massive, and the Arch-Vicar finds a special sort of glee in talking about it:

But Belial knew that feeding means breeding. In the old days, when people made love, they merely increased the infant mortality rate and lowered the expectation of life. But after the coming of the food ships, it was different. Copulation resulted in population—with a vengeance! (*AE* 91)

This new population is not a population of well-adjusted, intelligent *Island*-people, nor does it consist of canary-owning Japanese bourgeoisie. This growth, in fact, results from the *generosity* of such people, a generosity that leads to their own destruction by growing the proletariat. “It began with machines,” the Arch-Vicar intones, “and the first grain ships from the New World. Food for the hungry and a burden lifted from man's shoulders” (*AE* 91). The alleviating of world hunger was not a positive development.

Apparently, according to the Arch-Vicar, all it did was make people grow

Bigger and better, richer and more powerful—and then almost suddenly, hungrier and hungrier. Yes, Belial foresaw it all—the passage from

hunger to imported food, from imported food to booming population and from booming population back to hunger again. Back to hunger. The New Hunger, the Higher Hunger, the hunger of enormous industrialized proletariats, the hunger of city dwellers with money...the hunger that is the cause of total wars and the total wars that are the cause of yet more hunger. (AE 92)

In other words, everyone becomes hungry because of overpopulation, hunger leads to war, to nuclear destruction, and finally to the satanic kingdom on Earth. This sounds suspiciously like the problems Huxley warns against in *Brave New World Revisited*; the only difference is he is pessimistic about these developments and his character the Arch-Vicar is gleeful about them. The Arch-Vicar says the march to Armageddon all started with the feeding of the hungry, and so if this did not happen, the satanic kingdom would not have arisen. It therefore follows that overpopulation is, in Huxley's mind, the cause of the awfulness.

Since the Arch-Vicar blames food aid for hastening the kingdom of Belial, it sounds like Huxley is arguing that feeding the hungry on a massive scale is not good; if so, this position is nearly impossible to defend. We know for sure Tallis is arguing this point. From a practical standpoint, it seems that *not* feeding the hungry would be far worse and would lead to more unrest, as hungry people are more likely to start trouble than well-fed people. Huxley gives more agency to the masses than is actually warranted, and it seems as if he believes the smaller, less prolific class is not at fault for any of it. He is therefore guilty of a massive overgeneralization of the problem; the narrator of *Ape and Essence* blames the masses and overpopulation for causing a nuclear conflict, and this generalization ignores the culpability of the governments involved. Presumably it is not only ignorance that causes the war, but the masses are scapegoats nonetheless.

Huxley's final barb directed towards the ignorance of his own time comes out of the Arch-Vicar's lecture at St. Azazel's. The Arch-Vicar ascribes the victory of Belial to the actions of groups, not individuals, and their biggest mistakes occur in the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

If they'd stuck to the personal and the universal, they'd have been in harmony with the Order of Things, and the Lord of Flies would have been done for. But fortunately Belial had plenty of allies—the nations, the churches, the political parties. He used their prejudices. He exploited their ideologies. (AE 137).

Huxley is using the Arch-Vicar as a teaching tool; to avoid hell on earth, says Huxley, is to do exactly what the Arch-Vicar says would have defeated Belial. Belial's victory, according to the Arch-Vicar, is the fault of large groups of people easily swayed by emotion and mutual distrust. The "personal and therefore universal" becomes the "national and therefore internecine" (AE 137). Huxley implies that only nations have both the power and the collective will to unleash mutual destruction, and the few intellectuals making up the universal-minded minority are corrupted into the national will. The Orwellian term *groupthink* is an apt synonym for Huxley's *herd-poison*; both refer to this triumph of the mob over the individual. In fact, the problem Huxley sees most acutely is a sort of international groupthink, in which East and West both took

only the worst the other had to offer. So the East takes Western nationalism, Western armaments, Western movies and Western Marxism; the West takes Eastern despotism, Eastern superstitions and Eastern indifference to individual life. In a word, He [Belial] saw to it that mankind should make the worst of both worlds. (AE 137)

In essence, this is *Ape and Essence*: a hell on earth perpetrated by the absolute worst parts of the collective will. Introspection, self-knowledge and personal growth are supplanted; the perennial philosophy is dead. Thus, *Ape and Essence*, like *Brave New World*, shows

us what Huxley believes will happen when intellectualism loses and the masses rule the world.

### *ISLAND*

Huxley foreshadows the plot of a “true revision” of *Brave New World*, his “valedictory *Island*” (Holmes 149), when the Arch-Vicar squeaks about what would have happened if, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those in power would have made the best of both worlds instead of the worst.

“Eastern mysticism making sure that Western science should be properly used; the Eastern art of living refining Western energy; Western individualism tempering Eastern totalitarianism.” He shakes his head in pious horror. “Why, it would have been the kingdom of heaven.” (*AE* 138)

In 1962, a year before he died, Huxley published his vision of such a heavenly kingdom and placed it, not in the far future, but in the present day. As the Arch-Vicar lamented, Huxley’s perfect society is indeed “a desirable integration of Eastern religion and Western science and technology” (Ruppert 156). Though *Island* possesses many of the tools used to horrible effect in its dystopian predecessors—science, population control and mystical religion among these—it is heaven, not hell, precisely because of who uses these tools. To Huxley, *Island* happens when society is well thought out, when the greater good is considered before individual satisfaction, and when rulers are invariably rational and intelligent human beings. In a letter to Karan Singh, Huxley describes his own intentions thusly, “*Island* is a kind of pragmatic dream—a fantasy with detailed and (conceivably) practical instructions for making the imagined and desirable harmonization of European and Indian insights become a fact” (*Letters* 911). For once, the best will be

chosen instead of the worst, and all that Huxley believes to be good and right about both European and Indian “insights” will be properly implemented. At first this vision of a perfect society seems optimistic; Huxley believes his “instructions” are “practical” and “pragmatic”. Huxley assumes that if the readers of *Island* follow its precepts, then such a society would be possible and spread all over the world. In this book, for the first time in Huxley’s oeuvre, the upper intellectual class is given free rein to make the world, and the world they make is a matchless, though impractical, paradise.

The superiority of the small, enlightened group over the great unwashed masses is of primary importance in *Island*. Pala, the utopian island of *Island*, is “surrounded on all sides by insane and powerful and threatening barbarians. Moreover, the Palanese themselves are fully aware how difficult it is to be sane and human and civilized” (Firchow 179). Huxley places his fictional island off the west coast of Sumatra, and so the barbarians surrounding it are Southeast Asians, presumably including the Indonesians and Malaysians. Pala’s main enemy, the one that conquers it at the end of the novel, is the equally fictional Rendang, named after a curried-meat dish popular in Indonesia. Rendang and its leader Colonel Dipa are stereotypically belligerent, but also stereotypically Asian, and when anyone in the novel talks about the masses, or the Outside, they are almost always referring to their Asian neighbors. At its heart, even though the people of Pala are supposedly Asian themselves, *Island* is a racial novel. It is concerned with what happens when civilization, represented by British (English and Scottish) technology and culture mixed with the more fashionable tenets of Buddhism, is faced with the overwhelming numerical superiority of formerly colonized people. In effect, *Island* represents all of Huxley’s ideas about the superiority of English ideology,

the benefits of well-planned birth control and eugenics, and the danger of an expanding non-white population.

Though Pala is ostensibly a society of Mahayana Buddhists, this Buddhism is used primarily for population control, as most of the inhabitants are described as “Tantrik agnostics” (*Island* 92). Nearly all of the non-religious aspects of Palanese life seem decidedly English, or at least British in origin. It is as if Pala is a New Britain set up according to Huxley’s own tenets. The founding father of Pala is a Scottish doctor named Andrew MacPhail who, with the exception of Buddhism, remakes Pala in England’s own image:

They got a man out from England to establish Rothamsted-in-the-Tropics, and they set to work to give the Palanese a second language....There could be no escape for them, no glimpse of the outside world until they had learned English and could read the Latin script. (*Island* 149-150)

The inhabitants of Pala are given English agricultural practices—Rothamsted is a famous English center of agricultural research—and then they are taught English. These two improvements help transform the island into orderly civilization—even the native Raja of Pala speaks with a Cockney accent (*Island* 142). Pala is therefore a British colony that works, all the natives are remade English and are presumably happy about it. In fact, if Dr. Andrew’s great grandson Robert is to be believed, English was the best thing that ever happened to Pala artistically:

Adopting English as our stepmother tongue, we gave ourselves a literature with one of the longest pasts and certainly the widest of presents. We gave ourselves a background, a spiritual yardstick, a repertory of styles and techniques, an inexhaustible source of inspiration. In a word, we gave ourselves the possibility of being creative in a field where we had never been creative before. (*Island* 150-151)

Dr. Robert characterizes the pre-English Palanese as literary infants; they had “no real literature....Just bards reciting Buddhist and Hindu myths” (*Island* 149). English is, of course, seen by Huxley as superior and preferable to those ancient traditions.

One of the reasons Huxley brings England to Southeast Asia is because, by 1962, England had been cast out of all its colonies in the region with the exception of Hong Kong, and many of the former colonies were already in the hands of military dictators. This is the inspiration for Rendang, a country that exemplifies all that is wrong with the growing states in Southeast Asia. The protagonist Will Farnaby remembers “the villages through which he had passed in Colonel Dipa’s white Mercedes—the wattled huts, the garbage, the children with ophthalmia, the skeleton dogs, the women bent double under enormous loads” (*Island* 53). Rendang is the antithesis to Pala; it is a place where Asians have been left alone to control their own affairs instead of being taught the English way. Later descriptions of Rendang are even worse:

Those poor wretches camping out under the palm trees of Independence Avenue more totally abandoned by God and man than even the homeless, hopeless thousands he had seen sleeping like corpses in the streets of Calcutta. And now he thought of that little boy, that tiny potbellied skeleton, whom he had picked up [and] ...carried down to the windowless cellar that, for nine of them (he had counted the dark ringwormy heads), was home. (*Island* 91)

Without the influence of a Dr. Andrew to bring English civilization, Huxley implies, all Asian nations have similar problems with poverty, and these problems will spread through the influence of men like Colonel Dipa, the dictator of Rendang, who Dr. Robert describes as “with a purple, distorted face [and] a voice that he has trained, after long practice, to sound exactly like Hitler’s” (*Island* 125).

Will is not the only one disgusted by the conditions in the Outside; most of Pala's inhabitants are vicious in their descriptions of the outside world, even the parts not overrun with poverty, which they see as hopelessly ignorant, dangerous, and close-minded. According to Charles Holmes, "Susila MacPhail sounds no less hyperbolic than Mustapha Mond in her attitude towards Western family life" which, to both of them, seemed to cause nothing but neuroses and misery (188). Susila MacPhail's description of typically Western family life sounds suspiciously like Mond's description in *Brave New World*. She gives the recipe for a non-Palanese family as follows:

Take one sexually inept wage slave...one dissatisfied female, two or (if preferred) three small television addicts; marinate in a mixture of Freudism and dilute Christianity, then bottle up tightly in a four-room flat and stew for fifteen years in their own juice. (*Island* 102-103)

Pala, of course, is far more open-minded and, as Huxley clearly believes, rational in its ideas. In *Island*, there is no filter for Huxley's ideas like the Savage or the Arch-Vicar. If we can trust Huxley's own descriptions of the novel's purpose, we can assume that his ideas issue forth from the Palanese undiluted. And to a man the Palanese are scathing in their opinion of the masses. Robert MacPhail boils it all down to the newspapers, which are good examples of how the non-intellectual masses entertain themselves. The written word *out there* exhibited

No serious appeal to reason. Instead, a systematic effort to install conditioned reflexes in the minds of the voters—and, for the rest, crime, divorce, anecdotes, twaddle, anything to keep them distracted, anything to prevent them from thinking. (*Island* 171)

It is only on Pala, among the intellectual fringe, that real happiness, real thought, and real sanity are possible. This too shows Huxley drawing a careful line between

enlightenment, which Scottish doctors bring with them from England to create a society of intelligent rationalists, and the benighted Asians who try to get along without it.

This is not to say that everyone on Pala is some sort of super-genius, nor are they overly convinced of their own intelligence. Mrs. Rao's comment "Pala's the place for stupid people...we stupid ones *are* the greatest number" (*Island* 216), seems to suggest that most of the Palanese do not consider themselves as smart as their leaders. I suppose Huxley intends this self-deprecating comment to be endearing, or offer hope to the "stupid people," but in the context it is disingenuous. The average Palanese is certainly not stupid when compared to the rest of the world, especially if the rest of the world is represented by the squalor of Rendang. Even Mrs. Rao backtracks on this point somewhat, admitting that Palanese "stupid people" have a "kind of intelligence [that] is just as important" (*Island* 216). Mrs. Rao compares herself unfavorably with Vijaya and Dr. MacPhail, saying she is "too dumb to be good at any of the things [they] are good at" but then admits that she herself is well above average when it comes to being "sensitive and skillful" (*Island* 215). Try as she might to deny it, Mrs. Rao is part of the intellectual elite, as it is made clear often that the "stupid ones" on Pala are far more intelligent than even the smartest ones on the Outside. Their conversation causes Will to wonder aloud, "Which is better—to be born stupid into an intelligent society or intelligent into an insane one?" (*Island* 216). Obviously, Huxley points to the former as the better option, but it is interesting to note that the opposite of *intelligent* in this case is not *stupid*, but *insane*. In the rest of the world, it seems, stupidity has degenerated beyond the point of no return and become insanity. Pala was created only because "the

right people were intelligent at the right moment” (*Island* 92), and it continues to exist simply because the right people continue to act intelligently.

Before the coming apocalypse, before Colonel Dipa takes his *lebensraum*, Pala is perfect. To maintain this perfection, it is necessary for the Palanese to improve themselves both spiritually and, most importantly, genetically. As Peter Firchow asserts,

The Palanese . . . practice genetic control almost as rigorously as the lunatics of AF 632, but with the enormous difference of doing it voluntarily and in order to improve themselves intellectually, physically, artistically, spiritually—in every conceivable way—and not to propagate a rigid caste system. (179)

In other words, the Palanese use the science correctly, in a rational way. Therefore, unlike the *Brave New World*, the eugenics in *Island* are not meant to be scary or Nazi-ish at all; it is taken as self-evident that some genetic lines are superior to others, and propagating these better traits is culturally preferred. Vijaya is the mouthpiece for Huxley in this case:

We [on Pala] have a central bank of superior stocks. Superior stocks of every variety of physique and temperament. In *your* kind of environment, most people’s heredity never gets a fair chance. In ours, it does. And incidentally we have excellent genealogical and anthropometric records going back as far as the eighteen-seventies. (*Island* 220)

With these genetic resources—and Artificial Insemination—at their disposal, Vijaya and his wife Shanta choose a long-dead artist as the father of their next child, and the eventual goal, says Shanta, is “a centenarian clairvoyant in the family” (*Island* 220-221). The next exchange between Will and Vijaya is especially important, as it affirms that eugenics is taking place and is actually helping:

“So you’re improving the race.”  
“Very definitely. Give us another century, and our average IQ will be up to a hundred and fifteen.”

“Whereas ours, at the present rate of progress, will be down to about eighty-five. Better medicine—more congenital deficiencies preserved and passed on. It’ll make things a lot easier for future dictators.” (*Island* 221)

Will insinuates that improved lifesaving techniques—“better medicine”—is why so many people in his own country are allowed to pass on their “congenital deficiencies”.

However, Will misses the mark. Medical science on the Outside has nothing to do with it—indeed, medicine is probably more advanced on Pala, and yet there are no congenital defects being passed on. The population of Pala is neither stagnant nor decreasing; it is growing at “a third of one percent per annum” (*Island* 90). So why is it, exactly, that Will can say about Palanese children “How beautiful they were, and how faultless, how extraordinarily elegant! Like two little thoroughbreds” (*Island* 9)? The children can be called *thoroughbreds* because they are indeed thoroughly bred; the children born on Pala are “Only those we want. Nobody has more than three, and most people stop at two” (*Island* 90). Responsible breeding plus genetic engineering, each practiced by members of the intellectual class, soon produces a superior race of thoroughbreds.

Frankly, this is horrifying. It is almost impossible *not* to think of Nazism when the words *improving the race* are bandied about. Surely any of Huxley’s readers would make the same association with Nazism, so perhaps Will is attempting to make an allusion that Vijaya just does not understand or does not acknowledge. Either way, the fact that none of the characters recoil at the words is equally horrifying. Huxley tries to make the reasons for these machinations seem overwhelmingly positive, but instead this whole line of thought merely underscores Huxley’s contempt for the Outside and those he believes are genetically inferior. Dr. Robert MacPhail, son of the great Dr. Andrew, tells Will about the three most dangerous obstacles to any society’s success:

Ignorance, militarism, and breeding, these three—and the greatest of these is breeding. No hope, not the slightest possibility, of solving the economic problem until *that's* under control. As population rushes up, prosperity goes down. . . . And as prosperity goes down, discontent and rebellion, political ruthlessness and one-party rule, nationalism and bellicosity begin to rise. Another ten or fifteen years of uninhibited breeding, and the whole world, from China to Peru via Africa and the Middle East, will be fairly crawling with Great Leaders, all dedicated to the suppression of freedom. (*Island* 169).

Once again, Huxley tells us—this time through Dr. Robert—that overpopulation is the problem, and the existence of great masses of people inevitably leads to war, destruction and misery. It is no accident that the overpopulated world is described as “fairly crawling with Great Leaders” because by 1962 both Mao Zedong of China and Kim Il-Sung of North Korea had popularized that title for themselves. In addition, Robert mentions no European countries in his survey of “uninhibited breeding”—the teeming illiterates all come from China, Peru, Africa and the Middle East.

Huxley sees the rest of the world in 1962 as lost, hopelessly overconsumed and overpopulated. “I was in China only a month ago,” says Will, “Terrifying!” (*Island* 90). China is “terrifying” because its population is growing at an annual rate of two percent, and the rest of the developing world is not doing much better. It is being consumed by

Mass production, mass slaughter, mass communication and, above all, plain mass—more and more people in bigger and bigger slums or suburbs. By 1930 any clear-sighted observer could see that, for three quarters of the human race, freedom and happiness were almost out of the question. Today, thirty years later, they're completely out of the question. (*Island* 64)

The main reason why freedom and happiness were out of the question—“just plain mass”—is something the Palanese work hard to prevent. The prevention of the other two problems—“ignorance [and] militarism”—is somehow a pleasant side effect of preventing overpopulation.

The easiest way to accomplish this is through birth control, and of course Palanese birth control is offered as nothing like the horrible, government-dominated birth control of *Brave New World* or *Ape and Essence*. Rather, in *Island*, “propagation is not controlled by the state. Instead married couples, conscious as Huxley had long been about the dangers of overpopulation, deliberately restrict themselves to no more than three children” (Holmes 189). In this case, the Japanese Advertisement once again comes to mind; Huxley wants us to agree that the unhappy family is too ignorant to control their own destiny in such a way. The happy family—the intelligent ones—can be trusted to “never allow [them]selves to produce more children than [they] could feed, clothe, house, and educate into something like full humanity” (*Island* 168). Free contraceptives and instruction in *maithuna* are the only assistances the government gives these freely choosing and rational families—and these are really the only assistance they need.

How contraceptives help control population is evident, but the pervasive use of *maithuna* is one of Huxley’s more interesting ideas. *Maithuna* is “the yoga of love,” the part of Tantrik Buddhism that is not “silliness and superstition” (*Island* 86, 85). It is sex without ejaculation; *Maithuna* is spiritual rather than purely physical. In his previous utopian novels, Huxley time and again sees sex as a hindrance to both enlightenment and salvation. He implies that sex preoccupies the minds of the masses, it destabilizes societies, and only through controlling it is any sort of stability achieved. *Maithuna* is intellectual sex, “Huxley’s final solution to the problem of sex. It enabled Huxley, as it had enabled Yeats, to see the sexual act as another approach to the divine” (Holmes 187). In a sort of great, final irony, a physical urge is solved by an intellectual exercise. The

concept of *Maithuna* is learned instead of instinctual, involving more of the mind and far less of the genitalia. This in turn fosters the rational and spiritual approach Huxley believes to be so necessary, and it also—perhaps as a welcome side-effect—prevents the population from increasing.

But knowledge of *maithuna* is still esoteric, so it can only be understood by a select few, specifically the Palanese intelligent and rational enough to receive it. Though the masses would no doubt find much use in the practice of *maithuna*, the implication here is that they could not possibly understand it, and would therefore revile the idea. To drive this point home, Huxley sets up a couple of straw-man villains, representatives of the low-class, stereotypically Asian way of thinking that is so dangerous in his utopia. The Rani and her Raja-to-be son Murugan are created simply to be defeated; they represent the sort of spiritual mumbo-jumbo and amorphous greed Huxley typically accuses of placating and retarding the masses. Worse still, Murugan and the Rani are royalty, and are therefore in a position similar to that of Mustapha Mond: they have the power to change society for the better, but they choose appetite over intellect and greed over spiritual happiness.

There is racism afoot in this description of the true royal family of Pala; in many ways Huxley treats them as Waugh treats the Emperor Seth. They are true natives to the area, they are nothing like the Palanese who have achieved perfection through European enlightenment and, like Seth, they are lower-class royalty because of this distinction. They are the only natives we meet in the novel who are not completely married to Huxley's ideals, and are therefore set up to be ridiculed for it. Buddhism and *maithuna*

are esoteric enough for Huxley to accept, but all other native ideas and especially those espoused by the Rani and Murugan are described as barbaric.

The Rani, or the Queen Mother, is a stereotypical native who, like Seth, tries to embrace European ideas and false spirituality with hilarious results. She considers herself psychically gifted and allows something called her “Little Voice” to determine all aspects of life. Rather than striving for enlightenment, she is convinced she has already found it. Whereas the Palanese are introspective and interested in personal fulfillment, the Rani is dedicated to a “World Movement to save Humanity from self-destruction” and she peppers her speech with such nonsense that Will has to spend their entire conversation humoring her (*Island* 58). Her problems with the Palanese way of life center around sexual purity, which to her is the “*sine qua non*” (*Island* 60). Of course, in enforcing her own ideas on her son, the Rani becomes a gross Oedipean stereotype; Huxley hints fairly brazenly that Murugan’s homosexuality is mostly due to his mother’s suffocating influence. “She had brought him up to think of Women as essentially holy, [so] he wasn’t the sort of boy who would seduce a girl” (*Island* 60). In any other context Murugan’s respect for women might be considered noble, but Huxley portrays this as a symptom of a repressed sexual environment. Huxley’s absurd implication is that repressive sexual ideas can turn a person gay, and that any sort of spirituality that does not match with Huxley’s preferred Tantrik Buddhism is backwards and silly.

In addition, the Rani represents the clueless aristocrat, playing a similar role as the stereotypical bloated capitalist plays in some communist arguments. Owing to the way the Rani describes the “fine living” of Bahu in Rendang, it is easy for the reader to loath her:

“*Et combine sympathetique!*” said the Rani. “Among other things, Mr. Farnaby, Bahu is the Last of the Aristocrats. You should see his country place! Like *The Arabian Knights!* One claps one’s hands—and instantly there are six servants ready to do one’s bidding...the life of Harun al-Rashid, but with modern plumbing...And such taste...such a well-stored mind and, through it all...such a deep and unfailing sense of the Divine” (*Island 53*)

Will, who has recently visited Rendang, remembers the squalor and poverty that exists because of this “great aristocracy,” and says sardonically, “It sounds quite delightful” (*Island 53*). Not only does the Rani celebrate the worst parts of the Outside, she is also painfully unaware that the only truly “well-stored minds” and “unfailing senses of the Divine” exist in Pala, and her own version is just a misguided lie. She decries the happiness in Pala as a “False Happiness...a freedom that’s only for the Lower Self,” while Huxley adamantly maintains that the opposite is true. But defeating the Queen mother—who is vain and tends to bloviate—in a Utilitarian argument is far too easy. Huxley’s view that a sexually liberated, drug-using meritocracy is the best of all worlds is presented as obvious and inalienable.

Murugan, the soon-to-be Raja, is perhaps an even more disturbing piece of work. When the narrator remarks that “Hitler was evidently one of [Murugan’s] heroes” (*Island 175*) it is clear that Murugan is a caricature. Like his mother, Murugan is set up as the antithesis to the enlightened Palanese; he embraces every Outside vice that the Palanese work so hard to avoid. His goals for the Brave New World he intends to build include heavy industry, modernization, and militarization, all of which, as Dr. Robert asserts, equal “misery, totalitarianism and war” (*Island 50, 167*). Most of all, however, Murugan is seduced by consumerism, perhaps the biggest danger to pastoral Pala. Will finds him reading a Sears-Roebuck catalog—no greater symbol of consumption used to foment

class mobility exists—that has been given to him by Colonel Dipa, the Hadrian to his Antinoüs (*Island* 155).

Incidentally, Huxley as narrator calls Murugan Antinoüs several times, referring to a stereotypically effeminate boy-lover in Roman history. In effect, by hailing Murugan thusly, whatever power he might have wielded as heir-apparent is stripped away. He is no prince, the novel reminds us, just a catamite in the sway of a dictator. His arguments, which closely parallel those of his mother, are ineffective simply because of who he is. Murugan is also paired very closely with Western consumerism because of his obsession with the Sears-Roebuck catalog. Will's musings on this American-made import tell a chilling story:

Light dawned; the Colonel's purpose revealed itself. *The serpent tempted me, and I did eat.* The tree in the midst of the garden was called the Tree of Consumer Goods, and to the inhabitants of every underdeveloped Eden the tiniest taste of its fruit, and even the sight of its thirteen hundred and fifty-eight leaves, had power to bring the shameful knowledge that, industrially speaking, they were stark naked. The future Raja of Pala was being made to realize that he was no more than the untrousered ruler of a tribe of savages. (*Island* 155)

The parallel drawn between Pala and Eden is apt; this Sears-Roebuck “apple” would soon cast humanity out of the garden forever. It has already infected the future Raja; he is petulant about the substandard car Pala provides for his use (*Island* 69), and he is entranced by the catalog's Italian Style Motor Scooter (155). The reason for his consumerist, anti-Palanese tendencies, predictably enough, comes from Outside:

He's had miseducation in Europe—Swiss governesses, English tutors, American movies, everybody's advertisements—and he's had reality eclipsed by his mother's brand of spirituality. So it's no wonder he pines for scooters. (*Island* 163)

In *Murugan*, mass culture and mass insanity as Huxley defines them have a new devotee. The solution to his problem, says Huxley through Dr. Robert, is simple: “Education and reality revealers” (*Island* 163). Basically, the cure for consumerism is Pala-centric education and the taking of psychedelic drugs. If the alternative to Dr. Robert’s idea is to agree with the Rani and Murugan, the reader is expected to side with Pala without hesitation.

*Island* combines the best of English civilization with the best of native wisdom to produce a consistent Huxleyan worldview: some animals, especially those reared on Pala, are *definitely* more equal than others. It lays out his ideas for a perfect world very clearly, but it also reinforces the kind of intellectual superiority Huxley tends to exhibit in many of his novels. It is clear from the beginning that Huxley does not believe a utopia like *Island* can be reproduced on a large scale, and certainly not if fiddled with by the actual natives in the area, who apparently cannot be trusted to do anything except reproduce incorrectly. Indeed, the *Island*-paradise is destroyed once the outside world and its teeming illiterates gain access to it and interfere. Peter Firchow remarks that “a good many people, reading *Island* for the first time, must have been reminded now and again of Book IV of *Gulliver’s Travels*” (187). Book IV, of course, relates Gulliver’s adventures among the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos, the sane, rational and super-intelligent horses plagued by thousands of simian tree-dwellers. The Palanese are like the Houyhnhnms in many ways, because unlike the Outside Yahoos, they are

both happy and free; they have successfully blended Buddhism and experimental science, psychedelic drugs and behavioral engineering, pastoral values and technology...[this] has produced a rich and rewarding life in which everyone lives in harmony with nature and spends a great deal of time cultivating an authentic relationship to his mortality. (Ruppert 131-132)

The Palanese achieve all this by intelligently and rationally doing what is most certainly *not* done in Huxley's dystopias: they control the herd, check its growth, and forswear its poison. This leaves the Yahoos stuck on the outside with no prospects of enlightenment or improvement whatsoever.

Huxley's Pala is meant to remind the reader of another island menaced by waves of hungry Asians: a recently de-Empired Great Britain. As with Waugh, Huxley laments the coming destruction of Englishness by building a fictional microcosm where it can flourish, and then destroying it with an invasion of former colonials. This is meant, I believe, to elicit sympathy and pathos from the reader, as well as to spread the nostalgic ideal of Imperial England. Things were always better, both in Britain and in Pala, when the Houyhnhnms were in control. Unfortunately, says Huxley with his novels, the Yahoos are just too numerous and too uncivilized for this to persist.

## CHAPTER 4:

### NO TAIL AND NO FLIES: GEORGE ORWELL AND THE HOME-GROWN UTOPIA

In George Orwell's 1936 novel *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, the following exchange takes place between the rich Marxist Philip Ravelston and the idealistic young protagonist, Gordon Comstock:

“But what *would* Socialism mean, according to your idea of it?”  
“Oh! Some kind of Aldous Huxley *Brave New World*; only not so amusing. Four hours a day in a model factory, tightening up bolt number 6003. Rations served out in greaseproof paper at the communal kitchen. Community hikes from Marx Hostel to Lenin Hostel and back. Free abortion-clinics on all the corners. All very well in its way, of course. Only we don't want it.” (88)

In previous chapters, Comstock is so committed to the destruction of capitalism, to the belief that class conflict is the source of all evil in the world, that he voluntarily removes himself from society altogether. Rather than make a living writing advertisements, Comstock chooses to live in exile and poverty as a statement against wealth and the capitalist system. However, he is sardonic when he gets around to describing a truly socialist society, and it sounds nothing like a worker's paradise. In addition, his statement “we don't want it” refers to England itself; the idea is that such a society would never be accepted by the English, and therefore could never happen. Comstock is, in essence, a socialist who is dismissive of a socialist future, and the conflict nearly tears him apart. In the end—and the tone suggests that this is not really a happy ending—capitalism wins out. Comstock acquiesces to the machine, settles down with a wife and a mainstream job, and presumably learns his lesson. “Every intelligent boy of sixteen is a Socialist,” Comstock says, “at that age one does not see the hook sticking out of the

rather stodgy bait” (*KAF* 43). By the end of the novel, Comstock has shed himself of the hook.

When it comes to political conflict, Orwell has more in common with Gordon Comstock than the fact that they both worked in bookshops. He too spent several years destitute and wandering as a statement against capitalism. Unlike Comstock, Orwell does not exactly capitulate to the machine at any point, but he *did* distrust the socialist future, so much so that “some kind of Aldous Huxley *Brave New World*; only not so amusing” could have come from his own mouth. Orwell’s writings are replete with contradictory statements about socialism, and it is often difficult—but not impossible—to know exactly where he stands. *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) expounds a socialist theory convincing enough for it to be included as a Left Book Club selection, but even in that book there are passages that seem to contradict themselves. For instance, Orwell asserts that “everyone who uses his brain knows that Socialism, as a world-system and whole-heartedly applied, is a way out” (*RWP* 158). It is “a way out” of class struggle, of inequality, and of misery. However, the next sentence says Socialism “would at least ensure our getting enough to eat even if it deprived us of everything else” (*RWP* 159). This is hardly a compliment. A society in which basic needs are met at the expense of everything else is exactly what Huxley’s *Brave New World* is warning us about, and surely Orwell understands that the world of Mustapha Mond is no Elysian Fields, even if it is amusing, and even if it does provide the greatest happiness to the greatest number.

Much of Orwell’s pessimism about a socialist future came from his time in Spain during the Civil War, which he describes in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). When he first arrives in Barcelona in December of 1936, Orwell is impressed by what he sees:

The aspect of Barcelona was something startling and overwhelming. It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle....In outward appearance it was a town in which the wealthy classes had practically ceased to exist....There was much in it that I did not understand, in some ways I did not even like it, but I recognized it immediately as a state of affairs worth fighting for. (4-5)

This positive view of socialism is wrecked when Orwell becomes a victim of Trotskyist/Stalinist infighting in Spain. Many of his friends were imprisoned or killed because their particular flavor of socialism was considered dangerous by those in power, the Soviet-backed Communists. Orwell understood firsthand how dangerous Stalin was long before many of his fellow socialists had realized it. Though the horror of Stalinism affected Orwell's world outlook—his two most famous books *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) can certainly be described as anti-Stalin—it did not cause him to abandon socialism completely. In 1946 Orwell publishes an essay entitled “Why I Write” in which he defines his primary political position and credits his experiences in Spain with forming it:

The Spanish war and other events in 1936-7 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic Socialism, as I understand it. (7)

The word choice here is key; there is a substantial difference in Orwell's mind between the totalitarian brand of socialism that Stalin represents and *democratic* socialism, the type which he advocates and, in some sense, always advocated even before the Spanish Civil War. To continue Comstock's metaphor, Orwell contends that the stodgy bait isn't all that bad, provided the totalitarian hook is removed from it.

Orwell qualifies his endorsement of “democratic Socialism” with the phrase “as I understand it,” and exactly how Orwell understands it is important in order to reconcile

his seemingly contradictory statements about socialism. Too often in modern criticism the Orwell debate has been framed rather expansively around whether or not Orwell was a proponent of socialism, as he himself claims, or if he was in fact more conservative in his politics, as some critics interpret *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In his 1952 introduction to *Homage to Catalonia*, Lionel Trilling says that Orwell writes in “a whole literary genre with which we have become familiar in the last decade, the personal confession of involvement and then of disillusionment with communism” (vi). Those who would laud the anti-totalitarian Orwell and gloss over his earlier involvement with radicals like this interpretation; Anthony Daniels says *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* make Orwell “an honorary conservative, though in fact he was a conscript rather than a volunteer.” The belief exhibited here is that Orwell started out radical and “hopelessly naïve” (Greenblatt 41), but later saw the error of his views and corrected them. He became conservative as soon as he “popularized a severe and damaging criticism of the idea of socialism and its adherents” (Williams 10). Though Orwell said specifically that his critique of socialism, especially in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, was meant to *help* the revolution rather than harm it, his protesting that he was still a socialist after so unequivocally condemning socialists struck many critics as hypocritical. Stephen Greenblatt is especially caustic about this supposed hypocrisy, “Orwell declares himself a revolutionary socialist to the end of his life, even after he has written powerful and bitter exposés of the whole notion of progressive revolution and the socialist myth of history” (42). To go from avid socialism to declaring that socialist ideas of history are myths is certainly a profound philosophical change, one that, Greenblatt asserts, Orwell would deny even in the face of mounting evidence.

Certainly, as James Wood writes, “After the war [World War II] Orwell became most famous as a left-baiting anti-totalitarian,” but this fame owes more to what people wished to read *into* Orwell’s writings than what he actually wrote. It is a pity Orwell died before he could pen a valedictory affirmation of his philosophy, an *Island* of his own, in order to better clarify his position. Such a work might have gone a long way towards re-establishing Orwell as a socialist and radical. Instead, Orwell’s farewell statement was the very pessimistic *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Therefore, for most people alive today, it is his combat with communism that constitutes “his intellectual and moral legacy” (Hitchens, *Why Orwell Matters* 8). With the Soviet Union set up as the clear enemy during the Cold War, and especially during the Thatcher/Reagan neoconservative movement of the 1980’s, some people commandeered Orwell’s anti-totalitarian writings and incorrectly expanded them to include all socialist ideas. As Harold Bloom relates,

The sage Podhoretz allowed himself to observe that Orwell would have become a neoconservative had he survived until this moment [1984]. Perhaps irony, however equivocal, is inadequate to represent so curious a posthumous fate as has come to the author of *Homage to Catalonia*. (1)

It is difficult indeed to find a high school in the United States in which *Homage to Catalonia* is required reading. However, *Animal Farm* and its now orthodox anti-communist interpretation are ubiquitous. A great many people today know Orwell as anti-communist; far fewer know him as pro-socialist.

This monolithic idea of Orwell as anti-communist is often expanded to show Orwell as a darling of the conservatives. Christopher Hitchens describes this process in a way that sounds eerily similar to the building of Frankenstein’s monster,

It is true on the face of it that Orwell was one of the founding fathers of anti-communism; that he had a strong patriotic sense and a very potent instinct for what we might call elementary right and wrong; that he

despised government and bureaucracy and was a stout individualist; that he distrusted academics and reposed a faith in popular wisdom; that he upheld a somewhat traditional orthodoxy in sexual and moral matters, looked down on homosexuals and abhorred abortion; and that he seems to have been an advocate for private ownership of guns. He also preferred the country to the town, and poems that rhymed. From these scattered bones one could readily (if a trifle hastily) reconstruct the skeleton of a rather gruff English Home Counties Tory. (*Why Orwell Matters* 79-80)

Hitchens is being especially vicious to those who would use Orwell as a conservative mouthpiece; his sarcasm suggests that all of these qualities of Orwell are pulled out of context in order to further a specific political aim, and the actual complexity of Orwell's beliefs is ignored. It is as if "democratic Socialism as [Orwell] understand[s] it" is not really socialism at all, and of course nothing could be further from the truth. Unlike Waugh and Huxley, it cannot be successfully argued that George Orwell was in reality a "rather gruff English Home Counties Tory," nor was he a champion of the English upper class, be it hereditary, intellectual, or otherwise. In fact, Orwell spent his literary life *attacking* privilege, the snobbery that goes with it, and the hypocrisy of the reformist intellectual. Orwell is no conservative, and he is no communist either. Indeed, the very dichotomy is incorrectly framed.

Orwell's works are too varied and too critical of both sides to be so easily categorized, and to try to do so is unfair and self-serving. There is a third option, a better way of defining democratic socialism *as Orwell understands it*. Just as his distrust and hatred of Stalinism intensified in Spain, so did his steadfast belief in the perfect sort of socialism:

One had been in a community [Republican Spain] where hope was more normal than apathy or cynicism, where the word 'comrade' stood for comradeship and not, as in most countries, for humbug....In every country in the world a huge tribe of party-hacks and sleek little professors are busy 'proving' that Socialism means no more than a planned state-

capitalism with the grab-motive left intact. But fortunately there exists a vision of Socialism quite different from this. The thing that attracts ordinary men to Socialism and makes them willing to risk their skins for it, the ‘mystique’ of Socialism, is the idea of equality; to the vast majority of people Socialism means a classless society, or it means nothing at all. And it was here that those few months in the militia were valuable to me....The effect was to make my desire to see Socialism established much more actual than it had been before. (*Homage to Catalonia* 104-105).

Orwell paints a beautiful picture of socialism as a system of human interaction far removed from “planned state-capitalism,” and instead driven by hope and “comradeship.” Above all, Orwell sees socialism as “equality,” both in condition and in class. In the same passage Orwell admits that “such a state of affairs could not last. It was simply a temporary and local phase in an enormous game that is being played over the whole surface of the earth” (104). Orwell recognizes his own idealism as well as its impossibility; indeed, after the horrors of two world wars, after Hitler’s butchery and Stalin’s purges, Orwell’s idyllic socialism and the equality it represented most likely seemed even further away than it did when he wrote *Homage to Catalonia*.

Nevertheless, the *idea* of democratic socialism was firmly entrenched in Orwell’s mind and was therefore an integral part of his ideology. Orwell saw the world through a democratic-socialist lens, even before the Spanish Civil War, and I contend that this ideological position—which was also anti-imperial, anti-hegemonic, and anti-oppression—found its genesis in the same sort of Althusserian nostalgia I defined in the introduction. In his article “George Orwell: Socialism and Utopia,” Richard White asks two excellent questions:

Did Orwell’s idealism finally succumb to a more cynical realism in his last novels, *Animal Farm* and *1984* (which suggest that everything, including the working class, is either corrupt or corruptible)? And to what extent did his hope for a socialist future actually derive from his nostalgia for a time, before World War I, when life was less complicated?

The answers to these questions, as I see them, are *no* and *a great deal*. These answers give insight into the purpose behind Orwell's writings. Democratic socialism as Orwell defines it does not exist at any point after he leaves Barcelona, but his belief in it stems from a place and time in which it *did* exist and *was* possible, at least insofar as Orwell remembered it. This place is England, the time of possibility was indeed "before World War I," and at the end of *Homage to Catalonia* Orwell describes both as a veritable utopia:

Down here it was still the England I had known in my childhood: the railway-cuttings smothered in wild flowers, the deep meadows where the great shining horses browse and meditate, the slow-moving streams bordered by willows, the green bosoms of the elms, the larkspurs in the cottage gardens; and then the huge peaceful wilderness of outer London, the barges on the miry river, the familiar streets, the posters telling of cricket matches and Royal weddings, the men in bowler hats, the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, the red buses, the blue policeman—(231-232)

In *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell gives us this description so he can then knock us flat with reality; the next sentence reads "all sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England, from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar of bombs" (232). To Orwell, this iconic, idyllic and mostly stereotypical view of England is both tremendously attractive and dangerously distracting. In addition, he believed such a system could be easily destroyed. Orwell had no delusions that England as it existed was completely equal or completely classless, but he did hold that it was the best option available. "From the English-speaking culture," Orwell writes, "if it does not perish, a society of free and equal human beings will ultimately arise" ("The Lion and the Unicorn" 89). This kind of steadfast optimism stems from a remembered England that is, in Orwell's mind, quite literally the best hope for humankind.

In 1940, when Orwell begins work on his essay “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius,” the bombs are falling in earnest, and whether or not England will survive the barrage is almost literally up in the air. In this work, Orwell embraces his nostalgia and adds to it a powerful sense of patriotism:

One cannot see the modern world as it is unless one recognizes the overwhelming strength of patriotism, national loyalty....as a *positive* force there is nothing to set beside it. Christianity and international Socialism are as weak as straw in comparison with it. (11)

Especially for modern conservative critics, Orwell’s ideas here look very much like what a conservative might say. As James Wood tells us:

Orwell’s radicalism was also conservative. He was a socialist artist but utterly anti-bohemian; a cosmopolitan who had lived in Paris and fought alongside Trotskyists in Spain but who was glad to get back home to lamb and mint sauce and “beer made with veritable hops.” He wanted England to change but stay the same, and he became a great popular journalist in part because he was so good at defending the ordinary virtues of English life, as he saw them, against the menace of change.

In this quote, love of country is incorrectly equated with conservatism, as if it is a strange and ironic thing for a “radical” to also love his country. In fact, in some cases the conservative/socialist paradox of Orwell is manufactured precisely because of his clear love for England and traditionally English things. However, patriotism does not equal conservatism; Orwell himself says patriotism “is actually the opposite of Conservatism, since it is a devotion to something that is always changing and yet is felt to be mystically the same” (“The Lion and the Unicorn,” 85). Orwell’s patriotism, as in “The Lion and the Unicorn,” and his belief in democratic socialism, as in *Homage to Catalonia*, are linked together by nostalgia and the wish to preserve an English *status quo ante* that he holds dear.

Unfortunately for Orwell the socialist, maintaining this dear old society requires keeping in place the English class system he so often speaks against, at least for a little while longer. Sometimes Orwell sounds resigned to this; he declares that “though the English class-system has outlived its usefulness, it *has* outlived it and shows no signs of dying” (*RWP 208*). In “The Lion and the Unicorn,” Orwell explains his position in a tone that is both belligerent and conciliatory:

England is the most class-ridden country under the sun. It is a land of snobbery and privilege, ruled largely by the old and the silly. But in any calculation about it, one has got to take into account its emotional unity, the tendency of nearly all its inhabitants to feel alike and act together in moments of supreme crisis. (*RWP 29*)

Orwell believes England is not the best it can be by any means; the class system is barely tolerable, but it *is* tolerable because it is united and stable. In moments of supreme crisis, such as during either world war, England’s various classes come together rather than come apart. For Orwell, a continuation of the class system is not the optimum scenario, but the preservation of England as it stands is more important than a classless society. Without this preservation, there is the very real chance of his beloved country leaning too far one way or the other, becoming like Hitler’s Germany or Stalin’s Russia. Orwell includes himself when he says

We all rail against class-distinctions, but very few people seriously want to abolish them. Here you come upon the important fact that every revolutionary opinion draws part of its strength from a secret conviction that nothing can be changed. (*RWP 146*)

If it is true that nothing can be changed, then it follows that what is best for social improvement is to work within the system. If one is allowed to choose a system, Orwell might say, one could do a great deal worse than England, even with its class distinctions.

In his “Politics v. Literature” (1946), Orwell attributes a goal to Jonathan Swift that is very similar to his own. He says that Swift’s aim in writing is not to create a new world, but to make “the world of his own day, a little cleaner, a little saner, with no radical change and no poking into the unknowable” (83). In his novels, Orwell advocates the same thing, a cleaner and saner version of the pre-Great War world of his childhood, minus the snobbery and class conflict responsible for his horrendous public-school years, minus the naked imperialism he came to hate during his time as a policeman in Burma, and plus a common respect for English culture and a preservation of its traditions. In this way “cleaner and saner” *always* means a return to “the idea of a static, semi-fictional working-class world of decency and good-tempered bus drivers and bad teeth” (Wood).

Orwell had a great faith in England despite its inherent inequality. Though he wished for and actively fought for socialist revolution in other countries, he did not think what had happened in Russia and Spain would happen at home. Orwell says in *Homage to Catalonia* that the Spanish resisted Franco with a “definite revolutionary outbreak,” but if Franco were somehow transported to England he would be resisted “in the name of ‘democracy’ and the *status quo*” (48-49). In Orwell’s eyes, the English do not revolt; even Franco would be handled—and resisted—in a peaceable manner. Spanish democracy could not survive Franco, but English democracy seems to Orwell to be far more resilient. The *status quo* is a very powerful force in England, and Orwell is never as critical of it as he is of an imagined socialist future. As he writes in 1937,

We live, admittedly, amid the wreck of a civilisation, but it has been a great civilisation in its day, and in patches it still flourishes almost undisturbed. It still has its bouquet, so to speak; whereas the imagined socialist future, like the colonial burgundy, tastes only of iron and water. (*RWP* 120).

Orwell does not look fondly into the future; he instead waxes nostalgic about a great civilization wrecked. After all, says Orwell, “our age has not been an altogether bad one to live in” (*RWP* 109). In fact, compared to the dark and dreary future Orwell foresees, the “good old days” of his imagination are very good indeed.

Despite the apparent difference between early novels like *Burmese Days* (1934) or *Coming Up For Air* (1939) and his later, more popular novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell’s overall philosophy does not change much. The themes of these novels are more alike than many would like to believe, because Orwell’s “cynical realism” exists from the very beginning, and his “idealism” is always tainted with it. His idealism did not succumb to anything in his writing career, and the true nature of this idealism is often overlooked. Though it is arguable that his political statements differ, Orwell’s novels are united not only by cynical realism but also a longing for the old “nation of shopkeepers” as praised by Adam Smith and disparaged by Napoleon. It is indeed Orwell’s nostalgia for halcyon antebellum days—the paradisiacal Edwardian England he remembers—that drives his pen. If it were possible to bottle English small-town life circa 1910 and preserve it in perpetuity, Orwell would buy a cellar-full, provided he could hand-select the vintage. This particular wine would certainly taste better to him than the iron and water of a socialist future or even the iron and water of the imperialist present. In other words, the best of all possible worlds, as described in Orwell’s novels, is based upon the small-town English microcosm, detached completely from damaging outside influence. If this influence is kept to a minimum, and the English can be persuaded to behave decently to each other, then the *status quo antebellum* is, to Orwell, as good as it gets.

The problem with Orwell's nostalgia is that no time period is as perfect as he remembers, and no piece of England ever exists in isolation. Whether the inhabitants of this Edwardian small town hypocritically ignore it or not, their way of life is inextricably tied to a huge Empire in which oppression and racism flourish. Even if the Empire did not exist, the English small town is hardly free of poverty, misery, or class struggle. Nevertheless, England as Orwell remembers it is ideological; Orwell's sense of the world is shaped by a more positive, if unrealistic, view of the past. This misremembered past colors both his opinion of the present and his predictions for the future. Questions of class, colonialism, and capitalism bedevil Orwell for much of his career, and it seems that he is never satisfied with the answers he obtains. Therefore it is no surprise that he longs for a place and an era in which such questions need not be asked, and life is gloriously uncomplicated. His novels are cynical because this ideal is unreachable, and the ideal is unreachable because it is an attractive but illusory refuge.

## *BURMESE DAYS*

Orwell's 1934 novel *Burmese Days* is one of a very few of his writings set in Burma, where he worked as a member of the Imperial Police from 1922 to 1927. Two of his more famous essays, "A Hanging" (1931) and "Shooting an Elephant" (1936) are also set in Burma, but "none of his letters from Burma have been published, and except for a few short, uninformative paragraphs nothing has been written by the men who knew him there" (Meyers 52). It is not clear why Orwell wrote so very little about Burma compared with his other essay subjects, and Jeffrey Meyers blames either the climate or the Japanese occupation for destroying what factual records there might have been (53).

What *is* clear, however, is that the experience had a profound effect on Orwell's philosophy, though this effect was often conflicted and contradictory. As Orwell explains in "Shooting an Elephant":

Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear....All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, IN SAECULA SAECULORUM, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts.

Like John Flory, the protagonist of *Burmese Days* who is often "a bit too Bolshie" in his opinions (*BD* 34), Orwell is very much anti-imperial. Christopher Hitchens tells us that Orwell's "rooted opposition to imperialism is a strong and consistent theme throughout all of his writings" (*Why Orwell Matters* 22), and this view was forged into steel during his time in Burma. Nevertheless, Orwell found it difficult to reconcile his anti-

imperialism with his opinion of the Burmese themselves. It is as if he disapproves of imperialism in principle, but he also seems to imply that the Burmese tend to deserve it in some ways, simply because of who they are and how they react to members of an occupying force.

The novel simultaneously shows Orwell's disgust for the Empire and his loathing of the Burmese, and the implication is that things can only get worse. The terrible aspects of an oppressive Empire are on display, as are the stereotypically odious influences of the native population. From the beginning there is no hope either for Burma or the English who rule it. Instead, Orwell identifies with everything negative and implies that both the conquerors and the conquered deserve what they get. It is as if Orwell were rewriting *Heart of Darkness* while standing in the middle of Kurtz's camp, before Marlowe's arrival, watching everything unravel and waiting for the predictable and deserved death of both the protagonist and all the savages surrounding him.

Parts of *Burmese Days* are meant to ridicule the racist ideas of narrow-minded Englishmen, but this is Swift's reflecting mirror once again, making fun of others for having a view Orwell himself shares. The character Ellis is hyperbolically racist—anyone who is not Anglo-Saxon is referred to as a “nigger” by Ellis, despite their skin color or national origin. Mr. Lackersteen agrees to sign whatever vicious rant Ellis proposes (*BD* 31). Deputy Commissioner MacGregor, who is “deeply fond” of Orientals and offended by Ellis' tirades, nevertheless also remembers fondly the days “when one's butler was disrespectful, one sent him along to the jail with a chit saying ‘please give the bearer fifteen lashes’” (*BD* 29-30). Elizabeth is yet another example of the “Europeans” being blind to cultural difference and vicious in their descriptions of Asians. She speaks

of Burmese women thusly, “Aren’t they too simply dreadful? So *coarse*-looking; like some kind of animal....that black skin—I don’t know how anyone could bear it!” (*BD* 119). Of course, none of them are black—Flory corrects her by saying “brown skin”—but the constant use of the word “black” reinforces the idea that in Burma and elsewhere in the Empire, the low are made to feel mighty by the simple virtue of being white. The members of the Kyauktada Club exemplify for Orwell all that is wrong with the people he calls Anglo-Indian, those English who, like Ellis, “should never be allowed to set foot in the East” (*BD* 24).

It might seem on the surface that *Burmese Days* is ridiculing racism, but Orwell himself did not see any real measure of equality between the English and the “Orientals,” and he very rarely speaks of anything positive coming out of the interaction between them. Orwell admits in *The Road to Wigan Pier* that nearly everyone in India beats their servants—“at any rate occasionally”—and then forgives this action with the statement “Orientals can be very provoking” (138). As the omniscient narrator of *Burmese Days*, Orwell says “you could forgive the Europeans a great deal of their bitterness. Living and working among Orientals would try the temper of a saint” (*BD* 34). Even though all the white characters in *Burmese Days* are English, Orwell never refers to them as such, instead using the word *European* as a far more inclusive term. This use of the word *European* instead of *English* underscores the fact that the two communities are racially and culturally separate; the implication is that a Slav or a Finn or even a Frenchman would have been admitted to the Club and the higher echelon of Anglo-Indian society before an “Oriental” would be. Indeed, a main part of the conflict in *Burmese Days* is the question of whether or not a native should be admitted to the Club to satisfy an order

from the Commissioner. When an “Oriental” is finally admitted over much protestation, his most admirable quality is that “he did not come too often” (*BD* 285).

The problem with Orwell’s indictment of the Europeans is that similar racial ideas occur in the building of the novel. Quite simply, all of Orwell’s Burmese characters are either caricatures or stereotypes; those that are not abjectly ignorant or hopelessly debased are ruthless, cruel and petty. “Orwell created a slimy Burmese villain in U Po Kyin,” says John Rossi, “who for sheer Oriental mendacity is a match for a character such as Fu Manchu.” U Po Kyin is indeed a Fu Manchu stereotype; he is fat, conniving, and easy to imagine as a villain who would tent his fingers and laugh evilly behind a very recognizable moustache. Even Orwell’s sympathetic characters, such as Dr. Veraswami and Ma Hla May, are not simply innocent victims of English cruelty; they are a self-hating ethnic and a prostitute/extortionist respectively. Ma Hla May is portrayed as someone who would scream bloody murder rather than part with “a switch of false hair” (*BD* 114), and Veraswami’s “passionate admiration of the English” is only slightly less ludicrous than his tendency to “maintain with positive eagerness that he, as an Indian, belonged to an inferior and degenerate race” (*BD* 114). Veraswami also seems to prefer Flory’s company to surgery, at the expense of his native patients. “I have an operation at ten, strangulated hernia, very urgent,” Veraswami says, but rather than treat the operation as *truly* urgent he says simply, “Till then I am free” (*BD* 146). Either the South Asian characters in *Burmese Days* are overly subservient, overly stupid and greedy, or overly dangerous and immoral; there are none that exist outside of these categories.

It is not surprising that Orwell—and quite possibly his fellow Europeans in Burma—had such strong negative views about the Burmese. Of all the places the British

Empire controlled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its hold on Burma was perhaps the most tenuous. “It had taken Britain over sixty years,” writes Penny Edwards, “from the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824 to the overthrow of Mandalay in 1885—to bring Burma into British India” (280) and the conquest was never certain nor complete. To many of the British, both in the East and back home in the metropole,

Burma was generally perceived as a weak link in the system of British imperial governance. The frustratingly partial nature of the British conquest in Upper Burma meant that this site powerfully evoked metropolitan anxieties about the fragility of Britain’s global powers. (Bailkin 34)

Orwell was therefore stationed quite literally at the edge of the Empire, far removed even from the seat of British power in India, and this isolation combined with the very real possibility of armed conflict with the natives might be one reason why *Burmese Days* is so biting and cynical in its treatment of both the Burmese and their English overlords. A second and perhaps more important reason for this cynicism, as we will see, is a chiefly nostalgic ideology, the same force that unifies Orwell’s anti-imperial stance with his fairly blatant racism against the Burmese. Nostalgia for an England that is somehow insular and unspoiled, that is unaffected by the bad influence of Empire, seems to be an intellectual refuge for Orwell throughout his writing career, and even in his first novel such ideals are evident. This speaks to Orwell’s true aim in being anti-imperialist; he is not as concerned about what imperialism was doing to the Burmese as he is about what it was doing to the English.

Orwell’s opinion of the relationship between the English and the Burmese is in many ways analogous to Thomas Jefferson’s somewhat hypocritical opinion of slavery. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson writes,

The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the *amor patriae* of the other.

Like slavery in Virginia, the master-servant relationships in Burma are portrayed by Orwell as destroying the morals of the ruling class, and this *Heart of Darkness*-esque crumbling of morality is particularly horrifying to him. Orwell was never proud of his own behavior as a policeman in Burma, and he was often shocked and horrified by the behavior of his countrymen. Orwell had no great love for the Burmese, but he is especially disgusted by the kinds of people the English become when they are exposed to ill-gotten privilege and prestige. “It is probably fair to say that Orwell was even more consumed by the spectacle of overweening privilege than by the spectacle of overwhelming poverty” (Wood). What exists in Orwell’s Burma is this overweening privilege without the tempering effect of national solidarity or common law.

In some ways *Burmese Days* is also similar to Waugh’s *Black Mischief*, in that the environment changes the Europeans considerably. The difference is in how they change. To Waugh, a European among Africans is automatically a prince or a super-hero, able to do things that he could not do in his native land. Thus we see Basil Seal go from cad to revolutionary, and we see the stage-Irish Connolly become a conquering general. For Orwell, life among the natives makes a European much, much worse; absolute power does indeed corrupt absolutely. It is for this reason that “all the persons in the novel are caricatures, distorted and ludicrous images of varieties of human evil, folly, and perversion” (Greenblatt 50). Flory’s description of his arrival in Burma is typical of what happens to the English when they arrived in the East:

His first six months in Burma he had spent in Rangoon, where he was supposed to be learning the office side of his business. He had lived in a 'chummery' with four other youths who devoted their lives to debauchery. And what debauchery! (*BD* 65)

The debauchery that Flory experiences corrupts him absolutely; he avoids service in World War I "because the East had already corrupted him, and he did not want to exchange his whisky, his servants and his Burmese girls for the boredom of the parade ground and the strain of cruel marches" (*BD* 67). Each of the English characters has a position of power in Burma that he might never achieve back in England, but this is not a Basil Seal-type power; the power of the *pukka sahib*, or "gentleman master", merely gives more opportunity to be degenerate. Orwell's descriptions of this degeneracy are lurid to the point of hilarity, as when Lackersteen gets free of his wife for a fortnight:

[she] had returned unexpectedly a day before her time, to find Mr. Lackersteen, drunk, supported on either side by a naked Burmese girl, while a third upended a whisky bottle into his mouth. Since then she had watched him, as he used to complain, 'like a cat over a bloody mousehole'. However, he managed to enjoy quite a number of 'good times', though they were usually rather hurried ones. (*BD* 21-22).

It is hard to believe Lackersteen would have the same opportunities at home in England, nor would he be able to act in such a way except in Burma, where "every European... is ex-officio, or rather ex-colore, a good fellow, until he has done something quite outrageous" (*BD* 34). In a place where Lackersteen's illicit foursome is not enough to be classified as outrageous, and is instead spoken of with humorous resignation, Orwell implies, nearly anything is possible.

The change wrought in England and the English by the existence of the Empire is, to Orwell, simply not worth the moral price, despite the great piles of money and influence. "No Englishman," says Orwell, "wants [the Empire] to disintegrate, [but]

under the capitalist system, in order that England may live in comparative comfort, a hundred million Indians must live on the verge of starvation” (*RWP* 148). To be a part of the transplanted English—who become a pseudo-aristocracy shot through with depravity in the East—that is allowing (or causing) the starvation is to gain the whole world but lose the soul. Flory thinks this exact thought in *Burmese Days*, transposing the gospel of Mark to read “What shall it profit a man if he save his own soul and lose the whole world?” (79). In colonial Burma, the English are doing just that, losing their souls and gaining the world. Out of all the characters, Flory is the only one that comments on this corruption of the English, and even he only does it in secret. As he says in a conversation with Dr. Veraswami,

*I’m not seditious. I don’t want the Burmans to drive us out of this country. God forbid! I’m here to make money, like everyone else. All I object to is the slimy white man’s burden humbug. The pukka sahib pose. It’s so boring. Even those bloody fools at the Club might be better company if we weren’t all of us living a lie... the lie that we’re here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them. I suppose it’s a natural lie enough. But it corrupts us, it corrupts us in ways you can’t imagine. (BD 39)*

In other words, Flory understands that imperialism is thievery, but the money he makes ensures that he will remain complicit. He sees the corruption and the immorality in his English compatriots and in himself, and yet he continues in it. In what will turn out to be brilliant foreshadowing, Flory compares himself to the demon of sexual immorality. Like the reprobates of *Ape and Essence*, Flory hearkens back to Milton: “I don’t go in for proclaiming from the housetops. I haven’t the guts. I `counsel ignoble ease,’ like old Belial in *Paradise Lost*. It’s safer. You’ve got to be a pukka sahib or die, in this country” (*BD* 147). Flory recognizes the hypocrisy of his cowardice and his desire to maintain his *pukka sahib* status, but like Belial he is irredeemable.

Orwell's cynicism is evident when he describes the Burmese and the English in such ways, and their interaction is one of the great evils of Empire as far as Orwell is concerned. While describing the English and the Burmese as disgusting and degenerate is a primary aspect of *Burmese Days*, what is perhaps equally important is a pervasive belief among the English and Burmese characters that England and English things are far better than what they have to endure. The English ideal is a powerful force in the novel, though it is often understated. Englishness itself, or at least the *idea* of Englishness, was pervasive in the Empire, and especially in Burma. As I previously quoted in the Waugh section:

Plain Englishness, in those days, was a principle. The British Empire was most decidedly British....there were specifically British ways of doing things. There were emotions no proper Englishman would display. There were tastes and taboos so pungently British that the whole world knew them, and expected them to be honoured. (Morris 509)

It is important to note that Morris uses the terms *Englishness* and *Britishness* interchangeably, and indeed there was no appreciable difference between the two terms out in the colonies. The Scots or the Welsh might take issue with being lumped in with the English while arguing about it in the metropole, but out in the Empire people rarely bothered about such distinctions, especially since a common Other was so well-defined by color and culture. "Hanging together" is what the English call this unity (*BD* 147); the idea is best expressed by Flory's former Scottish boss, who says "Remember laddie, always remember, we are *sahiblog* [masters] and they are dirrt!". (*BD* 191). Flory says he is "sickened [by] such trash" but is perfectly content to reap the rewards associated with this belief. All in all, though Orwell ridicules the prejudices of his English

characters, and makes fun of their pretensions, England and Englishness remain the standard to which they are all compared, and none live up to it.

This idea of Englishness as a tangible force, as a culture that is so obviously superior as to be necessarily imitated by everyone, is one of the few ideas of Empire that Orwell does not satirize. Instead, the English of the Empire are compared to the metropole and found wanting. The narrator tells us that few British officials in India “work as hard or as intelligently as the postmaster of a provincial town in England” (*BD* 68). Burma itself is described as

A stifling, stultifying world in which to live. It is a world in which every word and every thought is censored. In England it is hard even to imagine such an atmosphere. Everyone is free in England; we sell our souls in public and buy them back in private, among our friends. But even friendship can hardly exist when every white man is a cog in the wheels of despotism. (*BD* 69)

Selling one’s soul is not exactly a positive thing to do, but the freedom to do so is apparently as important, and as visible in England, as friendship. Neither of these exist in Burma, says the narrator; England is the only place where you are free to think for yourself (*BD* 69). Flory himself “was pining for England...[his] thin blood quickened with the good food and the smell of the sea” (*BD* 70), and Elizabeth refers to England as

Lovely, lovely, golden world!...It hurt her in her breast to see it...Was it possible that there was no escape? Could she be doomed forever to this sordid meanness, with no hope of ever getting back to the decent world again? (*BD* 94)

England is the beautiful place where the wickedness of *Burmese Days* conceivably could not happen. Even for the natives, the basest imitation of England is seen as beautiful. For example, Orwell quickly disparages the Kyauktada Club as dirty, kitschy, and in no way comparable to a similar establishment in England, and yet the natives consider it

paradisiacal. Dr. Veraswami calls the club “sacrosanct” (BD 47), and entrance to the Club is worth any amount of villainy for U Po Kyin; it is “that mysterious temple, that holy of holies far harder of entry than Nirvana!” (BD 143). The Club is nothing special to Europeans; in some ways it is laughable, but it is always seen by both English and Burmese alike as better than anything the East has to offer.

There is very little actual contact with England over the course of the novel, though it is constantly discussed. From the beginning, all the white people are homesick for England, hungrily consuming papers like “*Punch*, *Pink’un* and *Vie Parisienne*” (BD 20), which consist of comics, racing news and mild French pornography respectively. These rags, barely creditable reading back home, are some of the very few things that visit from the home country. When a real, live Englishwoman arrives, she is far more wonderful than any magazine, and her effect on the members of the Club is astounding. When Elizabeth walks into the Club for the first time, she brings with her an idealized vision of Englishness that the expatriates find very attractive. The reality of England, and even the reality of Elizabeth herself, pales in comparison to this romanticized version of home. Though she is hardly a sympathetic character herself, she does represent something that none of the other Club members have had for a long time—she is a link back to England. Elizabeth’s presence turns them all, however briefly, into decent human beings for a short period of time. This is not because of her personality, which leaves much to be desired, and she is “not beautiful” (BD 82), but her arrival produced a “gala air about the Club” (BD 108). Even Ellis “was in a much better mood than usual” (BD 109). It is Flory, however, that manages to put Elizabeth’s effect into words:

Her presence had changed the whole orbit of his mind. She had brought back to him the air of England—dear England, where thought is free and

one is not condemned forever to dance the *danse du pukka sahib* for the edification of the lower races. (*BD* 151)

Because of this “air of England” Flory actually does a kind thing for Dr. Veraswami—he vows to propose him for membership in the Club and actually follows through with his promise. Even with Ma Hla May he is tolerably decent for a short time, saying “It hurts me to see you like this. I will do what I can for you. . . . I do not hate you, you have done me no evil. It is I who have wronged you” (*BD* 155-156). There is genuine feeling behind this confession, and though Flory sends her away, she is sent away with money that she was not forced to extort from him.

One breath of England does all this, but it is just one breath, and of course it does not last. The smothering heat of Burma comes back quickly enough, and the *pukka sahiblog* return to their evil as soon as the newness wears off. In rapid succession, Lackersteen makes a “spirited attempt” to rape Elizabeth (*BD* 229), Ellis blinds a boy with his cane (*BD* 242), and Macgregor provokes a riot (*BD* 246). Flory is briefly a hero, but his suicide looms, and Elizabeth loses her Englishness very quickly, soon becoming a *burra memsahib*, or “important mistress” who does nothing but terrorize the servants and give parties. After the brief happiness, there is misery all around and even more examples of how awful the English become when not in England.

For the most part, *Burmese Days* is seen by critics as a first try, interesting for where it stands in the lead up to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and possibly a typical colonial novel told from a socialist standpoint. It is not usually considered one of Orwell’s better works, and is often read as immature. However, *Burmese Days* should stand on its own as an isolationist novel, one that primarily advocates an abandoning of the colonial system and a return to the more traditional aspects of English society. The cynicism of

the novel can be read as a statement of both Orwell's belief in potential English superiority and his belief that this superiority is being undermined by close contact with people who lack this potential. Unfortunately, Orwell sees no way to reverse the changes colonialism brings, and the novel is depressing for that reason as well. It is as if Orwell's first novel is also his first attempt to laud an extra-colonial England, hypothetically existing apart from its Empire instead of, as it was in reality, almost completely dependent on it.

## *COMING UP FOR AIR*

England—as abandoned by the Anglo-Burmese—is to Orwell a wonderful place worthy of protection and praise. It is worthy of condemnation as well, but it is in no way worthy of the destruction that Orwell sees coming as early as the mid-1930s. In 1940, when this predicted destruction became reality, Orwell writes “The Lion and the Unicorn” to proclaim his own patriotism and show why England was necessarily defensible. He is not completely uncritical, writing that

England is not the jewelled isle of Shakespeare’s much-quoted message, nor is it the inferno depicted by Dr. Goebbels....A family with the wrong members in control—that, perhaps, is as near as one can come to describing England in a phrase. (30)

Saying that the wrong members are in control is typical of the socialist-Orwell, but he is not able to condemn them unequivocally. Later in “The Lion and the Unicorn” Orwell praises the English ruling class as “morally fairly sound” and even gives the occasion of their rule a great compliment:

However unjustly England might be organized, it was at any rate not torn by class warfare or haunted by secret police. The Empire was peaceful as no area of comparable size has ever been. Throughout its vast extent, nearly a quarter of the earth, there were fewer armed men than would be found necessary by a minor Balkan state. (34)

To twist a phrase made popular by Churchill, Orwell believes the English version of democracy is the worst possible government, that is, except for all the others. To Orwell, there is much to be loved in England, and the greatest task that can be set before the English is to “bring the real England to the surface.” “Even winning the war” he says, “is secondary” (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 93).

So what does Orwell mean when he says “the real England”? From the above quotes, it can be assumed that Orwell believes the real England is a place in which the right members are in control, class warfare is nonexistent, and the inhabitants flourish under the rule of a *Pax Britannica*. By necessity, the Empire is very much in operation in Orwell’s *Pax Britannica*, and it in fact provides much of the money and material that allows “the real England” to thrive, but Orwell tries to downplay the importance of Empire in his vision. He even incorrectly assumes, as he implies in *Burmese Days*, that the metropole could and should exist without the moral quandary caused by the Empire and its inequalities. Thus, Orwell describes the Empire as “peaceful” and happy, even though he knows by experience in Burma that this is not always the case.

Despite the impossibility of an insular and Empire-less system, Orwell works under the impression that such a place does exist. After all, he insists that the “real England” need not be created, but simply brought to the surface. Rather than see Orwell as one who calls for political change, readers could view him instead as a person advocating the preservation of a system already in place. He asks us to “consider what the world would really be like if the English-speaking culture perished” (“The Lion and the Unicorn” 87) and he does not vacillate over the idea that this would make the world much worse. Paradise, to Orwell, begins and ends at home.

The best example of Orwell’s Home County-love can be found in 1938’s *Coming Up For Air*, generally regarded as his best novel that isn’t *Animal Farm* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. *Coming Up For Air* is written on the eve of global war—it accurately predicts the onset of this war—so it is clear that the Home County paradise described therein will never be possible again, even if it ever was. Like *Burmese Days*, *Coming Up*

*For Air* is tremendously cynical; to hear Stephen Greenblatt tell it, the novel is even more pessimistic about the future than *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

[In *CUA*] the past is dead, the present is intolerable, the future holds no promise of renewal. The future belongs to the sadists and the fanatics, to the criminally insane, who are fast gaining control over the world, to the mentally unbalanced, who know no morality or decency, to the blind, moronic masses whose life and meager thoughts are completely controlled by unscrupulous maniacs. (38)

It is possible that this is hyperbole, but it is not too far from the doom-and-gloom George Bowling predicts. At one point, Bowling even foreshadows O'Brien of *Miniluv* when he says a particular political blowhard was thinking about

Smashing people's faces in with a spanner...Smash! Right in the middle! The bones cave in like an eggshell and what was a face a minute ago is just a great big blob of strawberry jam. Smash! There goes another! That's what's in his mind, waking and sleeping, and the more he thinks of it the more he likes it. And it's all O.K. because the smashed faces belong to Fascists. You could hear all that in the tone of his voice. (175)

Bowling fears the future that O'Brien helps make reality, the picture of a boot stamping on a human face forever. He makes no distinction between Communist or Fascist, because they will all be "smashing faces, or having their own faces smashed, depending on who's winning" (*CUA* 177). Bowling, and by extension Orwell his creator, sees evil in the future and goodness in the past. In effect, of all Orwell's characters, George Bowling comes the closest to speaking with Orwell's own voice.

Unfortunately, Bowling's yesterday is, for all practical purposes, fictional; his memory is selective, tied to both his own moderately good fortune and his pessimism about the coming war. Nearly anything is better when compared to the horrible future Bowling predicts, but even this does not fully justify Bowling's (Orwell's) rose-colored hindsight. Nevertheless, *Coming Up For Air* is "still read as a masterly evocation of an

English Edwardian rural childhood, with its yearning for a time of peace and, perhaps more important, a time of security” (Hitchens, *Why Orwell Matters* 185). In short, the whole novel revolves around an idea of a former time full of peace and security, of known variables and predictable outcomes. Though it may never come again, Bowling genuinely wishes it would, because it was “a good world to live in...I belong to it” (*CUA* 36). Indeed, as Bowling looks around at his own life, at the life of a fat, forty-five-year-old insurance salesman with false teeth and six pounds a week, he can only think of the modern world as one that has changed too much. He is nothing but cynical about modern England. His own neighborhood is described thusly:

What *is* a road like Ellesmere Road? Just a prison with the cells all in a row. A line of semi-detached torture chambers where the poor little five-to-ten-pound-a-weekers quake and shiver, every one of them with the boss twisting his tail and his wife riding him like the nightmare and the kids sucking his blood like leeches. (*CUA* 12)

That is West Bletchley, and it is for a good reason that the name of the suburb sounds like someone retching. In contrast to it is the Lower Binfield Bowling remembers from before the War,

If I shut my eyes and think of Lower Binfield any time before I was, say, eight, it’s always in summer weather that I remember it. Either it’s the market-place at dinner-time, with a sort of sleepy dusty hush over everything...or it’s a hot afternoon in the great green juicy meadows around the town, or it’s about dusk in the lane behind the allotments, and there’s a smell of pipe-tobacco and night-stocks floating through the hedge. (*CUA* 43).

Every time Bowling describes the Lower Binfield of his childhood it is a beautiful sensory explosion. Everything about it is beautiful, including normally offensive things such as the “powerful smell of dog” or the blue flies and blackbeetles infesting his mother’s kitchen (*CUA* 62-63). To hear Bowling tell it, as he does over and over

throughout the novel, Lower Binfield was heaven, and West Bletchley is nothing short of hell.

It is true, if a bit cliché, to say the good old days were never as good as they are remembered to be. Bowling has to conveniently forget a great deal to make his Lower Binfield a paradise. He admits that he is doing so—“It’s quite true that if you look back on any special period of time you tend to remember the pleasant bits” (*CUA* 124), but the fact remains that England 1910 was more similar to 1938 than George Bowling allows. Much of *Coming Up For Air* anticipates the horror of a coming war, but Bowling sees Edwardian England as a time when people had “a feeling of security, even when they weren’t secure. More exactly, it was a feeling of continuity” (*CUA* 125). However, World War I loomed just as large in the early teens as World War II did in the thirties; indeed, “anxiety and the expectation of war were a part of the Edwardian consciousness” (Hynes 53). In both years there was wide consternation about the rising power of Germany. In addition, the morality and feasibility of Empire was being questioned on a large scale:

Never had the British empire been more unpopular in the world than it was when the nineteenth century passed over into the twentieth; never indeed had the idea of empire been more questionable in the eyes even of a number of the subjects of that empire. (Thomason 529)

However, with the exception of Uncle Ezekiel and Bowling’s father arguing about the Boer War, the tribulations of Empire are not mentioned at all in the novel, and Lower Binfield itself portrayed as totally insulated from the problems of imperialism.

It is plausible that the people of Lower Binfield knew little of these things, especially because Lower Binfield is represented as a country town. As Sir Charles Petrie writes,

In such a society [country England] it was hardly surprising that news of even the most stirring events should filter down into the countryside like the noise of something far away, and the General Election of 1900, the South African War, and the death of the Queen did scarcely ripple the surface of these deep waters... (82)

Bowling's mother, in fact, "couldn't have told you whether Ireland was east or west of England" (*CUA* 56). But this is not to say that the Edwardian small town was not affected by Empire or impending war, and both Bowling and Orwell his creator know that Lower Binfield wasn't *actually* existing in complete isolation. Rather, it is necessary for them to keep Lower Binfield idyllic to maintain a sort of ideological superiority. The idea matters more than the reality; for Orwell to warn us about the future, or bewail the industrialized present, he must compare these to a perfect past. There must be a "real England" to bring to the surface, even if, as it happens, the real England is but the remembrance of the good parts and the forgetting of the bad. Lower Binfield is an unreachable standard, misremembered in order to comment on the frightening changes that are soon to come.

Thus, the only real villain in *Coming Up for Air* is change itself. Bowling seems convinced that change is whittling away at what was once good about England, and if the goodness had not yet completely disappeared it would very soon. It is this fear of change, along with Bowling's cynical blasting of what England was becoming, that causes some critics to read the novel "as an extended meditation on the common man's passivity and helplessness in a period of impending political crisis; or as a sentimental, even reactionary, compromise of Orwell's leftist politics" (Federico). Sentimental, yes, reactionary, probably, but *Coming Up for Air's* sentimentalism and reactionary love of yesterday do not compromise Orwell's politics. Instead, they compliment each other.

Orwell's hope for a socialist future is based on the ideological stance afforded by this beautiful memory of a less complicated England.

The Lower Binfield of George Bowling's childhood is perhaps closer than anything else to Orwell's idea of utopia. This is no iron-and-water tasting socialism, nor is it anything like *Brave New World*. Lower Binfield, at least as Bowling remembers it, is full of decent English people behaving decently. It is a place where the aristocracy simply does not exist, or if they do they are too small and too far away to really matter. Binfield House, "a great white house with a colonnade" (*CUA* 41) sits atop a hill and lords over the village, much as an aristocratic mansion should, but it is empty and remains so for decades. Bowling was seven before he even knew it was there (*CUA* 41). There is no ruling class in Lower Binfield; Mr. Farrel, owner of Binfield House and the only one who could possibly qualify as upper-class, lives in London. Other than the "slummy street behind the brewery" (*CUA* 45) there is no abject poverty either; no Manchester as described by Engels exists. The rest of the town is surprisingly egalitarian, and class struggle never goes beyond teasing farm boys for their accents or arguing in front of the seedshop about the Boer War. The Army is neither scary nor even respected. "Listing for a soldier, in their eyes, was the exact equivalent of a girl's going on the streets" says Bowling (*CUA* 48), implying that being a soldier was about as socially upstanding as becoming a prostitute. In both cases, there was no need to fear either of these professions, and even their existence was acknowledged but not discussed. Best of all, elections and political bickering are a running joke; the political system is stable enough to be theatrical rather than exigent. Bowling says "people took politics seriously in those days. They used to begin storing up rotten eggs weeks before an

election” (*CUA* 50). For Orwell, though Lower Binfield is *de jure* part of an oppressive class system and an immoral Empire, it is *de facto* an insular paradise.

*Coming Up for Air* basically argues that the former, more stratified English society was actually better than the current one, and much better than the one Bowling predicts will soon arrive with the sound of dropping bombs. After the Great War, at least for a time, the class system in Britain ceased to be so rigidly defined and became a terrible mix-up. Bowling blames the Army for this; “it turned you into an imitation gentleman and gave you a fixed idea that there’d always be a bit of money coming from somewhere” (*CUA* 146). All of a sudden, people who had no business thinking of themselves as upper class started acting like they were.

The chap who’d been a shopwalker saw himself as a travelling salesman, and the chap who’d been a travelling salesman saw himself as a managing director. It was the effect of Army life, the effect of wearing pips and having a cheque-book and calling the evening meal dinner. (*CUA* 147).

In other words, Army veterans began getting delusions of grandeur, delusions which Bowling “didn’t share [but were] pretty common among ex-officers, that I could spend the rest of my life drinking pink gin” (*CUA* 146-147). As soon as veterans start to believe in the “post-war success dope,” they began to work for status they could not have, and this is a harbinger of the soulless, cookie-cutter-suburb world Bowling hates so much. Strangely enough, Orwell implies in the novel that England was happier when the classes were rigid and defined. When class lines blur, capitalism does not disappear as predicted. It grows exponentially, and the country is

infected by the filthy diseases of Progress, Modernity, and Industrialism, everything is now tawdry, debased, dirty. The precious past, with its values of human dignity, decency, and honesty, has been smothered by the inevitable weight of ignorance, viciousness, and ugliness. (Greenblatt 38)

Bowling does not consider himself to have fallen for this delusion, but in actuality he too begins to look and act above his station, and it gives him nothing but trouble. He knows where he belongs—“the God-fearing shopkeeper class, the low church and high-tea class” (*CUA* 156)—but he socializes and then marries outside of it, specifically into the “officer-rentier-clergyman class” (*CUA* 158). His interactions with his in-laws, as Bowling tells it,

is an interesting illustration of what fools people can be when they get outside their own line. . . . I looked on them as my social and intellectual superiors, while they on the other hand mistook me for a rising young business man who before long would be pulling down the big dough. (*CUA* 158)

The implication is that, if Bowling had known the true nature of the class into which he was marrying, he would have been a shopkeeper. Instead, his job is terrible, his home life is worse, and all he can think about is getting back to where he used to be.

The book does have its *Wigan Pier* moments, moments that portray Lower Binfield more realistically and less idyllic than it should be for the purposes of the argument. Lower Binfield does not seem Edenlike when Bowling is describing Katie Simmons and her family, who lived in a “filthy little rat-hole [that] swarmed with children like a kind of vermin” (*CUA* 45). But Orwell treats even the life of the struggling proletariat in the teens as preferable to life in the modern suburbs, where all the “respectable householders [are] Tories, yes-men and bumsuckers” (*CUA* 15). Bowling knows there were places in Lower Binfield that needed to be made cleaner and saner, such as where Katie Simmons lived, but for the most part he tends to compliment and even envy the proletariat. According to Bowling, the proles have no worries—

Did you ever know a navvy who lay awake thinking about the sack? The prole suffers physically, but he’s a free man when he isn’t working. But in

every one of those little stucco boxes there's some poor bastard who's never free except when he's fast asleep and dreaming that he's got the boss down the bottom of a well and is bunging lumps of coal at him. (CUA 13)

It is as if the soul of England is being traded for so-called progress, a progress that does nothing but turn men into “poor downtrodden bastards” (CUA 15) constantly worrying about money and status and getting sacked. Bowling is proud of himself for being *like a prole*, in that he has “the prole’s attitude towards money. Life’s here to be lived, and if we’re going to be in the soup next week—well, next week’s a long way off” (CUA 161). It is not clear whether Bowling has that philosophy or is just telling himself that he does, but he is depressed by the fact that he sees no one around him who lives life in such a way. Instead, his wife and his extended family, who he describes as “decayed middle-class,” have none of the vitality that makes the navy enviable, since “their vitality has been drained away by lack of money” (CUA 160). The prole has no money either, but he also has no *worries* about money, which makes all the difference in the world. Bowling loathes the fact that middle-class children, like his own, will grow up “with a fixed idea not only that one always *is* hard-up but that it’s one’s duty to be miserable about it” (CUA 160). In short, having money brings nothing but the compulsion to believe that no amount of money is ever enough. In West Bletchley, the worry of money is the root of all evil, whereas in Lower Binfield, before the changes began, everybody was “making do.”

George Bowling’s parents lived and died comfortably in their station, “making do” with a seedshop and not wanting or caring about anything else. It is about their lives that Bowling is the most sentimental, because they never thought about the sack or “getting on” or really much of anything. “To the end [Bowling’s father] believed that

with thrift, hard work and fair dealing a man can't go wrong" (*CUA* 126) and, in the world of 1910, he was right. Bowling shudders to think what would have become of his parents in the new world of suburbs and soul-sucking business jobs, and his cynicism concerning this makes it sound like he is envious of their early deaths. He says,

But at least they never lived to know that everything they'd believed in was just so much junk. They lived at the end of an epoch, when everything was dissolving into a sort of ghastly flux, and they didn't know it. They thought it was eternity. You couldn't blame them. That was what it felt like. (*CUA* 127).

If only, both Bowling and Orwell imply, it could have actually *been* eternity, because "it was a good time to be alive" (*CUA* 119). Change ruins everything. Change turns the beautiful fishpond into a rubbish pit and turns Lower Binfield into West Bletchley. It is strange to hear Orwell advocating the retention of a stratified society with a tiny aristocracy and a stagnant middle class, but this is exactly what he is arguing for in *Coming Up for Air*. This is why Bowling says "I *am* sentimental about my childhood—not my own particular childhood, but the civilization which I grew up in and which is now, I suppose, just about at its last kick. And fishing is somehow typical of that civilization." It is sad that, as much as he talks about it, the man never gets to fish. Fishing itself is a sobering reminder of the tranquility that has already been lost, just as the trash-filled ponds speak to how much worse things can get.

## *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR AND ANIMAL FARM*

Seven years elapse between the publication of *Coming Up for Air* and *Animal Farm*, and in that time much of George Bowling's pessimism becomes reality. The Second World War is at least as bad as Bowling believes it will be, though even he could not have imagined the true scale of it. However, Orwell's prescience in 1938 downplays the importance of the war despite its horror. Bowling tells us

It isn't the war that matters, it's the after-war. The world we're going down into, the kind of hate-world, slogan-world. The coloured shirts, the barbed wire, the rubber truncheons. The secret cells where the electric light burns night and day, and the detectives watching you while you sleep. And the processions and the posters with enormous faces, and the crowds of a million people all cheering for the Leader till they deafen themselves into thinking that they really worship him, and all the time, underneath, they hate him so that they want to puke. It's all going to happen. (*CUA* 176)

As early as 1938, Orwell was thinking about the settings for both his "fairy story" *Animal Farm* and for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and during the war he continues the train of thought that would develop into his masterpieces. In "The Lion and the Unicorn," written as the Luftwaffe was bombing London during the Blitz, Orwell ruminates at great length about what England will be like when the war ends. Atypically, he sounds relatively optimistic about England's chances; even as the bombs were falling he ends his essay with the words, "I believe in England, and I believe that we shall go forward" ("The Lion and the Unicorn 94). The optimistic tone of "The Lion and the Unicorn" might be a result of Orwell's patriotism, or it might be because being a pessimist while under fire is counterproductive, but there is also the possibility that World War II, even as it was happening, was not what worried Orwell the most.

At first, World War II did much to crystallize Orwell's thoughts on a future he believed could be salvaged with careful planning. In "The Lion and the Unicorn," Orwell lists a "six-point programme" to follow in order to ensure that England will prosper in the postwar era as a democratic-socialist state:

1. Nationalization of land, mines, railways, banks and major industries.
2. Limitation of incomes, on such a scale that the highest tax-free income in Britain does not exceed the lowest by more than ten to one.
3. Reform of the educational system along democratic lines.
4. Immediate Dominion status for India, with power to secede when the war is over.
5. Formation of an Imperial General Council, in which the coloured peoples are to be represented.
6. Declaration of formal alliance with China, Abyssinia and all other victims of the Fascist powers. (73)

Surprisingly, by the end of 1948, strong attempts had been made to accomplish at least four of these points. The Labour government elected in 1945 nationalized mines, airlines, communication, and health services (Marwick 335). Heavy taxes were imposed on the wealthy, education was reformed, and India began governing itself (Marwick 359, 413). In many ways the United Kingdom was indeed moving toward the modern welfare state, and it stands to reason that Orwell approved of the changes. However, while it can be argued that some of Orwell's advice had been heeded, there is little evidence that these changes made him any less cynical about the future. After all, the optimism of "The Lion and the Unicorn" is fairly short-lived; by 1943 he had already started writing *Animal Farm* in earnest. As Bowling says and Orwell came to believe, the war was not as bad as the after-war, the change into a "hate-world, slogan-world". Owing to the blasted state of England and the rest of Europe after the war, Orwell can certainly be forgiven for embracing cynicism again. Indeed, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* are

terrifying portraits of government gone mad, and there is little optimism to be found in either of them.

The cause of Orwell's cynicism and fatalistic view of the future is not wholly political; the social conditions in England were especially awful after the war, so much so that the English urban landscape of the late forties bears a strong resemblance to Airstrip One in the future year 1984. Owing to wartime destruction and an abnormally cold winter in 1946-47, the privation and scarcity of the war years actually became more severe. In his book *Post-Victorian Britain*, L. C. B. Seaman gives us a list:

Not only was food rationing maintained; it was rationed more stringently than in wartime. The introduction of bread rationing for the first time was followed, at the end of 1947, by the rationing of potatoes, which had likewise not been rationed during the war; and by 1948 most rations were below the wartime average. Clothes rationing did not end until 1949; the points system lasted till 1950; as late as 1951 the meat ration was less than tenpennyworth per head per week. (431)

In addition, massive power cuts after the war caused 800,000 people to be added to an already bloated unemployment list (Marwick 334). "The worst deprivations of all for sizeable sections of the community resulted from the Government's inability to build, or even to seem likely to build, desperately needed houses" (Marwick 360). In order to escape "austerity...constant exhortations to increase productivity [and] grim conditions of overcrowding" the majority of British people went to the cinema (Marwick 360). Widespread unemployment, homelessness, rolling blackouts and food rationing sound much like what Winston Smith endures, and he too goes to the "war flicks," where scenes of horrific violence keep the proletariat from paying too much attention to the misery around them (1984 8).

It is difficult for Orwell to be optimistic when England is in such a bad situation, even if the Labour government is implementing pieces of his “six-point programme”. As it stood, all 1940’s England needed to become 1980’s Oceania was a dictator and a vigorous secret police. During their 1945 election loss to Labour, Conservative leader Winston Churchill warned that such a situation might not be too far away:

I declare to you, from the bottom of my heart, that no Socialist system can be established without a political police....No Socialist Government conducting the entire life and industry of the country could afford to allow free, sharp, or violently worded expressions of public discontent. They would have to fall back on some form of Gestapo, no doubt very humanely directed in the first instance. (qtd. in Seaman 423)

Churchill directed this speech towards his opponent Clement Attlee, and his reference to the Nazi Secret Police was inappropriate to say the least and hardly timely. So many people were disturbed at this characterization of Labour that some historians think this speech cost Churchill the election. Nevertheless, Churchill’s characterization of socialism as a slippery slope towards dictatorship unwittingly foreshadows *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell would probably disagree with Churchill’s estimation of Labour Party socialism, but he too saw the slippery slope. To Orwell, the social situations he saw mattered more than the political ones. Whether Big Brother is Socialist or National Socialist is of no account; *Nineteen Eighty-Four* would retain its horror either way.

Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1948, the same year as Huxley published *Ape and Essence* and perhaps the first year that fear of atomic war became ubiquitous in British and American societies. For many who read *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in high school or otherwise, the point of the book is very simple: it is about the evils of communism and the horror of autocratic rule. Unfortunately, communism and autocracy are often equated with socialism, democratic socialism, and nearly anything else that has

but a trace of red in it, which has led many conservative critics to claim, as the introduction to this chapter outlines, that Orwell is anti-socialist himself. Even though Orwell “issued a written statement repudiating those who interpreted or conscripted the novel[s] as an attack on the socialist movement in general,” it is this very conscription that has made *Nineteen Eighty-Four* “‘required reading’ in respectable schools” (Hitchens, *Introduction x, viii*).

Orwell as Cold Warrior, as an English author standing against the Red Menace of the Soviet Union, is a typical misrepresentation of his aims as a satirist. As Anthony Daniels observed in 2007,

In any political argument of philosophical significance, everyone wants George Orwell as an ally. To be able to claim that he is so, however, you must first place him on an ideological map and then discover that, by happy coincidence, you occupy precisely the same position yourself. Hey presto, Orwell is on your side, and your opponents are thereby reduced to persons of ill-will or bad faith!

In other words, Orwell can be used and is being used to bolster certain Western-capitalist ideologies, despite the fact that he is adamant in his support for socialism. By impressing both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* into service against the USSR, much of their more subtle arguments are overlooked. Both Orwell’s cynicism and his nostalgia reach fever-pitch in these novels, and neither book is as clearly anti-communist or anti-socialist as many would like to believe. Instead, in both cases, there is a perfect society recognized but never achieved or preserved, and it is eerily similar to antebellum, rural England. The “Golden Country” exists, to steal a phrase from Winston Smith, in England, in the countryside, and only in the past. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is, above all else, an anti-1948 as well as an anti-future book, a cynical masterpiece that shows Orwell’s belief that humanity is not virtuous enough to save itself from totalitarianism. The novel

is certain in its claim that the future is inescapable; Big Brother will take control no matter what, either under the banner of Ingsoc or because of some as-yet-unnamed movement. This inescapable future is just like Orwell's present. It is urban, filthy, squalid and dangerous, whereas the past, misremembered as it is, is rural, peaceful and beautiful. A longing for this beautiful past, this Lower Binfield that Winston cannot truly comprehend, is what actually drives the action of the novel.

When Julia and Winston are brought in to see O'Brien in his private residence, both believe they are joining an insurrection against Big Brother. The encounter ends with a toast:

He [O'Brien] filled the glasses and raised his own glass by the stem. "What shall it be this time?" he said, still with the faint suggestion of irony. "To the confusion of the Thought Police? To the death of Big Brother? To humanity? To the future?" "To the past," said Winston. "The past is more important," agreed O'Brien gravely. (1984 253)

Of all the things O'Brien says to Winston, this is the one that comes closest to tangible truth. This scene is arguably the climax of the novel, because after this meeting there is only the reading of Goldstein's book before Winston and Julia are captured and taken to the Ministry of Love. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* "makes an almost conscious attempt to destroy the very concept of hope" (Hitchens, *Introduction x*) and the second half of the novel is where it succeeds. For Winston, everything after his toast to the past is nothing but an eternal repetition of the horrible present. Everything that he does before this toast is in pursuit of the idyllic past. Ironically, even though Winston's job is to destroy all references to previous times, his personal and secret desire is to preserve as much of it as he can. The past *is* important, mostly because the catastrophically depressing fate of

Winston and Julia prove that the future is exactly what O'Brien says it is: a boot stamping on a human face forever.

Winston hopes for a better day, a far-future time in which the Party does not exist. In reality, there is no far future, and Winston's hope actually lies in a past that is being destroyed more and more effectively every day. Of course, the main lesson Winston learns in the Ministry of Love is that the present is eternal and the past no longer exists except as Party fabrications. After all, "who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past" (1984 324). Thus, the present, the 1984 inhabited by Winston and O'Brien and all the rest, is static and unchanging. All the change predicted in *Coming Up for Air* has come to pass, and the ruling Party has no need for any more. Because of this, Winston's 1984 is the same as Orwell's 1948, only mummified and preserved by a government strong and brutal enough to keep it all in place. The scariest thing about *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is that it is not a novel about the far future, it is a novel about the miseries and injustices of 1948 being made eternal.

There is misery and injustice enough among Party members, but what happens among the proles in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is utterly dehumanizing. Syme says early in the book that "the proles are not human beings" (1984 136) and much of their description seems to confirm this. The proles are easily duped and universally ignorant; they "remembered a million useless things....but all the relevant facts were outside the range of their vision" (1984 174). They only care about "films, football, beer and above all, gambling," (1984 154), they read "rubbishy newspapers containing almost nothing except sport, crime and astrology" (127), and most importantly, "to keep them in control was not difficult" (154). In short, the proles of 1984 live the stereotype of the actual working

class in 1948 which, even though they find themselves on the winning side of a global war, have no real hope or inclination that life can get any better.

Winston Smith enjoys mooning about the proles and believes them to be the only hope for any sort of rebellion—they could rid themselves of the Party by “ris[ing] up and shak[ing] themselves like a horse shaking off flies” (1984 152). Winston tells Julia that “the proles are human brings...we are not human” (1984 242), and he admires them for their humanity, warts and all. The prole woman with the meter-wide hips is beautiful to Winston because of her vitality, and in the seconds before he and Julia are captured Winston allows himself to believe that “their awakening would come” and the Party would be swept away (1984 296). Winston’s view of the proles is decidedly liberal, more in keeping with socialism and the tenets of Emmanuel Goldstein. Unfortunately for Winston, O’Brien dashes this hope very easily, saying “It is all nonsense. The proletarians will never revolt, not in a thousand years or a million” (1984 337). Nevertheless, the one hope available at the end of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is that O’Brien is wrong and the proletarian revolution will come after all.

In fact, both O’Brien and Winston are correct. The proles of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are ignorant, vile and easily manipulated, but they also represent the last vestiges of the culture and morality Orwell believes to be so important. Urban life, technology, and squalor are inextricably tied to the horrible future in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, whereas the rural countryside in which Winston meets Julia is idealized and beautiful:

Winston looked out into the field beyond, and underwent a curious, slow shock of recognition. He knew it by sight. An old, close-bitten pasture, with a footpath wandering across it and a molehill here and there...Surely somewhere nearby, but out of sight, there must be a stream with green pools where dace were swimming.

“Isn’t there a stream somewhere near here?” he whispered.

“That’s right, there is a stream. It’s at the edge of the next field, actually. There are fish in it, great big ones. You can watch them lying in the pools under the willow trees, waving their tails.”

“It’s the Golden Country—almost,” he murmured.

“The Golden Country?”

“It’s nothing, really. A landscape I’ve seen sometimes in a dream.” (1984 203-204)

This beautiful place is much the same as George Bowling’s remembered Lower Binfield; there are even fish swimming around. As far as Winston knows, it is one of the last places on Earth without microphones or telescreens or any of the machinery that makes the city such an odious place to live. Quite simply, it is technology and city life that keeps the Inner Party in power. Winston learns that they have no power over the countryside when he goes there to make love to Julia. If this Golden Country were peopled as Orwell implies it used to be, it would be the stratified society of small-town England, in which the aristocracy is virtually invisible and the proletariat is not bound up in urban misery. A return to this life is most preferable, and the horror of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is that such a return cannot happen.

Nostalgia for the Golden Country in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is meant to convince the reader that there are certain things worth preserving, namely the rural life of before the war. In Emmanuel Goldstein’s book *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, Winston sees a critique of pre-Big Brother capitalism that reads, in part,

It was possible, no doubt, to imagine a society in which *wealth*... should be evenly distributed, while *power* remained in the hands of a small privileged caste. But in practice such a society could not long remain stable....In the long run, a hierarchical society was only possible on a basis of poverty and ignorance. To return to the agricultural past, as some thinkers about the beginning of the twentieth century dreamed of doing, was not a practicable solution. It conflicted with the tendency towards mechanization which had become quasi-instinctive throughout almost the whole world...(1984 266)

Evenly distributed wealth with power in the hands of a select few is, in essence, Orwell's version of democratic socialism. Lower Binfield resembles this ideal in some ways.

There is no *exact* wealth-equality—which is indeed impossible—but to Bowling and to Orwell himself it certainly seemed that equality of situation was far closer in places like that than in anywhere else. Lower Binfield was a literal nation of shopkeepers—most of the people were more or less on the same level, and the seat of power—the government of the select few—was far away and didn't matter anyway. Goldstein says such a society “was not a practicable solution” because of the overwhelming influence of technology and urbanization, the very things that make Oceania so wretched. Nevertheless, if it *were* possible, a return to the agricultural past—to a rural, Home Counties setting—would remove much of what would eventually put Big Brother in power, or at the very least would make England a little cleaner and saner.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* are almost universally considered Orwell's best work. Greenblatt calls *Animal Farm* “a remarkable achievement precisely because Orwell uses the apparently frivolous form of the animal tale to convey with immense power his profoundly bitter message” (60-61). Orwell's bitter message in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* involves technology and urbanization leading to dictatorship; in *Animal Farm*, his bitter message is that any form of government has the potential, maybe even the mandate, to be oppressive and cruel. People saw these things happening in the 1940's, and so both novels became tremendously popular in an age of much fear and uncertainty. “Uncertainty” can be seen especially in the trouble Orwell had in publishing *Animal Farm*. In 1944, when he first tried to find a publisher, “Stalin's Soviet Union was so popular that year in both Britain and America that few wanted to read or hear anything

critical of it” (Baker *vii*). After all, Stalin had been instrumental in defeating Hitler. But by August 1945, less than a year later, relations with the Soviet Union had soured to the point that sales of *Animal Farm* vastly exceeded any of Orwell’s previous books (Baker *viii*).

It is *Animal Farm*, above all others, that cements Orwell’s place as an anti-communist and therefore a *de facto* capitalist in the heads of many modern American theorists, since the references to the Soviet Union are transparent and easily discussed. The enemy of mine enemy is my friend, so to speak, which is probably why *Animal Farm* remains such a popular book in the United States. But to see a condemnation of Stalin and his oppressive regime as a condemnation of socialism is short-sighted, and does not take into account “Orwell’s judgment of the West. After all, the pigs do not turn into alien monsters; they come to resemble their bitter rivals Mr. Pilkington and Mr. Frederick, who represent the Nazis and the Capitalists” (Greenblatt 64). The point of *Animal Farm* is that the pigs become humanlike in the end. If Napoleon is Stalin, as is almost universally agreed, then Pilkington and Frederick are Churchill and Hitler respectively. Saying that Stalin was like Hitler will ruffle no feathers, but putting Churchill or perhaps Roosevelt in that company is bound to change the meaning of the novel into something the West would find unpalatable. Greenblatt references this as well, saying that, in *Animal Farm*, “communism is no more or less evil than fascism or capitalism...they are all illusions” (65). If so, then it is no surprise that Richard White saw *Animal Farm* as cynical and the previous novels as idealistic. If no government is preferable to any other, and all exist merely to subjugate and torture, then perhaps *Animal*

*Farm* is the most cynical “fairy story” of all. Quite simply, the animals cannot win no matter what they do.

Even from the beginning of the animal revolution there is no real hope of its success—however much the animals might believe in it—and only old Benjamin the donkey seems to recognize this. “He seldom talked, but when he did, it was usually to make some cynical remark—for instance, he would say that God had given him a tail to keep the flies off, but that he would sooner have had no tail and no flies” (*AF* 4). This seemingly inscrutable remark actually sets the stage for later events and foreshadows the ignominious end of the Animal Farm experiment. Flies, to Benjamin, represent unavoidable misery, everything from the cruel farmer Jones to the privation of winter and the heartbreak of the windmill. All of this is inevitable, and all the animals can really hope for is to postpone it for a while, using their God-given tails to keep the flies away. Benjamin, pessimist that he is, realizes that the Revolution would change nothing. He “professed to remember every detail of his long life and to know that things never had been, nor ever could be much better or much worse—hunger, hardship and disappointment being, so he said, the unalterable law of life” (*AF* 77-78). In other words, however much the tail is flicked, the flies would only stay away a short time, and soon the miseries would return. In all of Orwell, there is nothing as depressing and cynical as this, the idea that though things can and do change, nothing is ever permanently changed for the better.

Manor Farm controlled by Jones (the last czar?) is an awful place, and the final version of Manor Farm controlled by Napoleon is even worse. There is only the briefest of summers between these two extremes, in which, for a while, the animals are actually

happy. It is here, from the time of the Rebellion to the first counterattack by Jones and his men, or from late June until October, that Animal Farm feels like a utopia. The joy of the animals as they look upon their new home resembles Bowling's view of Lower Binfield in both tone and scope:

Yes, it was theirs—everything they could see was theirs! In the ecstasy of that thought they gambolled round and round, they hurled themselves into the air in great leaps of excitement. They rolled in the dew, they cropped mouthfuls of the sweet summer grass, they kicked up clods of the black earth and snuffed its rich scent. Then they made a tour of inspection of the whole farm and surveyed with speechless admiration the ploughland, the hayfield, the orchard, the pool, the spinney. It was as though they had never seen these things before, and even now they could hardly believe it was all their own. (*AF* 14-15)

In this summer of contentment there is still a ruling class—because of their “superior knowledge,” the pigs “directed and supervised the others” (*AF* 18)—but they are not yet oppressive, and Napoleon has not yet raised his doggie-KGB nor made a grab for power. Instead, much like the aristocratic Binfield House and its absent owner, the evidence of the pigs can be seen, but they are mostly removed from the lives of the other animals. There is also a very stratified animal hierarchy based on cleverness—pigs and dogs above, sheep and geese below—but a common enemy and a common cause keep class conflict safely under wraps. The animals are not equal and were never equal, but as long as the belief persisted that they were, “the work of the farm went like clockwork, [and] the animals were as happy as they had never conceived it possible to be” (*AF* 18). Such a state of bliss brings to mind Flory's hunting trip with Elizabeth, Bowling's pre-Boer War childhood, and the illicit affair of Winston and Julia. None of these last, and each character waxes nostalgic about the better days until change makes the nostalgia impossible too.

Benjamin's wish for God to take away both hardship and the necessary wherewithal to combat it—no flies and no tails—is as impossible a wish as Moses' Sugarcandy Mountain. It is a wish we saw in *Burmese Days* when Flory believes marrying Elizabeth will somehow make Burma tolerable. It is George Bowling's dream of carp in the pool behind Binfield House, and it is Winston Smith's aching futile belief that Emmanuel Goldstein actually exists. In every case, the glaring truth is that nothing can stay the same, and every paradise is fleeting and ephemeral. Orwell's cynicism is present throughout his works because he believes human nature will not allow a place with no tails and no flies to survive for long. For utopia to truly exist, he contends, the brief summer in which everything is beautiful—when Flory is hunting, Bowling is fishing, and Smith is making love—must be stretched out forever. The *status quo* of that moment must be brought back and then be maintained in perpetuity. Unfortunately, *Animal Farm* tells us, there is no moving backwards; the flies and the tails are always there.

Orwell's fiction is popular fiction, and terms such as *Big Brother* have become ubiquitous in modern society, so it is no surprise that Orwell's ideas should be used by theorists and politicians to promote specific agendas. But to read Orwell as only a political writer is to stereotype him, just as remembering him only for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is to miss some very important ideas. Orwell's legacy should not be entirely tied up in the image of a communist-fighter, as he is often perceived today, nor in that of an ardent socialist, as Orwell tended to stylize himself. Instead, Orwell should be seen as keeping ideological company with both Waugh and Huxley, writers with whom he often professed to disagree. For all of them, a primary impetus is the fear of an inevitable

future set up in contrast to a superior Englishness that has either passed away or never actually existed. Seeing their novels in these terms situates them in a very specific time. Waugh, Huxley and Orwell each gave voice to an often unspoken desire of many of their peers, a desire that is poignant in its futility, but which is also universal. This desire is to have the real world match a sometimes indefinable ideal, and to stave off change by glorifying the good old days.

CHAPTER 5:  
CONCLUSION

In his introduction to *Ideology*, Terry Eagleton makes an interesting connection between ideology and a poem by Thom Gunn:

[The poem] speaks of a German conscript in the Second World War who risked his life helping Jews to escape the fate in store for them at the hands of the Nazis:

I know he had unusual eyes,  
Whose power no order could determine,  
Not to mistake the men he saw,  
As others did, for gods or vermin.

What persuades men and women to mistake each other from time to time for gods or vermin is ideology. (*xiii*)

Mistaking some men for gods and others for vermin was a cornerstone of Nazi ideology; to borrow again from *Animal Farm*, the Nazis considered some animals to be vastly more equal than others, some worthy of worship, others only of extermination. Gunn's hero in this poem seems to transcend ideology. He possesses the enviable ability to see beyond the suffocating influence of his surroundings and to form his own opinion which, as is evident from later history, was the correct opinion to have.

But though the German soldier did not mistake the men he saw for gods or vermin, he did view them as *something*. This something was, thankfully, different from the opinion of his Nazi superiors, and indeed was probably different from the view of the Jews themselves. Althusser tells us over and over that ideology is inescapable; there is no outside of ideology, no more than there is, as Derrida would say, an "outside of text." So how is it possible to reconcile the actions of the soldier with the boundaries of

ideology? Can a person escape ideology and look at the world utterly objectively, uninfluenced by anything?

To me the answer seems to be *no*, but this *no* carries with it enough caveats and intricacies to keep critics and philosophers busy for the next few centuries. Perhaps the German soldier did not escape the prevailing ideology, but retained instead another ideology in a conscious action. We can assume he was indoctrinated, either forced by state apparatuses to comply with state ideology or compelled by the influence of the masses around him to simply follow the herd, but by his actions the German soldier proves that the indoctrination failed. His own ideology, I contend, was stronger than that of his peers, or more entrenched, or more attractive for moral or religious reasons. Whatever the case, I believe what caused the soldier to save the Jews was not rejection of a new ideology but steadfast adherence to an earlier one. Thus, it follows that the soldier did not escape ideology at all, nor did he exchange it. If he had, it would have been an exchange of good for evil, and he would not have saved those he did. In this way, the Althusserian notion of ideology as being “invested” in the imaginary rings true. That which the soldier imagined—or remembered, as a “hope or nostalgia”—was more powerful than the conditions in which he found himself.

It may seem a bit frivolous to go from such questions to a study of English satire, but for many people today the ideology of Empire as it existed in the early twentieth century is in some ways on par with that of the Nazis. As Norman Davies writes,

British imperialism, like all imperialisms, has since lost its glitter. It is widely considered today to be one of the great undiluted evils of history, involving the subjugation of the weak by the strong, the exploitation of the poor by the rich, the destruction of native cultures, and the humiliation by ‘whites’ of ‘non-whites’. It is blamed for all sorts of current ills from poverty and political chaos in the Third World to racism and

Eurocentrism. Certainly, the Empire's goals of political, economic and cultural integration were ruthlessly pursued without too much concern for the consequences. Seen in retrospect, they belonged to a condemned system containing the seeds of its own destruction; and the reaction was bound to come. (719)

Indeed, the Empire seemed evil to many, even those who participated in it at its height; certainly Orwell hated it bitterly, and his experiences in Burma intensified this hatred. Nevertheless, what caused him to speak against it, and what caused Huxley and Waugh to argue for it in some ways, is the same invested nostalgia that causes the German soldier to save the Jews. There is always a remembrance of perfection coloring ideology, an idea of a better time or a more preferable time, even when the remembrance is inaccurate or overly rosy. For every Empire-hater there was one whose remembrances of it were more positive, one for whom "British imperialism was seen as an effective force for good" (Davies 719). This remembrance affects views of the present and of the future. It is my contention that satire is the outward expression of an inner weighing of past, present, and future, in which the past invariably weighs the heaviest.

For this reason, satire is tied inextricably to the time of its creation, perhaps more so than any other genre. When Waugh, Huxley and Orwell look back from their position they see a better time, a time unaffected by change, a time made attractive by its stability and certain predictability. Of course, this is ideology, a way of looking at things based on ideas formulated long before, and it is imaginary rather than real. When we—as historians, critics or satirists—look back at the same period we naturally see it differently. For us it has changed, the *status quo* is different, and therefore the satire does not have the same effect it once had. The references must be explained, the positions historicized, and by doing so the immediacy of the warning disappears. I suspect a similar fate awaits

satire written today. Those that were written against specific changes, or for the retention of a *status quo*, lose their effectiveness when the changes are made or the recent past becomes the remote past. I would love to explore nostalgia as it exists in the works of Kurt Vonnegut, Terry Pratchett, or for the editors of *The Onion*. Most likely, each of these satirical writers compares their flawed modern world to a nostalgic ideal, misremembered or misconstrued but nonetheless useful at the time for the comparison. As Dustin Griffin writes, satire is supposed to “insist on the sharp differences between vice and virtue, between good and bad, between what man *is* and what man *ought to be*” (36). In doing so, man’s *ought to be* is not compared to what he *is*, or what he *was*, but to what the satirist *thinks* he was. This position of the writer, what causes him to laud some things and decry others, says more about the age in which he lives and his own personal struggles within it than perhaps we recognize. With deference to O’Brien of *Miniluv*, in some ways control of the past does indeed control the future, or at least the perception of it.

## CHAPTER 6:

### WORKS CITED

- Aldridge, Alexander. *The Scientific World View in Dystopia*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984. Print.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Marxists Internet Archive Library*. Marxists.org. First published in print 1970. Web. June 21, 2010.
- . "Marxism and Humanism." *Marxists Internet Archive Library*. Marxists.org. First published in print June 1964. Web. May 20, 2010.
- Associated Press. "Palestine Division Plan Upset by More Opposition." *Long Beach Press-Telegram*. 26 November 1947: A-1. Print.
- Associated Press. "Soviets Explode Atom Bomb, Writer Says." *Long Beach Press-Telegram*. 11 November 1947: A-1. Print.
- Bailkin, Jordanna. "Making Faces: Tattooed Women and Colonial Regimes." *History Workshop Journal* 59.1 (2005): 33-56. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 10 June 2010.
- Baker, Russell. Preface. *Animal Farm*. By George Orwell. New York: Signet Classics, 1996.
- Bloom, Harold. Introduction. *George Orwell's 1984*. Ed. Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987. Print.
- Brians, Paul. "Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction." *Washington State University - Pullman, Washington*. 17 Dec. 2008. Web. 1 June 2010.
- Canton, Edgardo and Aldous Huxley. "A Defence of the Intellect". *UNESCO Courier* 46.12 (December 1993): 42-43. Print.
- Carens, James F. *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966. Print.
- Carey, John. *The Intellectuals and the Masses*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1992. Print.

- “The Colour Problem.” *The Saturday Review* 140.3651 (1925): 432. *British Periodicals*. Web. 31 May 2010.
- “Control of Population.” *The Saturday Review* 139.3633 (1925): 642. *British Periodicals*. Web. 31 May 2010.
- Daniels, Anthony. “Orwell's 'Catalonia' Revisited.” *New Criterion*. 25.6 (Feb. 2007): 11+. Print.
- Davies, Watkin. “The Price of Peace.” *Fortnightly* 136 (1934): 292-302. *British Periodicals*. Web. 01 June 2010.
- Doyle, Paul A. *A Reader's Companion to the Novels and Short Stories of Evelyn Waugh*. Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1988. Print.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology: An Introduction*. New York: Verso, 1991. Print.
- . *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. Print.
- Edwards, Penny. “Half-Cast: Staging Race in British Burma.” *Postcolonial Studies* 5.3 (2002): 279-295. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 10 June 2010.
- Federico, Annette. “Making do: George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*.” *Studies in the Novel*. 37.1 (Spring 2005): n. pag. *Gale*. Web. 25 January 2010.
- Feinberg, Leonard. *Introduction to Satire*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1967. Print.
- “Fighting against the future; George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh.” *The Economist* [US] 23 Aug. 2008. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 20 June 2010.
- Firchow, Peter. *Aldous Huxley: Satirist and Novelist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972. Print.
- Fiske, John. “Culture, Ideology, Interpellation.” *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Julie and Michael Ryan Rivkin. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. 1268-73. Print.
- Garnett, Robert R. *From Grimes to Brideshead: The Early Novels of Evelyn Waugh*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1990. Print.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. Print.
- Green, Martin. Introduction. *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*. By Aldous Huxley. New York: Harper and Row, 1960. Print.

- Greenberg, Jonathan. "Cannibals and Catholics: Reading the Reading of Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief*." *Modernist Cultures* 2.2 (2006): 115-137. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 4 Apr. 2010.
- Greenblatt, Stephen Jay. *Three Modern Satirists: Waugh, Orwell, and Huxley*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965. Print.
- Greene, Donald. "A Partiality for Lords: Evelyn Waugh and Snobbery." *The American Scholar* 58.3 (1989): 444-459. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 20 June 2010.
- Griffin, Dustin. *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994. Print.
- Hall, Stuart. "The Rise of the Representative/Interventionist State." *State and Society in Contemporary Britain*. Eds. Gregor McLennan, David Held and Stuart Hall. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1984. Print.
- Hitchens, Christopher. Introduction. *Animal Farm and 1984*. By George Orwell. New York: Harcourt, 2003. Print.
- . *Why Orwell Matters*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. Print.
- Holmes, Charles M. *Aldous Huxley and the Way to Reality*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1970. Print.
- Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Translated by John Cumming. New York: Continuum Publishing, 2000. Print.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Ape and Essence*. New York: Harper and Row, 1948. Print.
- . *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*. New York: Harper and Row, 1960. Print.
- . *The Devils of Loudun*. New York: Harper, 1952. Print.
- . *Island*. New York: Harper and Row, 1962. Print.
- . *The Letters of Aldous Huxley*. Ed. Grover Smith. New York: Harper and Row, 1969. Print.
- . *The Perennial Philosophy*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945. Print.
- . *Point Counter Point*. New York: Random House, 1928. Print.

- Hynes, Samuel. *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1968. Print.
- Izzo, David Garrett. "Aldous Huxley." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 25.3 (Fall 2005): 86-136. Print.
- Jefferson, Thomas. "Manners." *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library. 10 August 2006. Web. 26 January 2010.
- Jerrold, Douglas. "Current Comments." *English Review* (1934): 455. *British Periodicals*. Web. 01 June 2010.
- Kass, Leon R. "Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*." *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life*. (March 2000): 51-52. Print.
- Littlewood, Ian. *The Writings of Evelyn Waugh*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983. Print.
- Lynch, Daniel P. "Evelyn Waugh's Early Novels: The Limits of Fiction." *Papers on Language & Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 30.4 (Fall 1994): 373-386. Web. 4 April 2010.
- MacDonald, Alex. "Choosing Utopia: an Existential Reading of Aldous Huxley's *Island*." *Utopian Studies* 12.2 (Spring 2001): 103-113. Print.
- Marovitz, Sanford E. "Aldous Huxley and the Nuclear Age: *Ape and Essence* in Context." *Journal of Modern Literature* 18.1 (Winter 1992): 115-125. Print.
- Marwick, Arthur. *Britain in the Century of Total War*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968. Print.
- McCartney, George. *Confused Roaring: Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. Print.
- Meckier, Jerome. "Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, and Birth Control in *Black Mischief*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 23.2 (Winter 1999): 277-292. Print.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. "Orwell in Burma." *American Notes and Queries* 11. (1972): 52-54. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 10 June 2010.
- McCulloch, Andrew. "Satire and Satyr: Decline and Fall." *The English Review*. 11.4 (Apr. 2001): 30+. Web. 4 April 2010.
- Morris, James. *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.
- Murray, Nicholas. *Aldous Huxley: an English Intellectual*. London: Little, Brown, 2002. Print.

Mussolini, Benito. "The Alternative for 1932." *The Saturday Review* 152.3950 (1931): 41. *British Periodicals*. Web. 31 May 2010.

"Notes of the Week." *The Saturday Review* 150.3902 (1930): 164. *British Periodicals*. Web. 31 May 2010.

Orwell, George. *Animal Farm and 1984*. New York: Harcourt, 2003. Print.

---. *Burmese Days*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962. Print.

---. *Coming Up For Air*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1939. Print.

---. *Homage to Catalonia*. New York: Harvest Book-Harcourt, 1980. Print.

---. *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1936. Print.

---. "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius." *Why I Write*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984. Print.

---. "Politics V. Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver's Travels*." *Discussions of Jonathan Swift*. Ed. John Traugott. Boston: Heath, 1962. Print.

---. *The Road to Wigan Pier*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1986. Print.

---. "Shooting an Elephant." *George Orwell - Complete Works, Biography, Quotes, Essays*. 2003. Web. 11 June 2010.

---. "Why I Write". *Why I Write*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984. Print.

Oxford English Dictionary. *OED Online*. 2009. Web. 21 May 2010.

Petrie, Sir Charles. *The Edwardians*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1965. Print.

Plath, Sylvia. *Collected Poems*. New York: Harper, 1981. Print.

Rossi, John P. "The Enduring Relevance of George Orwell." *Contemporary Review*. 283.1652 (Sept. 2003): n. pag. *Gale*. Web. 25 January 2010.

Ruppert, Peter. *Reader in a Strange Land: the Activity of Reading Literary Utopias*. Athens, GA: U. of Georgia Press, 1986. Print.

Schmerl, Rudolf B. "The Two Future Worlds of Aldous Huxley." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 77.3 (1962): 328-334. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 10 June 2010.

- Schwartz, Richard A. "Family, Gender, and Society in 1950s American Fiction of Nuclear Apocalypse: *Shadow on the Hearth, Tomorrow!, The Last Day, and Alas, Babylon.*" *Journal of American Culture* 29.4 (2006): 406-424. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 31 May 2010.
- "Scribe of the Dark Age.(Religion)." *Time* 8 Apr. 1946: 69. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 20 June 2010.
- Seaman, L.C.B. *Post-Victorian Britain, 1902-1951*. London: Methuen and Company, 1966. Print.
- Sexton, James, ed. *Aldous Huxley's Hearst Essays*. New York: Garland Publishers, 1994. Print.
- Slater, Ann Pasternak. "The Hundred Years of Waugh." *New Statesman* [1996] 3 Nov. 2003: 38+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 20 June 2010.
- Smith, Grover. Introduction. *The Letters of Aldous Huxley*. By Aldous Huxley. New York: Harper and Row, 1969. Print.
- Snyder, Edward D. "The Wild Irish: A Study of Some English Satires against the Irish, Scots, and Welsh." *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature* 17.12 (1920): 687-725. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 3 Apr. 2010.
- Southard, Addison E. "Modern Ethiopia." *National Geographic*. 59.6 (June 1931): 679-738. Print.
- Spender, Stephen. *The Creative Element: A Study of Vision, Despair, and Orthodoxy Among Some Modern Writers*. New York: The British Book Center, 1954. Print.
- Swift, Jonathan. *A Tale of a Tub, the Battle of the Books, and Other Satires, by Jonathan Swift*. New York: EP Dutton and Company, 1909. Print.
- Thody, Philip. *Huxley: A Biographical Introduction*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973. Print.
- Thomas, Bronwen E. "Multiparty Talk in the Novel: The Distribution of Tea and Talk in a Scene from Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief*." *Poetics Today* 23.4 (2002): 657-84. Print.
- Thomason, David, ed. *The New Cambridge Modern History, Volume XII: The Era of Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964. Print.

- Trilling, Lionel. Introduction. *Homage to Catalonia*. By George Orwell. New York: Harvest Book-Harcourt, 1980. v-xxiii. Print.
- Waugh, Evelyn. *Black Mischief*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1932. Print.
- . *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*. Ed. Michael Davie. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976. Print.
- . *The Essays, Articles, and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*. Ed. Donat Gallagher. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1983. Print.
- . *A Handful of Dust and Decline and Fall*. New York: Dell, 1971. Print.
- . *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*. Ed. Mark Amory. New York: Penguin Books, 1980. Print.
- . *A Little Learning*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964. Print.
- . *Waugh in Abyssinia*. Introduction by John Maxwell Hamilton. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007. Print.
- White, Richard. "George Orwell: Socialism and Utopia." *Utopian Studies*. 19.1 (Winter 2008): n. pag. *Gale*. Web. 25 January 2010.
- Williams, Raymond. "Are We Becoming More Divided?" *Who Speaks for Wales?* Ed. Daniel Williams. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003. Print.
- . "Wales and England." *Who Speaks for Wales?* Ed. Daniel Williams. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003. Print.
- . "George Orwell." *George Orwell's 1984*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987. Print.
- Wood, James. "A Fine Rage." *The New Yorker* 13 Apr. 2009: 54+. Print.
- Wykes, David. *Evelyn Waugh*. Literary Lives. Ed. Richard Dutton. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. Print.