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Visualizing The Permanent Lie: An Examination of Dystopian Literature Using Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Model

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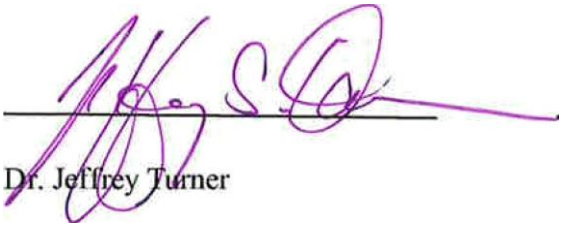

Dr. Jeffrey Turner

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“There was truth and there was untruth, and if you clung to the truth even against the whole world, you were not mad.”

George Orwell, *Nineteen-Eighty Four*

“...and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

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Abstract

This thesis argues for the formation of an evolving canon of literature critical to continued resistance to totalitarianism, focusing primarily on the works of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Ji Xianlin. In crafting the theoretical basis of my study, I rely primarily on Solzhenitsyn's concept of the "permanent lie" and its related concepts, "survive at any price" and "only material results matter" as formulated in his magnum opus, *The Gulag Archipelago*. In Solzhenitsyn's view, the "permanent lie" is rooted in the creation of a virtual reality among individuals trapped in a totalitarian society, in which they must hold two opposing viewpoints in their mind simultaneously, one for the private arena in which they are relatively free to share their true thoughts regarding the regime and one for the public sphere in which they must obey the rhetoric espoused by the ruling regime. Solzhenitsyn used "survive at any price" in terms of the mental fracture present by the continued adherence to the "permanent lie" to prolong survival, an idea to survive at the expense of others. Solzhenitsyn uses "only material results matter" to explain the unspoken agreement between the totalitarian regime and the oppressed individuals under the regime, that every act of a sinister nature or otherwise serves some greater good in the advancement of an equal and just society. An application of these theories together allows for the possibility of sustained resistance. The crux of my argument is that through Solzhenitsyn's theoretical framework related to totalitarianism and a study of reader-response theory that examines the ways in which the literature is received internally, a canon emerges from the theoretical and literary works that allows for a crucial study of resistance movements applicable to present-day and as society becomes ever more digitized in the 21st century. I have chosen George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Ji Xianlin for their shared belief in the necessity of resistance to totalitarianism through varying degrees of cultural influence and life experience with the evolving notion of the "totalitarian regime".

Orwell used his personal experience fighting against totalitarian ideologies in the Spanish Civil War as well as observations on the ostracization of the Soviet intelligentsia in the 1930s and 1940s to formulate his theories of the necessity of totalitarian resistance, encapsulated by his idea of "doublethink" and the replacement deity, Big Brother, in his novel, *Nineteen-Eighty Four*. Ji relies solely on his own experience, offering a first-hand account of the dangers of totalitarianism and continued adherence to the "permanent lie", detailing the raw terror of forced labor camps during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in his memoir, *The Cowshed: Memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*. Finally, Huxley formulates what some have termed "soft totalitarianism" in *Brave New World*, creating a society under the ever-watchful eye of the government yet unaware of the regime's malicious intent, distracted by base comforts and the illusion of a utopian society.

Together, the three authors along with the theoretical basis primarily from Solzhenitsyn, offer a historical lens to examine totalitarianism's past and its implications on future society to allow for a planned resistance before it can continue to take hold.

Introduction

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn categorized his concept of the "Permanent Lie" as "the only safe form of existence" (*Gulag*, Vol .2, 654) under a totalitarian regime, allowing an individual to survive in bodily form while jettisoning their moral standing. Through literature from George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Ji Xianlin, my thesis explores the conundrum of this shallow victory, offering the lens of classic totalitarian fiction and a memoir as vehicles for discussion. Literature can elaborate on this discussion in a more-complete manner than other branches of totalitarian studies, fine-tuning the strain between the permanent lie and a sense of individual truth and uses said strain creatively to resist totalitarianism.

Totalitarianism is summarized by French historian Stephane Courtois as "the monopoly of an ideology governing all ideas in all fields…in all means of dissemination" (Courtois). In other words, no thought or action can truly be considered your own in a totalitarian system. It is seen by Courtois and other scholars in the field such as Hannah Arendt, Solzhenitsyn, Mattias Desmet, and Shoshana Zuboff, as a phenomenon of the potential for mass society that emerged technologically in the twentieth century and that has taken new digital "soft" forms today in the cyberspace and neoliberal globalization of the so-called "global West". In relation to it, the "permanent lie" is perhaps best defined as a conscious deceit of one's own beliefs to align with the view espoused by the ruling ideological system. Thus, the rhetoric shared by an individual may appear factual but in publicly agreeing with the State, the individual is lying to themselves. The individual is effectively creating a virtual reality in which they must live publicly in efforts to survive and not raise suspicion. Engaging in the permanent lie requires a split between one's conscious mind and the unconscious - to maintain a steadfast belief but eschew the urge to disclose it. The ensuing mental struggle can be summarized by asking whether it is better to

potentially die while remaining steadfast to your beliefs or completely alter your personal philosophy to stay alive, a dilemma Solzhenitsyn struggled with greatly.

This study considers Solzhenitsyn's model for totalitarianism, focusing on how his ideas of the "permanent lie" and its two main related components, which he described as a combined ethos of "survive at any price" and "only material results matter", form a continuing framework for interpreting what can be called totalitarian culture and literary responses to it, even into the present. The crux of my argument is that Solzhenitsyn's framework, and related theories including a modern variant of reader-response theory (explored in Chapter Three), help to explain how works of fiction and memoir belong in a flexible canon of critical totalitarian studies. Indeed, the form of Solzhenitsyn's experimental hybrid memoir-history-philosophical work *The Gulag Archipelago* in part models this inclusion. I have chosen literature from Orwell, Huxley and Ji to represent classics of the literary totalitarian genre to outline an elastic imaginary canon of enduring totalitarian literature to pair with the theoretical framework suggested by Solzhenitsyn.

"Every wag of the tongue can be overheard by someone, every facial expression observed by someone," Solzhenitsyn described of "classic" mid-twentieth-century totalitarianism (*Gulag*, Vol, 2, 325), to which might be added today "every keystroke." A constant fear of misconstruction breeds a heightened sense of awareness, a voluntary self-censoring to prevent what may be inevitable in an often random sense of terror. However, if an individual is already partaking in the mental gymnastics of the permanent lie, there appears to be little additional harm manifested by dwelling in an atmosphere of supposed absolute safety through conformity that often is not apparent to the individual. The "permanent lie", "survive at any price" and "only material results matter" serve to depict the despondency and nihilism that afflict many

individuals left to fend in a totalitarian state at the proverbial but hidden unstable "breaking point".

Orwell categorized the theory that would later be known as the permanent lie as an "unending series of victories over your own mind" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four,* 16) in his novel *Nineteen-Eighty Four*. Orwell termed his understanding of the concept, d*oublethink*. In doing so, Orwell highlights the mental struggle that the conscious decision to rebel against one's sense of identity demands. Huxley rationalized the concept through immersive social conditioning via sex and drugs and mindless sports and media entertainments and genetic engineering (orgy-porgies, *soma*, obstacle golf, feelies, hatcheries) of the "Fordist" World State, in his novel *Brave New World*. Ji detailed the horrific grip that the permanent lie harbors on the mental faculties of himself and his fellow revolutionaries during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in his memoir, *The Cowshed*: *Memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*.

Before committing to a complete discussion of the framework behind Solzhenitsyn's model, it is necessary to acknowledge the contributions of Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt to the field of totalitarian studies. Arendt is considered the field's originator, with her exhaustive study, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, serving as an influential work in the decades since its release. At the heart of Arendt's philosophy on totalitarianism is atomization, a measured and exhaustive division of individualism used repeatedly by totalitarian regimes to isolate and dispel any rumblings of rebellion. Atomization is to totalitarian persuasion as divide and conquer is to military tactics. Whereas military forces realized the perhaps-demented value in separating individuals from the larger group system, totalitarian regimes in turn look to sever familial association, whether in the sense of the nuclear or extended family, social or traditional religious networks, leading to a paradoxically shared anguish of the Other within the totalitarian culture.

The idea of atomization as presented by Arendt is seen and echoed extensively through the literary works examined here, and influences my analysis of their work thoroughly.

Arendt considers the duopoly of fear to be one of the central themes of a totalitarian regime: "...fear of the people by the ruler and fear of the ruler by the people" (*Origins*, 506). It is key to understanding how atomization constricts the will of the oppressed in a totalitarian society, by fear of one another as well, all becoming systematized. The "objective truth" becomes clouded by the resulting system of fear. One can conceptualize truth in totalitarianism in relation to the common adage "history is written by the winners". As a totalitarian system seeks to control the free flow of information to quell rebellion, truth becomes subjective due to the systemic nature of an ideological reality. First-hand accounts, i.e. the witness of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, become ever more valuable as honest depictions of conditions by those whom the adage may coin a "loser" but who also fall outside of the system. Under a totalitarian regime, truth is filled with doubt, in essence a struggle to believe the narrative in front of you. As Solzhenitsyn adds, "They simply cannot believe the stupid and silly images of themselves which they hear over the radio, see in films, and read in the newspapers." (*Gulag, Vol. 2*, 654) Rejecting the permanent lie requires a conscious effort to remain aware when the world around you has devolved into unconscious paranoia. But in doing so, the risk to personal safety increases as well as an instability related to a constant uncertainty about reality. The price of a sense of mental freedom may be physical martyrdom or perceived psychological instability.

The notion of *price* is two-fold under Solzhenitsyn's model, with its highlighting of "survive at any price" as a driving ethical principle of totalitarian culture. Not only is loss of life a possibility for those with the courage to reject the permanent lie but simple maintaining of life

may require extensive costs. Solzhenitsyn continues that to survive at any price often means surviving at the expense of others. (*Gulag, Vol. 2*, 611) What value does collegiality hold when it could mean certain physical or at least social death? Orwell explores the resulting moral breakdown of the idea in the deteriorating relationship between his main protagonists in *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, Winston and Julia. Faced with the prospect of psychological torture, both are positively jovial at the thought of incriminating the other. Past romances and pleasantries hold little regard when faced with the encroaching thought of death. As Winston and Julia demonstrated unconsciously, surviving at any price is a no-win equation. Solzhenitsyn uses the metaphor of a fork in the road to explain the concept: "If you go to the right – you lose your life, and if you go to the left – you lose your conscience." (*Gulag, Vol. 2*, 611) Under the general premise of "the rulers can break my body and exhaust my limbs but my thoughts remain intact", resisting the urge to take the left side at the expense of one's conscience is key. Orwell explored both sides of the metaphorical road in *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, exploring the effects of mental subservience before a resulting physical torture for dissenters. Huxley presented the loss of conscience through continual use of soma and group sex as a self-medicated vacation from the facts, an escape from reality when the concrete events in front of oneself turned undesirable. Morals turned irrelevant with the population lost in a hallucinogenic fog. Ji was forced to constantly struggle with the loss of his former life in maintaining a mental resolve.

Finally, the correlative ethos of "only material results matter" in a totalitarian society is demonstrated repeatedly in works of critical totalitarian studies and in the aforementioned works of literature. It is the "ends justify the means" and "two wrongs make a right" of totalitarian culture. Viewing the totalitarian regime in such terms subverts any thought of daily resistance gaining sustained traction. Personal freedoms are trampled without a second thought in favor of a

proverbial “greater good” but what that “greater good” entails is never explicitly stated because it is systematized in an impersonal and technocratic way, whether it be Stalin’s Five Year Plans or goals of corporate globalization and AI development. All that is divulged is a loose vision of freedom, a mantra noting that daily life must improve under the regime to greater lengths than ever considered possible outside of the regime.

Perhaps the most-crucial element of Solzhenitsyn’s notion of material results being the determining factor in the success of a regime are the few words that follow in his *Gulag Archipelago*: “...the result is not in your favor”. (*Gulag, Vol. 2*, 615) Whereas “only material results matter” offers a semblance of hope to the oppressed under a guise of complete and unending cooperation to the system, Solzhenitsyn’s admission that the result is not in your favor expunges any notion of an unscarred escape. Survival will be damaging, both mentally and physically. In *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, Julia survives her harrowing ordeal in Room 101 – the Party’s designated torture setting, but survival comes with the cost of what seems to have been a surgical lobotomy, leaving Julia a shell of her former self, a material solution to her serving the material goals of the system. Solzhenitsyn’s dictum is expressed by equally-unpleasant solutions to the physical abuse and mental torture that accompanies imprisonment – does one release their mind to the regime, willing to express any view that may, even momentarily, ensure survival or do they allow their body to be broken and leave a distorted individual, if anything at all? Ji is left dragging his exhausted and bruised body through Reeducation camps, cruelly in the same setting in which he peddled his life’s vocation. Hearing the stunted cries of an elder, he realizes that he is forever broken.

Examining these works of totalitarian literature through Solzhenitsyn’s model not only allows for a deeper appreciation of the struggles faced by the authors – either first-hand in the

case of Ji and to a lesser extent, Orwell, or through frictions with intellectual trends in his circles in Huxley's case – but donates a vessel for a greater understanding of totalitarian philosophy. While the horrors faced by those forever scarred by experiences under totalitarianism can never be fully replicated, literary resistance to totalitarianism provides the tools to imagine the worst of human society while not requiring forced participation.

The works I have decided to examine are diverse, two fiction novels heavily influenced by the authors' experiences with totalitarianism and a memoir from an individual thrust into a delicate balance from a position of relative influence. However, the selections are purposeful, demonstrating the unfortunate timeless nature of totalitarianism. Examining these works through the lens of Solzhenitsyn's model of the "permanent lie" furthers a philosophical understanding of the contrasting totalitarian psyche, both from the perpetrator and the captive, paramount to the continual resistance. To echo's Solzhenitsyn's 1978 address to Harvard University students – the belief that a given society is immune to the destructive allure of totalitarianism is a logical fallacy. At the risk of engaging the proverbial alarm bells, civilized society is perpetually one generation away from potential cultural destruction at the hands of totalitarianism.

Chapter 1. Big Brother's Rule By Nobody: Solzhenitsyn and Arendt Through Orwell

The slogan "Big Brother is Watching You" adorns posters throughout the London of Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty Four*. The monstrous face and prying eyes of Big Brother stared back at Winston Smith, as if attempting to burrow into his soul. His chiseled features belie the ruling Party's true intentions. But the avatar of this stern and omniscient individual is both disingenuous and terror-inducing, because Big Brother is never revealed to be a concrete human in the flesh. Yet Big Brother is the unquestioned leader of the Party that rules over Oceania, simultaneously a dictatorial figure and a savior. Big Brother personifies Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's idea of the "permanent lie" underlying totalitarianism, because he serves as an ontological systemic being, enforcing complete control over the State of Oceania and disallowing free dissent within the mind of each person. The "permanent lie" functions as a virtual reality in concert with the officially-disseminated sense of truth from the ruling class, in this instance, the IngSoc Party. Oceania's ruling party espouses rhetoric that may or may not be true but with the Party acting as the solitary voice, the citizens of Oceania are forced to publicly agree for survival's sake, creating a virtual reality confusing objective, subjective, and manufactured truth. As Solzhenitsyn concludes, "Every word, if it does not have to be a direct lie, is nonetheless obliged not to contradict the general, common lie" (*Gulag*, Vol, 2, 655).

While individuals actively engaging in the "lie" are aware of the dueling narratives of truths external to the Party and within its ideology, they must maintain both complete realities, one for times in which the Party is watching and one reserved for a fleeting second of privacy. Solzhenitsyn encapsulated the mental war within oneself, the dangers of allowing the guard to drop ever-so-slightly, even for a moment, coupled with the allure of technology: "There is no man who has spoken into a microphone…without lying" (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 655). Unlike an

authoritarian state, totalitarianism requires a conscious willingness to commit to the "permanent lie" under the guise of safety. That very commitment forever obscures the demarcation of truth and fiction. In a sense, what was once the truth is now fiction and vice versa, at least as far as the tortured mind of the oppressed believes. Much like one false move could spell disaster in the classic totalitarian states of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in real life, such is the quandary in which Party members find themselves in Orwell's fictitious Britain.

Winston Smith, the protagonist in *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, summarized Orwell's fictional version of Solzhenitsyn's idea of the "permanent lie" rather bluntly but in a different manner. The "permanent lie" in Smith's thoughts is "an unending series of victories over your own memory" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 16). But Orwell has his own term for the "permanent lie" too, and a distinct manner of conceptualizing it in his fiction: *doublethink*. Orwell defines doublethink as "the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them." (9) However, when holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, the truth can become obscured. Big Brother operates in a similar manner, obscuring the truth, leading to confusion for those engaged in the permanent lie as to which narrative aligns with that understood to be true and the fabricated lie aligning with the Party narrative necessary for survival.

Big Brother effectively personifies the fear that encompasses Oceania. Perhaps it is proper to view Big Brother conceptually. If the concept is believed, Big Brother lends a real human face to the totalitarian police state that pervades every aspect of daily life in London, an actualized individual to equate with constant surveillance. If the idea is false, Big Brother can be dismissed as an attempt by the Party to control its citizens through constant fear, a mere symbol to mark the Party's intentions. However, individuals forced to engage in the permanent lie –

forced, as Solzhenitsyn seems to quite plausibly suggest that no one enters into the permanent lie of their own accord (*Gulag, Vol. 2,* 654) – cannot afford to dismiss the Party apparatus. As such, Big Brother and any similar totalitarian entity occupy a permanent place within the psyche of citizens. The narrative is inescapable to the full extent. But the mere presence of Big Brother – whether concrete or imagined – leads to doublethink as Orwell describes it. One cannot afford to fully dismiss his existence despite all efforts to the contrary.

In analyzing *Nineteen-Eighty Four,* and its deified stand-in the symbolic Big Brother, in light of Solzhenitsyn's "permanent lie" as an element of totalitarianism, this chapter will consider the psychology of totalitarianism, which it will unpack further in its following sections. Hannah Arendt identified isolation as a potential psychological harbinger for future totalitarian ideology personifying Big Brother as an individual, "alone in the crowd" in modern technological society. Arendt's twentieth-century model of mass formation can be reduced to an equation: Mobs + Technocratic Elites = Mass. In the 21st century, the psychotherapist Mattias Desmet summarized the parameters of the permanent lie more psychologically as a mass phenomenon with constituent elements of loneliness, meaninglessness, acute anxiety, and a striking out at a target to counteract that anxiety (Desmet 118). This formula finds its application by elites who, according to Desmet, consider their ideological reality to be "superior to the fiction of others" (Desmet 81) and are willing to engage in deceit to carry out the ideology in which they believe. The psychoanalytic theorist Julia Kristeva's theory can inform our understanding of this totalitarian psychology. She argues that the West has moved to a model of self in which (adapting Lacan), the Imaginary and Real realms become confused. The Self constructed in Western modernity in Kristevan terms is a cultural merger of the Imaginary and the Real. This individualization is put into binary opposition with the Symbolic, rather than the

three realms finding a healthier relational balance. Instead of the Symbolic being a connector of sorts by which the Self relates to the Other in shaping a relational identity, the Symbolic becomes subservient to the Self, as an instrumentalized vehicle for manipulating and objectifying the Other. A resulting extreme individualism and binarization of Self and Other then ironically in turn falls prey to what Shoshana Zuboff calls "instrumentarianism": A kind of totalitarianism 2.0 by which the isolated individual ends up becoming merely data for manipulation by the virtual reality of Solzhenitsyn's "permanent lie" via digital and visual technology. This comes to pass because the intensified individual intends to use technology for self-assertion but in turn becomes subsumed in the virtual individualism of the technological itself, according to Zuboff, an AI Big Brother reality in effect. The subject-self thus ends up flipped into the virtual Big Brother as its beloved virtual companion or alter ego—a kind of demonic Alexa or Siri. We'll start in unpacking this by considering Big Brother as an icon or symbolic stand-in for Orwell's idea of doublethink, which encompasses the merging of the self into the imaginary of a systemic ontology of control.

"Oceania Had Always Been at War with Eastasia": Double-think and Erasure in the "Permanent Lie"

Winston was left flabbergasted by the ingenuity and deception of the Party, yet impressed, as if any Party decision could have elicited the slightest emotion in him. The Party directive was clear: "Oceania was at war with Eastasia: Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia. A large part of the political literature of five years was now completely obsolete" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 80). Thrust into practical usage through habitual war propaganda that infiltrated the collective mind of Oceania, Orwell's "doublethink" as a fictional imaging of Solzhenitsyn's "permanent lie" allowed the isolated individual to fall prey to the mass.

Given Winston's occupation as an official alterer of historical records per the latest Party directive, the decision was guaranteed reality. From this point forward – or at least until the Party decided otherwise – Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia and any references to the contrary would be destroyed, forever lost to a perverted sense of history and expunged from the collective memory of citizens. To ensure compliance in the Party orders, Big Brother, as is known, was "always watching", telescreens eager to discern the slightest error in speech or thought that would be the demise of an unlucky individual. As the official rhetoric continually changed, a mistake was all but guaranteed. Winston remarks that Party members would "unquestionably have torn (Eurasian prisoners) to pieces" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 80) before the narrative from the Party changed and the prisoners held captive are no longer the enemy but the ally. Prisoners would soon be exchanged without so much as a passing admission of a change in military tactics, only an acceptance that Eastasia was the enemy. Eastasia had always been the enemy. The official directive told them as much and nothing existed to the contrary. A memory becomes a collective identity enforced by technology, with Big Brother as the hyper-individual of the new Self.

Returning to Kristeva, her psychological discussion of the Holy Trinity, as an archetypal marker of ultimate reality traditionally in shaping Western psychology, provides a point of reference for analysis of the virtual reality of Orwell's Party as representing larger totalitarian thought. Developments in Western trinitarian theology explored by Kristeva's analysis express the seed of totalitarianism in the early development of Western individualistic psychology. Traditional Christian belief grounding ideas of respect for human dignity stemmed from the teaching that man is made in the image of God. Kristeva considered the Holy Trinity and the distinct entities of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in terms of self as "the Son lowers

himself to our level" (*Black Sun* 208) and the Holy Spirit is "the image of God within us" (209). Such a principle guides believers around the world but creates contention in the inner psychology of the totalitarian ruler as the system's avatar or image comes to see themselves as a replacement deity.

But she also paralleled the Trinity as an archetype with the Lacanian triune elements of formation of the self, the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. The child in this model becomes self-conscious by entering the Imaginary or mirror stage, and then enters into language in the Symbolic. Kristeva argued that historically changes in doctrine of the Trinity in the Middle Ages, adopted by Catholics and then Protestants, encouraged a more individualistic view of self in Eurocentric cultures. She found this represented in the emergence of the importance of the individual Pope and of monarchs by divine rights. Later it could be extended to the self-reliance of the individual Protestant as interpreter of Scripture and practitioner of what Max Weber called the Protestant work ethic. The specific symptomatic change in doctrine highlighted by Kristeva as archetypal in the West was the development of a teaching, known as the *filioque*, that the Father and the Son together were originators of the Holy Spirit, contrary to earlier Christian doctrine still current outside of Europe. Taking her archetypal psychological model, this involved a merging of the realms of the Real and the Imaginary into a unity, in opposition to the Symbolic realm, which became subordinate to that new individuality.

Thus, to follow Kristeva's discussion of historical archetypes, the typology of the Holy Spirit as distinct from a materialistic system becomes subsumed as an instrument of meaning by the all-consuming systemic avatar or pattern of individual, by the twentieth century symbolized by the fictional Big Brother. The extreme development of this Western individualism became posited by Arendt as the source for both the atomization that enabled the rise of classic

totalitarianism, and the technological approach to nature and society that empowered that rise in the last century, as the symbolic realm becomes full a tool of individual assertation of power.

The latter process is the basis for what the technology scholar Shoshana Zuboff termed a trajectory toward "instrumentarianism" in the modern West, which in her view has become a kind of twenty-first century digital totalitarianism 2.0. In co-opting or banning organized religion only to replace it with a systemic virtual reality, new systems according to Zuboff involve an immersive psychological probing that mines the individual for profitable data for elites. The Party in *Nineteen-Eighty Four* operates as a figure for this process in pre-digital days. In Orwell's novel, Big Brother functions as replacement for the church, the head without a body that subsumes the self in totalitarian ideology. A sense of culture outside of Big Brother and Party support is largely irrelevant as entertainment ranges from war propaganda to public execution. Solzehenitsyn's fellow dissident writer Igor Sharafevich states, "human individuality finds its greatest support and its highest appreciation in religion" (Shafarevich 297) and as a ruling technocratic system evolves a quasi-religious role, Zuboff argues that a constant participation in networks of corporations and state security functions emerges in digital realms. If an individual is to believe in the presence of a higher power above the system, this must be conducted carefully and in private, irrelevantly to the technocracy's erasure of it, for "it is a jealous system," to paraphrase the Bible. Orwell prefigured all this in telescreens, Newspeak, spy copters and hate-inducing film sessions, but its apotheosis was Big Brother.

Big Brother's omnipresent avatarship provides a personification of Kristeva's theory of the confusion of the Real and the Imaginary in Western individualism, through the censoring of language proper and the development of Newspeak as a new language not allowing alternative ideas, while forcing individuals to carefully select their words and thoughts to avoid detection.

Language functions as a life preserver of sorts, creating the antidote to atomization that totalitarianism encourages and ultimately demands, but also becomes instrumentalized for propaganda and shaping virtual reality of the system. Orwell's writing indicates his own troubles with language and totalitarianism. Through a careful stripping of language, Big Brother forces a lack of culture into Oceania, fostering a species of mindless individuals unable to effectively communicate and coexist. To adapt Kristeva, our obsession with conformist utilitarian language becomes akin to a fetish but one that is necessary to societal survival in the permanent lie. By denying citizens the full and basic right to adequate language, Big Brother denies healthy survival of Oceania as a society, forcing individuals to cling to the Party for any hope of peaceful coexistence. As a fictional avatar, Big Brother's language of mindless Newspeak, detailed in the appendix to Orwell's novel and mastered professionally for career success by an apathetic Winston, provides a warning to the media-obsessed 21st century, finding its news on Twitter and TikTok.

Big Brother and the Party apparatus form an interwoven virtual reality in promoting new and contradictory information in Orwell's novel. The change in sworn enemy from Eurasia to Eastasia comes during Hate Week, the annual procession of military dominance organized by the Party, sending its members into a fervent demonstration of blind patriotism and loyalty. Orwell describes the event in his most-militaristic vocabulary, "...the tramp of marching feet, the grinding of the caterpillars of tanks...the booming of guns" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 79). At the moment that mental vulnerability was at its highest, "when the great orgasm was quivering to its climax…" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 79), Big Brother thrust into action. It was then that the change was made to install Eastasia as the object of Party hatred. The intent filled the air, all that was needed was a target. The iron fist of Big Brother implied that demonstrations would be swapped

without delay. As Solzhenitsyn adds, “And if your idiot interlocutor said face to face that we were retreating to the Volga in order to decoy Hitler farther...it was necessary to agree” (*Gulag, Vol. 2,* 655). The power and scope of Big Brother worked in a similar manner, the Party apparatus was always surveilling its citizens, 24 hours a day, seven days of week, 365 days a year – it was inescapable. The threat of constant and total war, a complete fabrication dictated by the Party for control of its citizens, was complete. A similar scenario occurred as the sparks that would ignite into World War II flickered in Europe when Adolf Hitler and Jozef Stalin signed a “nonaggression pact” (McMeekin 85) in 1939. The two countries had shared hostilities for decades, seemingly ending years of hatred for shared territorial gain. In an Orwellian stroke, the enemy had become the ally with the stroke of a pen.

Complete fabrications may be a hallmark of the totalitarian society imagined by Solzhenitsyn but the mental impact of maintaining appearances under the threat of death is immense. As Solzhenitsyn explained, “But what of our central smatterers? Perfectly well aware of the shabbiness and flabbiness of the party lie and ridiculing it among themselves, they yet cynically repeat the lie with their very next breath…” (*Great Lie* 351). Such is the conundrum faced by individuals expressing the courage necessary to rebel against a totalitarian state. The act of rebellion can be methodical by necessity, if forced to pledge allegiance publicly while fomenting privately. Orwell exploits allegiances through the endless boomerang effect of ally versus enemy in the context of Eurasia and Eastasia, but then also deepens portrayal of the mental impact fictionally in the personal life of Winston: He loves Julia, then he hates Julia and loves Big Brother instead. It is in the relationship of author and reader of the novel that potential for resistance and escape unfolds, either preventatively or in terms of creative foresight.

Orwell was forced to become the living embodiment of Winston Smith in hopes of disseminating his exposé of war atrocities, first as an essay writer and then as a novelist. Given the adamancy of the English press to present a pro-Communist leaning, his desired publications were considered too radical. As a result, Orwell was excommunicated from his publisher Victor Gollancz, "though not a word of it [his book account] was written yet" (*CEJL*, Vol. 1, 279). Much like Winston lives between the dual narratives of the permanent lie in his conscience at all times lest they slip from his memory, Orwell was forced to risk his professional livelihood in hopes of exposing the truth to which he held but which was in opposition to most of the writers in the literary circles in which he moved. He had to keep his memories and manuscripts of true events while crafting a narrative that would be suitable for mass publication. Orwell was left unable to share widely his first-hand account of the front lines, given pro-Communist fervor accommodated and in some respects, strengthened, by the British government. A growing sentiment in favor of Soviet efforts had created a simple real-world version of Big Brother for Orwell to venerate, as "Popular Front-style agitprop still provided fertile ground for the recruitment of Soviet spies" (McMeekin 51). Perhaps no better example exists to personify the degree to which Communist ideologies infiltrated Britain than through the Cambridge Five[1], a group of intellectuals cut from the same philosophical cloth as Orwell. Educated at the most prestigious of British boarding schools and universities, the allure of spies proved too great.

Years later, Orwell drew on his personal difficulties in discussing free thought to craft the symbolic Winston Smith, who proved a more enduring contribution to totalitarian studies than Orwell's journalism. Slightly autobiographical in character background, Winston knew,

[1] The Cambridge Five was the unofficial name given to a group of Soviet spies of British origin, active between the 1930s and 1950s, recruited while studying at the University of Cambridge. Consisting of Donald Maclean, Guy Burgess, Harold Philby, Anthony Blunt and John Cairncross, none of the members were officially charged.

somewhere deep in the recesses of his mind, surely, that the official Party doctrine that changed by the minute was inherently disingenuous and evil but he dare not speak those words. Arendt describes this with her concept of the "banality of evil" (*Eichmann* 201). Arendt states that there is an "obvious banality of an assumed human wickedness" (*Origins* 185) – that the idea of human's propensity for wrongdoing is a fatigued disconnection of mind and body, a willful denial or at "best" a double life.

Among Arendt's subjects for study, Adolf Eichmann[2] stood out as responsible for mass deportation to concentration camps under the Nazi regime, leading to the blood of millions on his hands. (*Eichmann* 95) But Arendt remarks that Eichmann was disconnected from the reality of his crimes, in effect a mindless machine performing his civic duty, without any regard or pause for the ramifications of his actions. The "permanent lie" operates in the same manner. The permanent lie did not grow from a conscious decision on the part of the oppressed to rebel against their captors but rather as a forced necessity for superficial public conformity in a society that prohibits dissent.

Like the Soviet leadership**,** the Party and the institution of Big Brother exhibit blindness to the horrors of their actions. Given the blind party devotion requisite to survival in Oceania, citizens lose sight of the overarching fight in addition to the enemy. As Orwell states, "The horrible thing about the Two-Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible not to join in" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 8). A general nonchalance to crime from the aforementioned Party leads to an utter disregard for conscience. As Orwell implies, Party members are swept into the pageantry and inclusion that the Two Minutes Hate provides rather than stopping to consider actions. Given that the Two Minutes Hate is a daily occurrence and the

[2] Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) was a Senior Assault-Unit Leader in the Nazi Party, credited as one of the main organizers of the Holocaust. Eichmann was captured, tried and executed for his involvement.

target changes nearly as frequently, war remains constant and self-sustaining and the Party can remain blind, knowing that a willing lapdog is ever at the ready.

The censoring of accepted thought patterns creates doublethink by design as the mind is troubled by contradictions. In a democratic society, namely the pre-digital United States, Arendt notes, "...the only person likely to be a victim of complete manipulation is the President of the United States" (*Crises*, 19). Arendt attributes this to a glut of perpetual advisors who "exercise their power chiefly by filtering the information that reaches the President and by interpreting the outside world for him" (19). Winston operates in this manner at the order of the Party, controlling the information to the masses and effectively interpreting the information in an easily-absorbed format, discouraging intelligent and free thought. Again, fictional characterization condenses and intensifies the ability of the reader to grasp the problem in personified form.

Meanwhile Winston considers his mind to be the lone area where he can exert the slightest hegemony over the Party. Through lengthy diatribes against his forced daily existence bordering on the cruelest monotony, Winston struggles to recall the minutiae of life prior to the Party's rule. It is in these fleeting remembrances that Winston finds the closest approximation of freedom. For Winston, victory is not to be found in submission to the Party but in a firm and unyielding resistance. In this sense, Winston echoes Solzhenitsyn's thoughts. The most difficult element of the permanent lie stands in its continual application as societal and political pressures mount. In the mind of Solzhenitsyn, this is effected through "a selection of ready-made lies" (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 654) It is an "all is well" signal when trapped in chaos, for the sole purpose of maintaining appearances, of implied devotion to the cause.

One of the most-infamous examples of "ready-made lies" comes from a photograph, culled from the ironically-named Soviet "Great Purge". The photo in question is that of Stalin and NKVD[3] Head Nikolai Yezhov posing by the Moscow Canal. The moment seems innocent enough but would later serve as a chilling reminder of *nonpersons* as the photo was doctored to remove Yezhov as he was usurped in the Soviet police ranks and later executed. Thus edited, the photo holds an air of paranormality, a clear admission of the missing person and Yezhov's fate. Paralleling this in Orwell's fiction, the last mention of Winston's neighbor Parsons, the slightly-aloof model Party representative in *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, involves a half-hearted presumption of guilt after he vanished, such is the danger of "thoughtcrime." He was turned in by his own children for allegedly harboring criticisms of the system, a fate also common in the Soviet Union.

Orwell does not place Parsons in a position to rebel but rather to submit to the accusations, confessing his guilt despite his overall role as a cheerleader for the Party in Winston's world. It feels rather nihilistic but instead of swearing allegiance to the Party in a perhaps-futile attempt at sparing his life, Parsons exhibits a joviality at his capture. He is perhaps the ideal example of an individual fully committed to the "permanent lie" even unto death. Loyal to the Party without fault, Parsons willingly acquiesces to any demands on his freedoms, time and family life, replacing love and devotion to his family with love and devotion for Big Brother. Then he vanished away to assume death for the avatar of the system. The character serves as exemplar of complete adherence to a totalitarian state, falling beyond the confines of the

[3] Russian-language acronym (Naródnyy komissariát vnútrennikh del) for the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, the Interior Ministry of the Soviet Union. It was the flagship police of the internal security efforts most infamous for the Gulag prison system. Gulag was a Russian-language acronym for Glávnoje upravlénije lageréj, the Soviet Union government agency responsible for the system of forced labor camps used to house and prosecute actual or suspected political dissidents. Solzhenitsyn uses the term as a synonym for the camps themselves, a method that has been popularized as a result.

Permanent Lie to blatant worship. To that end, Solzhenitsyn remarks that home was no protection against the permanent lie, for parents would subscribe to it there to protect themselves against accusation from their children, and to protect their children against harm to their careers or worse if they grew up with non-conforming beliefs. He concludes that "The choice was such that you would rather not have any children." (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 655)

Orwell drew inspiration for his novel in part from the same Soviet regime, which provides a fitting backdrop for the Ministry of Truth. With a dash of sadistic irony, Winston labors – physically and mentally – altering historical documents to match the thorough mental gymnastics routine of Party rhetoric. In a harbinger of the fate realized by many of his colleagues lured away from Party doctrine, Winston is left to alter a newspaper to reflect the disappearance of a person. "He unrolled the message that he had set aside earlier. It ran [in official Newspeak]: 'times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusungood refs unpersons rewrite fullwise upsub antefilling." (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 17) As Orwell explains in plain English, the order relayed that a person existed and was executed, requiring his erasure from the official record. As the official record is the only accepted doctrine in Party-controlled Oceania, for all intents and purposes, the individual no longer exists. In the act of altering a record as such, Winston is forced to actively engage in doublethink with the original document and the altered copy occupying his mental faculties simultaneously. And to return to the unfortunate example of a real-life victim, Solzhenitsyn wonders aloud on Orwell's influence in crafting Nineteen-Eighty Four, "...what was his model if not the Soviet intelligentsia of the 1930s and 40s?" (*Smatterers*, 352)

In removing individuals from existence, the Party (in fact and fiction) had one goal in mind – to silence dissenting opinions. As the scholar of totalitarianism Waldimar Gurien writes,

a main goal of totalitarian societies is a “reshaping of the nature of man and society.” (*Religion,* 4) The IngSoc Party sought to carefully eliminate individuals with the gall to differ from the notion of an omniscient Big Brother. By complete erasure from existence, the Party could gain control over one’s mind. This is the crucial dilemma facing Winston in the scope of the “permanent lie – a need to allow memories to flicker deep within his mental recesses while maintaining a sense of duty to the Party for his survival. As Orwell continues, “One never had the smallest clue as to what had happened to them. In some cases, they may not even be dead.” (*Nineteen-Eighty Four,* 21) Winston is actively working to create an alternate reality for the Party while clinging to what he believes to be the accurate historical version of events, one that he acknowledges he may be alone in holding.

Through a continual and complete alteration of history, the Party is not only able to force the “permanent lie" on the citizens of Oceania but to continually change the parameters of the opposing viewpoints that constitute the Lie. To sift through the haphazard dichotomy, Winston turns to his diary despite the act of writing – as an example of free expression – being strictly forbidden, As scholar Lillian Feder writes, “...Winston Smith is not yet conscious of the exact nature of the most serious crime he is committing against the State of Oceania – the use of language in the act of self-creation.” (Feder 392) Through the decision to write and the content itself, Winston demonstrates the courage necessary to reject the “permanent lie" when the alternative becomes wholly undesirable. Winston is effectively offering a continuation of his job in reverse, attempting to alter the official record of his memory by creating physical evidence of his true thoughts toward Big Brother. Conceptualizing his hurried scrawl as a release of the mental strain of the “permanent lie”, Winston’s writing as a cathartic therapy outweighs any potential harm. Winston uses what he terms “a revolutionary act” to denounce Big Brother,

showing little regard for his personal safety, choosing instead to attempt a betrayal with no mind to potential cost. He is attempting to create a new reality for himself, free from the shackles of the "permanent lie" and the constant Eurasia vs. Eastasia war debate that pervades Oceania throughout the timeframe of the novel. However he seems unable to free himself from the same processes that form the society at large, seeking his own counter-avatar to the avatar of Big Brother given his own stolen personal history, seeking to ally himself with an opposition that is fake, and being unable to find grounding for a permanent relationship with Julia in the all-immersive system of control by the regime.

Zuboff's more-recent journalistic study has added a deeper technological wrinkle to totalitarian studies, fitting for the 21st century. Zuboff explains that instrumentarian power reduces "human persons to the mere animal condition of behavior shorn of reflective meaning." (412) In other words, instrumentarianism conditions individuals to forgo the capacity to resist by categorizing individuals by their most base instinct in following a group. Solzhenitsyn indicates earlier political roots for this in how citizens juggling the "permanent lie" needed to show great restraint so as "not to contradict the general, common lie." (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 654) To do so in a current-day technocratic environment would mean ostracization from the common group formed by instrumentarianism. It is a balancing act of the highest stakes, a real-life tightrope walk without a safety net. Every word, sentence or facial expression is subject to intense scrutiny and could land an individual in Gulag or to a loss of existence. Or in Orwellian fictional terms, *facecrime (Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 29). Orwell uses the theory of facecrime as an example of the Party's unending control over every aspect of one's life. An individual can hold two opposing thoughts in their mind simultaneously but to hold two opposing facial expressions – a smile and a frown, perhaps – is much more difficult. Winston's resistance in light of the atomized society

in which he finds himself causes him to cling to the relative safety of Big Brother as his existence and Big Brother become an inseparable entity. Facial recognition technology today only exacerbates the concerns previously raised by Orwell.

Orwell's storytelling demonstrates the consequence of the permanent lie to readers on a personal level, transforming the novel from pure fiction to potentially condensed reality. For example**, a**s a frantic Winston and Julia attempt to converse in the crowded town square, a convoy of prisoners threaten to undermine the official IngSoc Party line were someone able to recognize it. But the Party effectively suppresses previous memory to the degree that Eastasian prisoners passing through do not faze Winston or Julia beyond a passing mention despite the fact that those prisoners were immediate former allies of their country (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 16) In a sense, Winston and Julia function as free-range prisoners, psychologically and romantically as the continually-shifting Party rhetoric forces them to constantly swear allegiances to the Party and to themselves with the ever-present possibility that they could become enemies if Party rhetoric demanded it. While Oceania is officially at war with Eastasia, an argument can be made for each individual continually waging a war within themselves while forced to change sides to demonstrate the power of the system.

The idea of the "permanent lie" and the unstable self, personified in Orwell's use of Winston Smith as a conduit for revolutionary tendencies in his vision of totalitarianism, puts flesh on the idea of atomization as considered by Arendt. At the essence of Arendt's philosophy is an idea of group association. As Arendt writes, "...men in the midst of communal disintegration and societal atomization wanted to belong at any price." (*Origins,* 270) As the ramifications of daily life decisions grow, the need for a proverbial security blanket increases in turn. The end result may be the same – such is the ever-present fear in a totalitarian society – but

group association allows for the illusion of security to quell the mind if nothing else. Mental exercise is commonly seen during potential revolt for that very reason. In the Spanish Civil War, ideological group associations of atomized people seemed to prove decisive. Orwell alludes to this in discussing the Spanish Civil War, stating "...if the Government had waited until it had trained troops at its disposal, Franco would never have been resisted." (*Homage*, 28) because of the speed of powerful group associations. The attraction of group association serves to explain why Winston and later, Julia, seek a romantic life with the proles, free from the mind control and inconsistent rhetoric of Big Brother. There is a duopoly of atomization and group association at work – a willing atomization from the Party in favor of hopeful acceptance from the ironically-deemed ignorant masses. But as Arendt argues, "The truth is that the masses grew out of the fragments of a highly atomized society…" (O*rigins*, 362). Continual chaos is thus required to advance the atomized individualistic group mentality. A type of group warfare ensues among the generally-atomized groups seeking larger membership and leads to a Big Brother scenario and perpetual war. Those that survive are not necessarily the strongest but the most willing to morph into mass formation. But Desmet indicates this can occur through an attempted break from the rhetoric espoused by the State leading to "unvented aggression…still looking for a target" (Desmet 118) and societal infighting that makes Orwell's novel continually relevant today. Winston is willing to risk permanent ostracization and possible death to subvert the will of the Party but ends up loving Big Brother.

Arendt adds that "totalitarian movements depended less on the structurelessness of a mass society than on the specific conditions of an atomized and individualized mass" (*Origins*, 363). This is clearly demonstrated in Orwell's novel. The Party members are far from lacking structure, rather every aspect of their daily life is subject to rigorous structure, none more evident

than a belief in the Lie. Winston is seemingly the last bastion of a structureless society, willing to question the official Party mathematics of two plus two equalling five or the inconsistent application of military tactics.

Winston is quite clear in his conceptualization that freedom is not the freedom to assert individual rights but to state truth in the face of the "permanent lie", rather than assert the lie of perpetual war of all against all to justify the totalitarian state (*Origins* 202). In a modern neoliberal society, freedom is conceptualized as self-assertion. Winston is devoted to truth as an individual on the fringes of society to start and has a conscious realization that personal freedom can be a way to revolt, remarking that there must be others in the mythical Brotherhood against whom the Party is in a continual war, fabricated or otherwise. In the eyes of the Party, freedom is "savage and unorganized" (Zamyatin, 13) to quote totalitarian author Yevgeny Zamyatin. Big Brother demands complete allegiance, physically, mentally and philosophically under the guise that free expression is dangerous. But Winston is still also himself immersed in the "permanent lie", causing him to consider his personal devotion to truth to be philosophical crimes in the name of freedom, and finding the opposition group to be managed by the same people as IngSoc. With the concept of freedom no longer existing in Oceania and thus based on the isolated individual, it is hard to break free of the system. Returning to Zamyatin, "When man's freedom equals zero, he commits no crimes." (35) But the innocent standing of the Party adherents begets a false sense of security, trapped in a rather-delusionary state of subservience. Holding onto the "permanent lie", Winston is willing to commit philosophical crimes in the name of freedom, but in accepting the definition of them as crimes, he is supporting his own atomized state, a paradoxical concept that Orwell's fiction is well-adapted to demonstrate experientially for the reader.

"...the worst thing in the world happens to be rats": The Face of Terror in Resisting Nobody

Winston Smith was experiencing his worst fear in all the world – a literal face-to-face encounter with ravenous rats, eagerly awaiting the command to eviscerate his flesh – or so he was told. Time to renege was short. In that instant, the only viable option was to acquiesce. But still the urge for the literal unthinkable remained in his mind: "To think, to think, even with a split-second left – was the only hope" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 126). Whether there were physical rats awaiting Winston's demise or if gnashing teeth and foaming mouths were simply exacerbating his fear beyond the possibility of maintaining clear thought is irrelevant. Room 101[4] had completed its goal in the eyes of the Party, reducing its subjects to nothing more than a pliable cog of the regime, willing to transform into the greatest advocate of totalitarianism if only their lives could temporarily be spared. But as Winston later realized mid-epiphany, no one simply survives the ordeal. Either the mind or the body is permanently altered as a result of mental or physical torture. Such is the end result. Without a concrete leader to condemn, the situation only worsens.

In classic totalitarianism, a concrete leader is seeking the final result and complete control of the general populace. However, Arendt notes that a fatal flaw of totalitarian movements is the ephemeral nature of their leadership. Arendt continues that the goal of complete control contributes to the downfall of totalitarian movements as the ideology functions through the creation of "a state of permanent instability" (*Origins* 434). To create permanent instability, there can be no concrete laws or institutions that lead to a self-sustaining society. To achieve that aim, "the totalitarian ruler must, at any price, prevent normalization from reaching the point where a

[4] Torture chamber used by the Party in *Nineteen-Eighty Four* to induce confessions from Party members suspected of committing crimes. Mere mention of Room 101 in the novel elicits cries of terror from Winston, Parsons and others.

new way of life could develop" (436). If the oppressed population catches a glimpse of an alternative, that may only increase the possibility of a rebellion. In terms of Big Brother, the Party and by extension, the application of the ruling ideology, the all-important end goal for society is left at the whim of a haphazard group of disciples around a figure who may not really exist, at least as presented.

Arendt terms this disconnected form of rule as "Rule by Nobody", defining the concept as "an intricate system of bureaus in which no men, neither one nor the best, neither the few nor the many, can be held responsible…" (*Crises* 148). Rule by Nobody is a scenario in which each individual answers to another while the whole is cloaked as an opaque system, removing any sense of accountability under the guise of an order from above, leaving those removed from the very top of government to rule without any thought as to the potential ramifications. To return to the example of Eichmann, he believed that he was acting from a sense of moral duty, simply following orders from his superiors. As such, he was blinded from the conscious thought of his actions. If there is no one willing or able to answer to atrocities committed, how can the oppressed formulate an element of resistance? Therein lies the difficulty. Arendt notes that "Rule by Nobody is clearly the most tyrannical of all, since there is no one left who could even be asked to answer for what is being done." (*Crises,* 148) Rule by Nobody breeds a system of surrogate leaders, exerting power that they may not truly possess. With the Rule by Nobody environment of technocracy operating "just beyond the threshold of human awareness" (Zuboff 446), the possibility of the system, in whichever form it takes, exerting psychological power it does not physically possess could become permanent. It is systemic power.

As individuals become accustomed to living their lives in accordance with the agreed lie disseminated by the system, it absorbs both opposition and the ruler as one, in effect claiming to

function as a kind of uber-Self, exemplified in Big Brother. In Orwell's novel, Winston allocates much mental effort to a determination of the existence of the mysterious "Brotherhood", a secret group of truth-seeking individuals aiming to overthrow the Party. (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 86) But it is a mirage that seems to be as much a part of the system ultimately as the ruling Party. The existence of the Brotherhood is never truly confirmed. However, Winston and those underground individuals longing for an existence free from Party control cling to the hope of such an organization. Likewise, the existence of Big Brother is never revealed yet those with a firm belief in the moral righteousness of the Party cling to a deified version of Big Brother. They know only as much as is needed to secure their support in the Party. Adolf Eichmann as chronicled by Arendt operated in the same sense with his loyalty to the Nazi regime, explaining while on trial for atrocities of war that "he had never been told more than he needed to know in order to perform a specific, limited job" (*Eichmann*, 77). With followers and dissenters trapped together in a web of disinformation, the keeper of the goal is ambiguous, perhaps by design. As such, perhaps O'Brien – Winston's supposed-confidant-turned-captor – misspeaks as he states, "In your case – the worst thing in the world – happens to be rats." (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 125) Rats are little but a physical manifestation of the true horror that Winston experiences. O'Brien held no true power, acting as a representative of Party doctrine, left mentally numb by strict adherence to that doctrine. Totalitarianism strips a sense of inner control from individuals, leaving them to grasp at the metaphorical straw of ruling party control. In this the symbolism of the rats threatening Winston's face can be significant, for as Emmanuel Levinas noted famously, it is the "face" or sense of person-to-person encounter that staves off totalitarian objectification, but the removal of the face encourages objectification of people as data, in the way that Zuboff details. (Bergo)

Misdirected terror and lack of control felt by the oppressed population under Rule by Nobody is complete in the sense that the exact nature of its physical manifestation is irrelevant, only that it exists. While Orwell makes a habit in his writing of returning to "rats" as an object of torture, it serves as a reflection of his conceptualization of torture. The inclusion of rats as Winston's primary fear allowed Orwell to draw on reminiscences about his own childhood, with family gatherings in Suffolk overrun with the creatures. In an attempt to rid his family and himself of the ordeal, Orwell purchased a large rat-trap and turned the incident into sport: "It is rather good sport to catch a rat and let it out and shoot it as it runs" (*Crick*, 69). The rat represented foreign intrusion on a proper world of order for the burgeoning Orwell, a pupil of boarding schools and fanatic of classic literature. As such, Orwell incorporated rats in a cage ready to escape as a detachment from reality for Winston, a different type of fear and anticipation out of his control. As systemic Rule by Nobody allows everyone and no one simultaneously to detach themselves from their actions and assume a position of power relative to the rest of society, its application differs. As Solzhenitsyn adds, "Some of them brought about their neighbors' arrest out of fear...Others did it for material gain...And still others...it was considered a service to one's class to expose the enemy!" (*Gulag, Vol. 2*, 650) Rather than a traditional ruling society targeting a specific group based on ideological, political or other concern, the difficulty of combating totalitarianism stems from a moving target. Under Rule by Nobody, an individual may not be considered a threat by nine of 10 individuals removed from the moral consequence of actions by the system, but the 10th may be that person's downfall.

Rule by Nobody creates a scenario in which it is "impossible to localize the enemy and to identify the enemy." (*Crises*, 149) This was surely the case in *Nineteen-Eighty Four* and to an extent during the Spanish Civil War of Orwell's personal experience, given the detached fighting

sequences. If we are led to assume that a world without order descends into madness, where does this leave a totalitarian system in which there is Rule by Nobody? Totalitarianism as an ideology is self-fulfilling, a continual quest for increasing power through an ever-changing definition of "enemy" in the eyes of the totalitarian state. The reconstitution of the term "enemy" continues "until every single person in the entirety of the state found him or herself at risk of encapsulation within that insatiable and devouring net." (*Gulag*, xv) Rather than the dictator or totalitarian leader giving the order to attack a said group and focus all efforts on the extermination or ostracization thereof, the order is an already-in-place assumption of applied ideology. An individual is constantly under threat of death or isolation as the pendulum of applied rule can move in any direction. Igor Shafarevich suggested the heart of modern totalitarian culture is mental illness, a drive toward self-destruction (Shafarevich 303).

In a corollary to Arendt's Rule by Nobody, Solzhenitsyn describes the social attitude regarding betrayal in the Gulag as a "cancer of the soul". (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 651) The possibility of the slightest indiscretion becoming one's greatest downfall was ever-present and as such, the desire to implicate anyone possible was prevalent. Without overt ideological framework, the true horrible intent was bastardized as it passes from individual to individual, and Rule by Nobody can attract anyone detached from the slightest sense of their reality, into its "banality of evil." Solzhenitsyn's "permanent lie" implies a clear fission from reality, necessary for a fleeting hope of survival, a safety mechanism that however allows for the normalization of potential insanity. Under Rule by Nobody as the official regime establishing such a virtual reality and collective identity of a system as an autonomous self, sight of reality versus fiction and any sense of an ultimate purpose to life apart from the system disappears. Orwell is influenced by this notion in his historical allegory *Animal Farm*, closing the novella with the line "The creatures outside

looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to tell which was which." (*Animal Farm,* 150) With the ruling-class animals detached from any groundedness and order, society devolves into chaos.

Orwell's native England suffered through a period of relative terroristic "Rule by Nobody" at the onset of World War I, a time during which "Orwell found his model for totalitarianism," (Rose 30). While Orwell was well-read from a young age, it is likely through continual reflection on his childhood that he discerned the impact of the early stages of the First World War on what would later become *Nineteen-Eighty Four*. The Defence of the Realm Act[5] (1914) was passed by the British Parliament with the intention of focusing all materials and efforts on the impending fight, given that the United Kingdom had only days earlier entered the War. The Act was interpreted to allow for imprisonment without cause and mass censorship under the guise of positive war efforts, together with economic centralization that impinged heavily on personal life. Echoes of the Act's influence on the mature writer and man responsible for *Nineteen-Eighty Four* are seen in the fictional Ingsoc Party's steadfast ban on luxury items, leaving Winston and other Party members to risk ostracization at best and their lives at worst to obtain items as simple as razor blades. Without a true government system to consistently enforce the law, London falls into complete tyranny in his novel. The state's appointed Thought Police continually monitor every second of existence for Party members, leaving citizens to strain for a brief moment out of the police's influence. But with no one head individual, the Thought Police are allowed free reign to prosecute as they see fit.

[5] The Defense of the Realm Act was passed to focus all resources, economic and social, on the efforts of World War I. It was interpreted to empower vast extra-judicial government powers.

The World War I English prototype of Rule by Nobody governance, reinforcing his experience of colonialism in Burma, had a profound impact on Orwell's political philosophy, strengthening his anti-totalitarian leanings with the clarity afforded by the possibility of free expression. But while Orwell welcomed a reprieve from the World War I-adopted cultural regulations, his subsequent experience in Spain and concerns about Communism as well as the administrative state into which he saw liberal democracy falling, only accelerated how he put his frustrations into pages. In *Nineteen-Eighty Four,* Winston and Julia were never allowed the level of thought required to express themselves freely and formulate a wholehearted revolution against the atrocities of the Party. As such, a desire to maintain loyalty to a concept of freedom and to the Party becomes their ultimate demise, perhaps most-concretely represented by Winston's cries - "Do it to Julia!...I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off. Strip her to the bones…" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four,* 360) Orwell experienced the psychological hold of a regime first-hand during a stint as a police officer in Burma, tasked with shooting an elephant to save the residents of a Burmese village. However, the task creates a mental quandary for Orwell, trapped between the task at hand and the imperialist leanings it suggests, as he remarks "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." (*Shooting*, 4)

Winston's urgent plea to transfer imminent torture to his previous paramour demonstrates Solzhenitsyn's idea of "survive at any price", which is a corollary of the permanent lie. Attempting to transform one's bleakly-hypothetical survival into reality in the GULAG required moral reimagining, describing eventual release from forced labor as a possibility that "shines like a rising sun" (*Gulag* 611). Surviving at any price requires a conscious discarding of the Golden Rule that might govern any psychological stasis of residual Christendom. Rather than elevating

the group above the individual, “survive at any price” by its nature eliminates the need for group mentality in favor of individual contentment in a base sense, like the creatures in *Animal Farm*. A sense of contentment is short-lived or nonexistent under this particular mentality, which can shift from Lacanian *jouissance* to the harsh reality of the slightly-delayed predicament akin to Kristeva’s thoughts on abjection, which lend themselves to an inner acceptance and forgiveness, but also in the instability of totalitarian culture tend toward psychological imbalance. (*Black Sun* 190)

Winston experiences this emotional instability during an horrific display of blind patriotism disguised as recreation in Oceania, a film serving as thinly-veiled propaganda for the Party. One of the few social activities allowed in Oceania for Party members, the film shows a reenactment of a ship bombing scene. The film elicits distinct reactions from the two groups in the audience as the Party members are “shouting with laughter when he sunk” (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 5) while the proles below are “shouting that they shouldn’t oughter have showed it not in front of the kids”. The two distinct reactions demonstrate the psychological response to rejecting the “permanent lie” versus willingly accepting it and losing one’s conscience. The proles have the ability to see the film for its true intent and content while the Party members are consumed by the propaganda and blind fervor. Rather than serving as a guiltless endeavor, tossed to the rubbish pile of one’s subconscious never to reemerge, Solzhenitsyn explains that the conscious choice to engage is, in effect, a permanent stain on one’s mind. Survive at any price is “the great divider of souls” (611).

Such is not a necessary price in either Solzhenitsyn's or Orwell’s view. The inner torment of an upper-middle class upbringing on Orwell’s psyche inspired the narrative portion of his novel, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and led to a lifelong interest in those from a perceived lower

social class. Orwell refuses to place a semblance of blame on the individuals he profiles, documenting their travails to shed light on their struggle. The Brooker family, subject of the opening pages of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, is simply looking to survive, but does not adopt a "survive at any price" stance. The remnants of traditional culture in their background seem resistant. Any negative element or relative torture is not seen as an obstacle to contentment or an opportunity to lament their very existence. They are not subject to Rule by Nobody to the extent of totalitarian subjects of Oceania or the Gulag.

Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* appreciates the isolationary tendency of his surroundings, loathing the traditional relationships that paradoxically would prevent an individual from regarding other human life as inherently disposable, the secret to the psychology of the system that he claims to despise. Winston would be an excellent representation of Arendt's theory of isolation in which she states that the "isolation of atomized individuals provides...the mass basis for totalitarian rule." (*Origins*, 452) His willingness to succumb to "survive at any price" stems not from an abject disdain for difference or a change of heart or faith regarding Julia but rather in the hopelessness that totalitarianism breeds. Much in the same manner that Orwell viewed involvement in World War II as unavoidable, Winston views his demise in the same light. He may resist for a short period of time but eventually his resolve will be exhausted. He becomes a surrogate lover to Big Brother and his identity enveloped by Rule by Nobody.

A shift in Winston's worldview highlights the impact that a system in which Rule by Nobody gains hold can have on an individual's mental faculties. Winston's frustration lies with individuals blind to the destruction of language and society allowed by the methodical march of the Party's influence. As such, he states that "if there is any hope at all, it lies with the proles." (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 275) The proles as Orwell alludes are those free from the grasp and

influence of the Party, societal outcasts of little concern to individuals hellbent on forcing an ideology on those in their immediate purview. The proles have no need for a "survive at any price" ideology because they are not governed by the same psychological pressure. Yet as Winston discovers to his further disillusionment, the proles are part of the mass-formation state, in which the proles as the mob find an apathetic alliance with the elites, according to Arendt. (*Origins* 358)

For the elites, the horror of "survive at any price" lies in the momentary loss of moral standing that it allows. In that moment, an individual is effectively resisting nobody, disregarding the complete despondence of their situation to engage in a losing battle with their mind. There is no resistance once a "survive at any price" mentality has been assumed. Solzhenitsyn describes the mental anguish associated with the idea using the example of a fork in the road – "If you go to the right – you lose your life, and if you go to the left – you lose your conscience." (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 611) There is no mutually-agreeable outcome that benefits all. Either the state apparatus is successful in breaking an individual to the point of their mental or physical death or the individual rebels against the state and leads to the death of others.

Whether it is "the permanent lie" or its servant ethic of "survive at any price", the goal in the eyes of the State is mental disconcertion. Creating and encouraging mass confusion lessens the possibility of a revolt by preventing the group cohesion necessary for upheaval. In the words of Frantisek Miklosko, a Slovak underground Church leader and current influential politician, "we can't let them take away our small communities" (Dreher 169). Small groups of individuals devoted to a counter-revolutionary cause can effectively resist the mass formation that Desmet considers a hallmark of totalitarian philosophy and the ensuing regimes. Desmet categorizes mass formation theory as a type of groupthink which "is accompanied by an almost absolute loss

of rational thinking and the ability for critical thinking" (Desmet 113). Winston experiences this first-hand during the Hate Week activities mentioned earlier in this chapter. Winston is simultaneously appalled by the spectacle and unable to control his conscience to the degree necessary to prevent his participation. In that moment, Winston has become a part of mass formation. Winston is ruled by nobody, verbally attacking the mere image of Emmanuel Goldstein because his corporeal form has yet to materialize, encouraged by the rabid screams of his colleagues. As Winston discovers, with the classes who have access to media and education in this state of confusion, "the proles" are no source for resistance, but lulled into thoughtless living by the regime's technological control of culture. (*Nineteen-Eighty Four,* 83)

Through actions that require contemplative thought coupled with a system that denies it, the system forces individuals into a scenario of no escape. Winston, seeking a firm grasp on his survival, tries to reminisce on the quality of life before the Party assumed control over every second of every life but he fails miserably, his memories consisting purely of trivialities, memorized nursery rhymes. (*Nineteen-Eighty Four,* 79) With no concept of the reason for his existence, Winston is dehumanized, falling prey to a loss of the sanctity of life about which Solzhenitsyn warns for those willing to choose the loss of conscience over a loss of life (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 611) However, in doing so, Winston is left with a shadowed sense of self, unable to recognize Julia or his former self when pressed. Winston willingly disregards any potential trust in Julia outside of the purview of the Party for a sliver of future existence but he is left psychologically vacant. With no concrete entity on which to blame his suffering, Winston succumbs to the only realistic avenue forward: blind allegiance. There never was a chance for him and Julia to have any kind of relationship or family life in a traditional sense.

To elaborate on the Rule by Nobody and its replacement of personal relationships, Arendt turns to French philosopher Bertrand de Jouvenel who said that "a man feels himself more of a man when he is imposing himself and making others the instruments of his will" (*Crises* 146). When an individual is detached from the full scope and horror of their actions, the desire for imposition only serves to increase making the proverbial moral compass irrelevant. To refer back to Desmet, the root cause of a degradation in a moral compass and the ensuing nonchalance to one's actions stem from social atomization, described by Desmet as "a highly aversive and painful psychological state" that leads to striking out against others, such as Winston's final hatred for Julia (Desmet 119). To counteract this atomization, an individual longs for mutual companionship in any form. Arendt states that it is "the people's support that lends power to the institutions of a country" (*Crises* 151). Such an element of blind consent to government action can lead to distrust and mass formation. Attempting to gain a firm standing in a society governed by the confusion of Rule by Nobody, individuals turn to the permanent lie to conform and submit, seeking any group association possible. With an ideology rather than an individual against which to rebel, the permanent lie becomes ever-more crucial to the system and to those finding themselves in it, as resistance could materialize from anywhere at any time threatening the new self.

The Psychological Impact of "Only Material Results Matter" in Oceania

Winston cheered along with the rest of the Party as the figure of Goldstein washed over the telescreen and the collective conscience of all involved. In the Party's view, Goldstein was the singular impetus for the hatred of "difference" that pervaded Oceania and required complete subservience. Anyone sitting for the Two-Minutes Hate understood the implications of silence in such a matter. The risk of objection was too severe but all were living a lie in which the reaction

was all-important and perception was reality. Solzhenitsyn illuminates the idea through the anecdote of a conference in Moscow during which a tribute to Stalin was called. Standing to applaud Stalin "for three minutes, four minutes, five minutes…" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 70), the exercise was less a display of loyalty to Stalin and the Soviet Union and more a show of endurance with one's physical and mental wellbeing at stake. The first to stop was in fact executed. As Solzhenitsyn states, "who would dare be the first to stop?" (70). These scenes reflect the second related concept of Solzhenitsyn's theory, "only material results matter," in the sense of only appearances matter. The idea that the material ends justify the means, in everything from showing unity in publicity to industrial planning, provides a corollary to "survive at any price." Appearances are everything in the virtual self of Big Brother: Perception is reality.

Winston willingly subjected himself to the rigorous mental strain of the "permanent lie" but knew the truth somewhere deep within himself, expressed in his writing, paralleling Orwell's own calling. The "permanent lie" had established such a foothold on the collective memory of Party members that "[e]verything faded away into a shadow-world, in which, finally even the date of the year had become uncertain" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 19). Of course, knowledge of an existence before Party control could never be admitted to oneself, let alone shared freely. Doing so was in direct opposition to the all-encompassing will of the Party's application of "only material results matter." Individual liberties were discarded in favor of a horde of agreeable individuals devoid of expressed thought, only serving the mission of the ruling party. Serving the mission of the ruling party was crucial to survival. The prevailing rhetoric had to be observed or an individual could expect to cease to exist. Winston is harrowingly aware of this fact stating that "they'll shoot me, I don't care...they always shoot you in the back of the neck " (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 10). An individual is expected to observe Party rhetoric without concrete knowledge of the

truth, as service to the Party is the most righteous of all life's endeavors, and contributes to the material success of the society.

So life prior to totalitarian control exists in a mental vacuum, effectively lost to an ideological restructuring of history. As the writer about totalitarianism Rod Dreher observes, the atrocities committed under totalitarianism and similar ideologies can potentially repeat themselves as knowledge fades. In discussing the Butovo Shooting Ground in Moscow, a slaughter ground of mainly Christian dissidents by Communists, he notes, "The signs of the mass murder here have been preserved in granite for all to see. Yet if not for Father Kirill (Kaleda) visiting their classrooms to tell this story, the great-grandchildren of the murdered generation would have minds untroubled by the memory of mass murder" (124). By writing in his diary at great personal risk, Winston is attempting to keep the material result of torture and murder by the Party at the forefront of his conscience, as damaging as that may be to his psyche. The material result may only matter if individuals can not remember the immaterial aspects of relationships and communications and spirituality wrought out by history. The materialism negates any value to writing and memory. The reader is involved in the objection to totalitarianism through reading this study, an act that interweaves the material and immaterial.

Orwell's positioning of Winston as an individual straddling the line between Party compliance and freedom of expression reflects also Orwell's brief time as a political commentator for the state-connected British Broadcasting Company (BBC). His work involved little substance beyond propaganda pieces with Orwell remarking that the broadcasts "were intended to keep India in the clutches of the British nabobs" (Crick 285). No recordings of Orwell's broadcasts have survived but the experience molded his characterization of his main protagonist. In a letter to BBC Eastern Services Director L.F. Rushbrook Williams, Orwell

argued that his commentary "is only of value if I can...avoid mention of subjects on which I could not conscientiously agree with current government policy" (283). By assuming his position as interpreter and analyst of British affairs in India, Orwell believed his work would be influential and well-received, only to later remark that "his talents were mainly wasted" (281). The lack of a sufficient impact may have frustrated the author, left to broadcast under his pseudonym (not his real name Eric Blair) at the behest of his superiors, but the experience afforded Orwell a sustained view of political propaganda and censorship that influenced *Nineteen-Eighty Four*. Room 101 again was the name of the BBC conference room whose bureaucratic setting Orwell abhorred..

Succumbing to a forced professional ideology, that keeping British rule in India was the material result that only mattered in news commentary, angered Orwell, resulting in a resignation from his post in 1943 after two contentious years. The decision is of little surprise given his own thoughts on the matter of British involvement in the East Indies, elaborated in his essay, "Shooting an Elephant". Asked to save a Burmese village from a rogue elephant, Orwell posits that "I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys" (*Shooting* 6). The material result (a dead elephant) did not matter. Orwell was at best divided on the morality of British involvement and governance in the East Indies and at worst, repulsed by the notion. Orwell viewed his service policing Burmese citizens through the eyes of an illegitimate savior, rescuing individuals from the reign of a government to whom he had sworn allegiance, further complicating his sense of authority. The British government firmly stood behind a principle that "only material results matter", aiming to convert Burma into an ideological territory of Britain rather than simply a governmental one. At odds was Orwell who stated "For at that time, I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and

the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better" (3). Orwell was forced to hold the opposing views of a firm disgust for British colonialism and an outward-facing allegiance to his post simultaneously, which created a divided sense of self. Orwell's position was solely held from a sense of duty and as the patriotism behind the duty evaporated, so too did his psychological blinders. In his case, the audio writing propaganda from the BBC was in support of a material result that was illusorily abstract to that of imperial rule, for even the materialism of "only material results matter" in the end becomes an empty construct of an abstract state.

If the "material" in "only material results matter" is emphasized, its abstracted form could include both capitalism and communism, ideologies that Orwell rejected. Orwell's IngSoc Party in *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, while totalitarian as a whole, can also be used as an example of misguided imperialism in its rampant thirst for militaristic control leads to a disintegrating economy and a loosening grip on control of the oppressed masses. In Arendt's view, the bourgeoisie turns to imperialism "out of economic necessity; for it did not want to give up the capitalist system whose inherent law is constant economic growth" (*Origins* 170). The Party's adoption of imperialism in Orwell's usage is simultaneously figurative and realized, with Oceania's military fighting Eastasia, Eurasia and neither in a contradictory fashion. An insistence from the Party to restrict free trade among its members creates a deep chasm of economic inequality between the upper echelon and the common man, i.e. Winston.

The inequality is demonstrated through the great difficulties of the common Party man in procuring something as simple as a razor blade, considered illegal to own, with Winston adding, "At any given moment, there was some necessary article which the Party shops were unable to supply" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 23). This demonstrates the theatrical notion of "only material results matter", in the virtual nature of achieving goals that really revolve around control of

society. Thus there is a gap between support for the supposed practicality of the ideology and supply of personal goods, which marks also an incursion further on the personal lives of those in the system. Further complicating the issue is the normalization of said inequality in the mind of the common Party man for fear of repercussion, and the implicit guilt of knowing that one must turn to illegal markets for personal goods, potentially being a crime. The idea that "only material results matter" had been accepted into the cognitive fabric of the Party members. Said acceptance was essential as the Party members had become victims of ideological imperialism, knowing their thoughts only in the capacity of Party rhetoric. The Party members fell prey to one of Arendt's paths for imperialism as a precursor to totalitarian culture. In her view, once established, impersonalism evokes a "full awakening of the conquered people's national consciousness and to consequent rebellion against the conqueror, or to tyranny" (*Origins* 173). In the case of Oceania, it is virtually a self-tyranny of a totalitarian successor to old imperialist Britain. Party members are too entrenched in their isolation to form any meaningful relationships.

The impact of "only material results matter" is perhaps best seen in the series of Three-Year Plans disseminated by the Ingsoc Party, which reinforced the cyclical process of tension between isolated individualism and mass formation. The individual is simultaneously trapped and freed, seeking a sense of unique identity while aligning with the accepted view, i.e. the mass formation of the plans to mobilize social development, in order to survive. Winston must straddle this line and the immense and unrelenting mental strain that it causes. Orwell utilizes the tactic in reference to the Five-Year Plans instituted by the Stalin regime, in which the public end goal was ever-changing but the result was a growing source of power for the system. The events of Orwell's novel constitute the Ninth Three-Year Plan, an oxymoronic term in itself but one that

hardly commands a sideways glance from Party members, with the previous Plans allowing for the Party's rise in power and control. In this instance, the Ninth Three-Year Plan features economic forecasts which are "grossly wrong" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four,* 18), leaving Winston to complete his civic duty and rectify the error. To hearken back to Solzhenitsyn, the result is not in your favor if it can and will be altered as the regime sees fit. The State accomplishes this by combining atomization with the ever-present human need for connection. Offering a metaphorical hand to the atomized individual, the State breeds a collective ideology built on support for the regime, attracting supporters through what Desmet calls a "solidarity with the collective" (Desmet 119). As such, anyone willing to subvert the newly-formed collective is seen as "lacking solidarity and civic responsibility" (119). By dividing an already-divided group, the State can mold the outcome in any way it needs.

Winston had accepted the result disseminated by the Party, his conscience sullied by mental exhaustion and psychological torture. Despite his best attempts at sustained resistance, the totalitarian state had triumphed. In stark contrast to the individual vehemently opposed to Party doctrine months prior, Winston's resolve was shattered, with an exhausted "He loved Big Brother" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four,* 131) closing the novel. As far as the system is concerned, material results mattered and had been achieved in the absorption of Winston's identity. With any possibility of sustained rebellion nonexistent, Winston was left to find pleasure in the daily minutiae allowed by the Party for the rest of his existence, a psychological reckoning upon which Solzhenitsyn expounds. "You even begin to like carrying hand barrows with rubbish and discussing with your work mate how the movies influence literature" (*Gulag, Vol. 2,* 618). For Winston at the end of the novel, the daily aspects of life are inconsequential but the resignation that daily life under the all-encompassing watch of a totalitarian state will not improve could be

considered the final frontier for free thought, as Solzhenitsyn indicates. Rather than the continual desire to advance a slight possibility of freedom, individuals are left grasping for a distraction. The cinema provides such a distraction, an opiate for the masses trapped under totalitarianism, to escape their daily existence for a few hours. However, in Zuboff's eyes, the escape from the mental and physical rigor of totalitarianism comes at a psychological cost with the modern masses bombarded by the allure of technological screens. The explosion of mobile gaming, complete with individuals idly clicking away their rights and potential legal recourse, has turned their devices into virtual telescreens. With "points to represent progress…badges to represent achievements" (Zuboff 341), the mental escape effectively becomes a source for a psychological caste system in one's subconscious. Algorithms, tracking of location, caching of personal data, targeted advertising and information, all help to shape an individual's semiosphere or realm of meaning in accord with a technocratic-neoliberal system, according to Zuboff, not to mention the great driving online industry of cyberporn and its effects on relationships and distraction.

The previously mentioned example of the film of the refugee ship continues Solzhenitsyn's reference to totalitarian uses of cinema as representing also larger manipulations of media. Such programming provides a temporary reprieve from the relentless horror of life under a totalitarian regime but also further opportunity for control. While attending the showing of a Party propaganda film, Winston remarks that there was "one very good one of a ship full of refugees being bombed…" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 5). Demonstrating the stranglehold that the IngSoc Party has on the mental faculties of its members, Winston finds a striking catharsis in reliving the joy of a Party enemy being eliminated on screen. In this moment, the reader sees the emotional exhaustion at the heart of Winston's struggle. However, to infer this as a genuine love of the totalitarian reckoning which the Party demands is incorrect given his later musings,

seeking to overthrow the government entity with little regard to personal safety. However, to create the illusion of unyielding allegiance is of utmost importance, as the "material results" in the actual virtual reality of the system, the pursuit of which at all costs are so exhausting. Zuboff encapsulates this psychological phenomenon as the "behavioral modification" (*Surveillance*, 406) of Big Other. In Zuboff's view, Big Other's[6] "vast capabilities to produce instrumentarian power" necessitate said modification of one's actions and perhaps more importantly, the continual strain of adhering to a newly-formed false ideology, likely in opposition to the natural thoughts of an individual.

The accepted notion by modern society at large of governance by technocracy echoes Winston's closing thoughts on Big Brother. With the prevalence of social media, the illusion of actual governance while Rule by Nobody assumes control is an ever-present threat, Zuboff concludes, and "exiles us from our own behavior" (408). This can be seen in the oxymoronic immateriality of "only material results matter" when viewed today through the eyes of social media. Social media details a similar control of Rule by Nobody as Zuboff relates through an "only material results matter" approach that is material in effect and appearance, although it is at heart immaterial in the sense of being virtual, as in the "keeping up of appearances" central to classical totalitarian regimes. Expanding on the idea of behavioral modification, the threat of punishment from the very possibility of a governing agent on the other end of a computer screen forces a psychological shift, unaware of our own surroundings. Actions and thoughts are thus existing on two related yet vastly-different planes, akin to a sleepwalking individual or someone immersed in watching themselves with others on a Zoom screen meeting, for example. Separated

[6] Borrowing a phrase from Jacques Lacan, the Big Other can be defined as a perceived omniscient entity present in situations of authoritative power, i.e. totalitarianism. As the "Big Other" is meant to know all, the entity is seen as the moral authority on all matters and is deified as such.

from the convergence of their thoughts and actions as one, the individual is unable to react, just as Winston begins to doubt the sanctity of governance by Big Brother only to be foiled by his own disconnected nostalgia.

Zuboff's concept of instrumentarianism as in effect "totalitarianism 2.0" applies well to the classic totalitarianism in which Winston and his fellow Party members find themselves. Winston struggles to remember a life prior to Party control due to a continual influx of contradictory information, and regimes of the era sought also to abolish all reference to the previous administration, attempting to expunge it from the collective memory. As the 21st-century equivalent, instrumentarianism mimics classic totalitarianism by creating a "market of total certainty" in a paradox of self-fragmentation, experienced by the consumer as often psychically a kind of uncertain chaos (Zuboff 412), monitoring behavior in cyberspace, and as evidenced on social media, expelling those who do not fit the narrative of the ruling individual. By culling individual behavior into a box fit for mass consumption, instrumentarianism reduces humans to their "mere animal condition of behavior shorn of reflective meaning" (412). As an individual risks censorship for disagreeing with the prominent narrative, a society is established where no one is required to answer for their wrongdoing in the erasure of those who are different, all in the name of a more materially successful life defined today especially by comfort and safety.

Orwell could never have fully understood the lengths to which government surveillance would intrude upon every aspect of daily life in the 21st century but his thoughts endure as a worthy starting point to a discussion. Whereas Winston at least reasonably thinks that he can, to an extent, freely share his thoughts, provided he stays out of sight and range of the many telescreens in Oceania, 21st century tech-minded individuals cannot afford even that same

imagined luxury of private space. With the possibility of every conversation being not only recorded but accessible indefinitely, “you must strain every nerve and sinew to avoid general work” (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 617). The unceasing “strain” plausibly caused Winston to abandon his rebellious intent in the closing pages of Orwell’s novel. As Solzhenitsyn continues, the time comes to “reconcile yourself to general work” (617). By general work, Solzhenitsyn refers to the standard hard labor to which he and many others were sentenced. Solzhenitsyn has a strained view on the concept of general work but sees it as a form of subtle resistance – in Solzhenitsyn’s eyes if “torn skin on the hands” (617) and “a piece of bread which is smaller” than that of the guards (617), minimizes (relatively speaking) psychological damage for the prisoner, he is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice of giving up his life figuratively or literally if needed in the name of resistance. In a sense, the prisoner is then immune to the Rule by Nobody nature of camp life. At least manual labor does not involve open ideological struggle. However, the rationale for instrumentarianism of shaping the appearance of hyper-efficiency in life, and thus living by the virtual rule of “only materials results matter” has led to a life in cyberspace that has far less opportunities for “general work” than in Solzhenitsyn's experience of classic totalitarianism, and arguably more immersion in at least the propaganda contexts of ideological immersion.

In Solzhenitsyn’s view, the concepts of “survive at any price” and “only material results matter” are interconnected and dependent on one another and both support the mass formation of “the permanent lie” also detailed by Arendt and Desmet, in concert with the technological control of instrumentarianism noted by Zuboff. With individuals reduced to nothing more than the value of their work and physical contribution to the system, Solzhenitsyn states that “The result is what counts and the result is not in your favor” (*Gulag, Vol. 2,* 615). As the idea spreads,

hopelessness abounds and leaves a destitute population of absorbed individuals. When the material result of appearances in subjection to the system become not only paramount but the only outcome to ensure continued survival, an individual is left to choose their allegiance to the system, in what easily becomes not a real choice. This is the dilemma facing Winston as he debates whether to rebel against the Party or to simply abandon hope of a pleasant existence.

` Winston waged war against his own mind in a futile attempt to recall minute details of life prior to the reign of the Party. Such was the totality of incessant Hate Week processions and the watchful gaze of Big Brother that the collective memory of the Party members had been effectively expunged and replaced by unyielding loyalty. Whether one truly believed loyalty to Big Brother was morally just or reprehensible was irrelevant. Allowing oneself to consider the possibility of a desired result, freed from the imaginary shackles of Big Brother's influence, required a longing for the immaterial in hopes of reaching the material. In the phrase "only material results matter", a clear emphasis is rightly placed on "material", implying a tangible nature. But the self is eaten out. Rather than using an emotional quotient to measure the impact of a totalitarian system on previously-free individuals, the impact is measured with raw data, albeit data that itself becomes a conceptualization for control by the system within its own terms. In the context of material results from an outside-the-system perspective, the estimated 20 million dead under Stalin's watch (*Black Book* 8) lends a frame of reference for each individual studying the regime.

Complicating the issue of the "result" in Winston's mind is a strict adherence to a degradation of truth from the Party. Unable to separate truth from fiction, the material result that was to matter had become unclear. The Party has operated on a sliding scale of truth and the assumption that their "subjective fiction is reality" and a corresponding belief that their "reality

is superior to the fiction of others" (Desmet 81). With an ever-changing rhetoric, Winston was unable to assume the position of "model Party member" even if he desired as the very constitution of a model Party member is unclear outside of those who absorb every misguided announcement as Gospel. Such is the danger of the aforementioned "result" assuming a permanent position of utmost importance. As Winston discovered as countless others have, morality is nonexistent when the ruling Party's "result" is observed. With the result in direct opposition to free life and the slightest error viewed as egregious, individuals are resigned to long for any escape possible. Unable to separate truth from fiction, as Orwell's depiction of Parsons suggests there is a sense of duty to one's demise, a belonging afforded by admission into a group of individuals erased by the ruling Party (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 103). The confusion of the Imaginative and the Real in Kristeva's psychoanalytic model becomes evident in the nature of selfhood in Orwell's tale of classic totalitarianism, and both the self and the interface of material and immaterial are lost.

In an Orwellian stroke, the failures of Stalin's Five-Year Plans have been attributed in part to "people's inability to publish truthful articles about the situation in their local areas" (Kassymbekova 165). The ordinary Party members in Oceania function based on a promise of strong economic foundations and a powerful military while evidence to the contrary hides in plain sight. When "only material results matter," the immaterial can quickly become the downfall of a society, because the immaterial realm of society includes communications and relationships, which remain in the control of the privileged elite and become more obscure to the mass as a whole as they are made more abstract. Winston is trapped in a dying totalitarian society, because his status as a figurehead for the resistance movement in Oceania leaves him isolated, unable to connect with others on a fundamental level. In his critique of socialism,

Shafarevich states that continued application of the ideology “deprives human life of its individuality and simultaneously deprives life of its meaning and attraction” (Shafarevich 303). Winston finds himself in a related psychological state, defined by the very thing that is destroying him, an effort to resist the IngSoc Party. Thus, he fuels the ever-present death drive within humans.

Conclusion

In Orwell’s novel, the “permanent lie” and the dual reality that it demands combine to create two distinct classes maintaining the system: the immediate ruling class and the ordinary Party members content to cling to any semblance of privilege that the Party allows, both above the proles. But as Winston learns, even to claim a sense of privilege in a totalitarian State is futile as the all-encompassing virtual reality erodes memories of the past. By continually shifting the rhetoric considered “official”, the Party forces individuals to choose between a “permanent lie” and a truth that was once held sacred but drifts further from accepted society by the day. Without anyone to atone and answer for the human rights atrocities in Oceania, rebelling against them grows ever more hopeless. Even Winston, the steadfast last bastion of truth in a society downtrodden by simple acceptance of their eventual fate, breaks at the hand of the system. In any action, Big Brother was always watching him. The result was never in his favor, no matter how hard he tried.

However, the key element in Winston’s eventual demise can be found in the part of his conscience that never resisted, despite his outward attempts to live amongst the proles and share his experiences in a diary. As Desmet says in discussing mass formation theory, Winston “believes the story” (Desmet 122) spread by Big Brother. For as much as he attempts to mourn

the losses of those close to him at the hands of the Party, there is an unshakable subconscious theme in the novel that Winston considers the punishments warranted. At best, he is an individual divided, trapped between two opposing schools of thought. Returning to Solzhenitsyn's example of the Soviet conference applause break, the district party leaders look at one another "with make-believe enthusiasm on their faces, looking at each other with faint hope" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 70). The issue is not that Winston truly loves or hates the avatar of Big Brother and the society that the figurehead has created. The issue is that Winston never fully commits to observing the permanent lie or rejecting it and accepting whatever fate may come his way. Winston attempts to operate in-between the two, living in both realms and is thus forever unsure of his next move. His sense of self is fractured rather than grounded, which involved qualities that the permanent lie cannot supply beyond the self becoming totally subversed or lost within it.

Winston Smith risked his very existence in search of truth, not so much to cleanse the horrors of his memory but that which would allow for his sustained existence in a pocket of contentment. Solzhenitsyn referenced the enviable quest for truth in his 1970 speech accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature stating that "One word of truth should outweigh the whole world" (Nobel). Solzhenitsyn's concept of the "whole world" can be interpreted as philosophically ambiguous and applied to each individual's personal situation, while indicating a larger mystery of objective truth only approachable through such subjectivity. In straining his memory and documenting his daily existence, both riveting and banal, Winston sought to harbor a safe haven for the unaltered truth, embroiling the quest in his legacy, all-too-aware of the distinct possibility of his demise. Documenting the injustices of the Party for "the future, for the unborn" (*Nineteen-Eighty Four*, 4), Winston recognized a duty to prevent life before Big Brother from becoming a casualty of the constant march of Party control.

Perhaps Winston was resigned to his fate, acquiescing only to the degree necessary to prolong a futile rebellion attempt. Disconnection coupled with a continual fear of the unknown pervades a system in which Solzhenitsyn describes the scene of an arrest as armed security men "against one person who hasn't even finished buttoning his trousers" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 7). Perhaps Winston was afraid of his demise coming without him being prepared, and in a sense it did. With the news ever-shaped by the system, Winston and others remained under constant surveillance of their own doing, of self-restraint for survival, absorbed by an instrumentalist sense of self and life. In loving Big Brother instead of Julia he came to love an avatar of himself with a passion for a virtual unity.

Chapter 2: The Pleasure Principle and the Symbolic Gulag: Brave New World

Henry Foster is a young lab technocrat only too happy to share statistics on the successes of eugenics in the laboratories of the World State with his superior and adoring young visitors in Aldous Huxley's alternative dystopia *Brave New World*. The novel portrays the latest breakthrough in human selective breeding as a new consumerist product communicated to young visiting students eager for future careers in the new industry in Huxley's London of the future. Customized genetic engineering "products" and careers in technocratic control, however, are only one aspect of the World State's often invisible manipulation of its people, through vehicles such as the pleasure-inducing and addictive drug soma to mellow out the population, recreational sports, and the "orgy-porgy" group-sex sessions, which distract everyone from any deep family, spiritual, or political commitments. Huxley's novel in all this draws a complementary picture of a future technocracy to Orwell's more Stalinistic Oceania. The individuals in Huxley's novel follow the pleasure principle as conceptualized by Sigmund Freud, in that individuals seek the avoidance of pain points within their lives to focus on that which brings pleasure. Human minds "seek to detach from the ego anything that may give rise to such unpleasurable experience" (Freud 1). While this concept may sound excellent on the surface, the World State's social contract includes the potential of pain like an invisible electric fence to keep the populace in line. Through fiction, Huxley is able to articulate a zombified society whose tenets still apply today, grounding the novel in verifiable historical movements but with the creative license to form a terrifying vision of technocracy. Huxley and Orwell take two different approaches to exposing the dilemma of the enduring influence of the totalitarian mind, differentiating the psychological stunting of classic totalitarianism from the obscured stunting of individuals left to their own devices with the government on stand-by should an individual stray too far from center. The end

result of both is a picture of modern totalitarian culture as a kind of spectrum of sado-mascochism, closely linked also to what Freud called the Death Drive (Thomas 70) in play with the Pleasure Principle. Huxley's approach has even been dubbed "soft totalitarianism" (Dreher 13) and matches up closely with Zuboff's later coining of the term "instrumentarianism" for life in cyberspace today (Zuboff 16).

Huxley's book in its very title, ironically using a phrase from Shakespeare's *Tempest*, provides a key to understanding its fiction as a part of totalitarian studies. "O Brave New World," Miranda utters in seeing the people shipwrecked by her father's magic, people who are part of a brutal political history both hidden and manipulated by his sorcery. In the play, Prospero's magic is a stand-in for developing technology in the early modern era, which often was allied with a magical sense of manipulating the environment and colonialism. As psychoanalytic scholar Matias Desmet has noted, it is the combination of elite control (through technology today) and the isolation of people from deep relationships with the earth, family, tradition, and one another, that leads to the psychological mass formation of totalitarianism. In Huxley's terms, this is accomplished less visibly and through comfort and pleasure of a West riding on riches derived from its colonial domination of the world. In this psychology, to use Julia Kristeva's terms explored in the last chapter, the Pleasure Principle facilitates a merging of the real and the imaginary in a selfhood that becomes not only increasingly instrumentalist but increasingly unstable and ready to become identified with systemic control by a pleasure-giving technocracy.

Orwell found inspiration for *Nineteen-Eighty Four* from his experiences fighting in the Spanish Civil War, while Huxley's inspiration lies in two different yet equally important ideologies. A grandson of the prominent biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, it may be appropriate

to say that Aldous Huxley was predisposed more by experience of intellectual conflict and conceptual realities, to writing a novel condemning excessive human involvement in manipulating nature technologically. His background included a family history leaning on a celebration of Charles Darwin's views of natural selection but misusing Darwin's legacy for social engineering rather than greater environmental consciousness. Aldous saw danger in human overinvolvement in the scientific process through eugenics, a view satirized through the prominent role played by the Department of Hatcheries and Social Conditioning in Brave New World. From a non-scientific standpoint, Huxley faced the initial seedlings of fascism while living in Italy, forcing him to leave Europe behind, never to return. Combining the two backgrounds, Huxley offers a blend of soft totalitarianism and a less-aggressive form of Orwell's classic totalitarianism in *Brave New World.* Both writers offered fictional imaginings from the heart of the waning days of the British Empire: Orwell drawing in part on the terrifying images of rising Nazism and Communism, and Huxley partly on the increasing power drive of materialistic technocracy within the elite projects of the supposedly democratic West, but both of them concerned with trends that led toward Zuboff's nightmare vision of digital control and surveillance in the twenty-first-century.

The role of the "Bokanovsky Process" (Huxley 18), the name given for the Department of Hatcheries' system of developing thousands of identical individuals, to allow for mass production in every sense raises major questions on the adaptation of totalitarianism into a functioning society. Totalitarian tech-culture may "bokanovskify" individuals, who in Huxley's novel display abject reverence toward Mustapha Mond, head of the World State, perhaps a play on the French *monde* meaning world and a variant name for Muhamed, "chosen' thus "world-chosen." Indeed, another character, John the Savage, illustrates the perishing of self in pursuit of

freedom. Given his eventual fate, John the Savage's wondering cries of "Why couldn't I have been the sacrifice?" (110), calling to mind the Christian tenet of Christ's sacrifice to atone for the sins of man, illuminate the struggle to succeed outside of the concept of the techno-pleasuring society and the toll that a continual rejection of "the lie" can demand. Faced with the psychologically-draining prospect of life inside the World State, Huxley implies that John the Savage commits suicide, partially via self-flaggelation, in a scene echoing the crucifixion of Christ, but without any resurrection except in the imagining conscience of the reader. Hanging himself as "Just under the crown of the archway, dangled a pair of feet" (231), John the Savage demands an eternal measure of difference in the reader's experience, promising a freedom in death that had escaped him in recent life, and a desperate sign to the reader like Winston Smith's ending for a need to resist before it is too late. For Solzhenitsyn, "a cruel and determined expression" (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 563) such as John's resolution represents a willingness to resist and is "the national hallmark of the Gulag Islanders" (563), but in the hands of the English dystopian novelists their main characters both end in a form of self-erasure. Paradoxically John as target of "soft totalitarian" experiences self-death with more finality, while Winston is left under the Stalinistic "hard totalitarian" system without the will even for that. Winston is terrorized by the threat of physical torture, while John experiences an acute self-willed reaction to slow death by creature comfort. Both allow for a relatable experience for the modern reader not in a physical camp like Solzehnitsyn's.

Shoshana Zuboff likely would categorize Huxley's World State and the directives of the Hatchery complex as an example of her concept of the Big Other – an omniscient technological apparatus overseeing the behaviors of all citizens (Zuboff 29). But unlike Orwell, this is more blatant, for there is not only no Big Brother, but the systemic control is even more immersive.

The glint of self-admiration in Foster's eyes at his role in perfecting society in his lab foreshadows a digital flash in Zuboff's, with technology serving as a continual producer of soma and orgy-porgy by scrolling, allowing individuals to eliminate factual regard for fleeting material comfort. In a Huxlerian stroke, Zuboff explains that Big Other functions by "replacing the engineering of souls with the engineering of behavior" (406). With the Department of Hatcheries serving as the Big Other, the entirety of the World State populace is corrupted by design. With individuals only able to trust those within their predetermined social class, and even then only in the proper circumstances, society continually teeters on the verge of collapse. As Solzhenitsyn states, "people survive unharmed only in a superficial bodily sense" (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 651). Mentally, the learned behavior of society through constant reinforcement and isolation induces the same psychological result as classic totalitarianism. Isolation provides the illusion of safety as someone cannot be implicated in serious dissent in full isolation.

Zuboff speaks to the allure of soft totalitarianism from the perspective of the system, allowing for a slow and subtle crushing of willpower rather than the complete erasure of a Self away from the State found in classic totalitarianism. Through the engineering of behavior, soft totalitarianism allows technology systemically to shape a society of subservient individuals, modifying their behavior to align with a corporate-state system not needing a fascist-style leader to perpetuate itself. Technology creates a learned behavioral system, "rewarding some forms of action and punishing others" (Zuboff 340) that may contradict an individual's previously-learned sense of right and wrong. The World State encourages this through the relative reward of soma, effectively punishing those unwilling to oblige through social ostracization. As the

behavior is so ingrained in an individual's psyche, the response to punishment is akin to Solzhenitsyn's "Me? What for?" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 5).

Social Conditioning and Control by Comfort

Lenina Crowne continually and wistfully longs for a pinch of soma in Huxley's novel as her life's events had grown unbearable, leaving her conditioned life to press for the comatose mentality that only soma could provide, as a nurse in the Hatchery dulled to the mental effects of social conditioning. As Lenina states, "A gramme [being the standard measure of a soma tablet] is better than a damn!" (Huxley 110). To eliminate the tribulations of daily life or at least mask them in a haze of ignorance is damning to the prospect of individual freedom that may be an ideal of a true utopia rather than the imagined realm. It is fitting that she would be quick to don the veil of ignorance that soma provides. It is the same passivity that Foster willingly allows in deference to his standing within the State. Had Crowne escaped the initial clutches of the social-industrial complex and retained a semblance of intelligent thought in relation to the realized concept of freedom, perhaps she may have rejected the allure of soma but it is a question that remains unanswered. Her very name indicates her dilemma, comically: Reflecting both the revolutionary Lenin and the traditional crown, she lacks the vigor of the first and the seeming placid assurance of the latter, and is left with psychological oblivion.

Without a thought to the contrary, those fully hypnotized by the self-righteous aura of the World Controllers willingly enact a comatose state. With the standard response little more than a hypnopaedic uttering of phrases so completely ingrained in an individual that their meaning is obscured, resistance is non-existent. If an individual's social personality can be summarized as a response to and an amalgamation of their peers, it is easy to see the almost-rhythmic repetition of

"Fordism" (Murray 251) in Huxley's novel. Huxley was a devout critic of Henry Ford's love of automation, a sharp contrast to the standard place of innovative brilliance occupied by Ford in American culture. Believing that the "dreadful religion of the machine will end by destroying the human race (252), Huxley railed against the absence of intelligent thought required to complete the mundane and repetitive tasks enabled by the spread of automation. He parodies this concept through the effective automation of daily existence in the World State – have sex, take drugs, be largely oblivious to the world at large. Crowne and others unable to circumvent the rhetoric pushed by the World Controllers come to rely on the social pressure of conformity as their instincts. As an unfortunate hallmark of a totalitarian state, the citizens of the World State serve as an extension of the World Controllers, enforcing the rigid principles of narrowly-accepted thought and dehumanization through sexual promiscuity that define the regime.

World Controllers is an apt moniker for the group of largely-undefined individuals that comprise the primary antagonists in Huxley's novel. Of these, Mustapha Mond is the lone complete characterization but in cloaking the group in near-obscurity, Huxley effectively creates a totalitarian everyman, accentuating the notion of social conditioning. Theorizing on the work of American philosopher James Burnham, George Orwell posited that "the rulers of this new society will be the people who effectively control the means of production" (*CELJ, Vol. 4, 160*). Burnham's concept of the managerial state on which Orwell comments can be considered a group of technocratic elites effectively controlling political office and corporations without assuming the proper channels of the election process in a modern democracy. The concept has been demonstrated on multiple fronts in recent years from the rise of social media founders and executives, i.e. Mark Zuckerberg, influencing the cognitive world fabric through popular platforms to the widespread influence of Dr. Anthony Fauci in forming state responses to the

COVID-19 pandemic. As information continues to become evermore saturated and accessible, the individuals responsible for controlling the means of production become evermore crucial. Orwell was considering means of production in an economic sense but the idea can be easily applied to Huxley. Mond and the World Controllers have little desire or need to oversee the means of production, with soma and sex serving as a surrogate manager – if an individual shows the initial signs of questioning their status or place in the greater society, a tablet is quickly dispersed to quell negative thoughts. The avoidance of mental or physical strife dictated by social conditioning allows the World Controllers to focus their attention to more important matters, attending to control of mental production.

Huxley penned *Brave New World* as a critique on the perversion of science and technology left completely unattended (with its latest apotheosis today being AI) and Mond is a fitting example. Possessing little physical power yet functioning on the illusion of total dominion over his society, Mond - and the unnamed but presumably equally-powerful additional World Controllers - face little resistance. Preying on the unfathomable fragility of a population dictated fully by social convention, the World Controllers need not be visible to exercise their reign. The social science of the World State is designed to view removal from society as the ultimate punishment as group membership affords gross comforts. As such, Mond seeks to punish Marx in the most-effective manner with "a transfer to a Sub-Centre, preferably to Iceland" (Huxley 96). In the eyes of Mond, the decree and its effect are simple: Marx will be removed from society and suffer a horrible, philosophical death. After all, "each new power won by man is a power over man as well" (Lewis 27). C.S. Lewis argues in his book *The Abolition of Man* for a finite power quotient in civilized society – and one would gather this is illustrated too in the uncivilized areas of Huxley's prose represented so vividly with John. Lewis considers the

overarching power struggle to concern man's "full control over himself" (27). But Lewis leaves the final result ambiguous as man will fight man for an eventual victor. For one individual or group to come to power, another must falter or be extinguished. In Zuboff;s eyes, the struggle for full control over oneself may be lost or won without conscious knowledge as "the mental agency and self-possession of the right to the future tense are gradually submerged beneath a new kind of automaticity…" (Zuboff 408). In other words, society grows so accustomed to the mindless flow of information and daily life that they are left oblivious to their loss of autonomous control. Left to its own devices, such a mindset hellbent on victory devoid of any cost-benefit analysis devolves into tyranny. Such is the philosophical bend of the World State. The World Controllers have squeezed the effective life-force from all citizens under their purview, and the Savage Reservation from which John comes is their reserve.

The concept of Iceland in the frame of the World State presents an interesting case study for totalitarianism. Iceland is the preferred exile location for individuals willing to commit the crime of free thought in the World State, a society dependent on unthinking uniformity. Following his jaunt to the Savage Reservation – and the philosophical awakening that he experiences while freed from the rigid caste system of the World State – Marx is threatened with an effective reeducation assignment in Iceland. Marx is repulsed and left cowering at the potential of transport to a foreign land away from any concept of the societal comforts of his *free* life. If Marx is forced to Iceland or if he is allowed to remain in his frivolous courtship has little effect on his psyche at this juncture. Marx's mind is forever tainted by the illusion of an omnipresent eye, observing his every twitch and thought for a possible rebellious seed. Solzhenitsyn discusses this idea through the story of Chebotaryev, a prisoner in Khabarovsk, circa 1933. Chebotaryev was subjected to psychological torture, the intentional application of

which Solzhenitsyn considered among the most heinous and ultimately effective methods of breaking a prisoner. Rather than answer questions before returning to his psychologically-solitary yet physically-crowded existence, he was left to continually wonder about his fate. As Solzhenitsyn relays, “Chebotaryev was not interrogated, no, but was simply kept in a continual state of being *led* to interrogation” (*Gulag,* Vol. 1, 109). By incorporating a foreign and undesirable land as punishment for breaking the delicate sense of order upon which the entire World State must function, Huxley replicates the same barbaric torture techniques on Marx.

The anti-intellectual realm, as the Savage Reservation is viewed by the World Controllers as a propaganda tool, is meant to function as a temporary escape for the World State, necessary to ensure complete societal control by allowing a natural comparison between the assumed perfection of the World State and the unrefined lawlessness of the quasi-mythical Savage Reservation. The way in which Huxley orchestrates his description of the two competing worlds borders on tortuous and it takes an individual enlightened to the maximum degree allowed in a society largely devoid of any true knowledge to recognize it. By design, the World Controllers aim to present their version of society as a utopia, absolute perfection with no need for quarrel. As such, the degree to which a human is fully-human is directly related to their degree of subjection to somatic-sexual pressures. Marx rejects this version of the permanent lie to the fullest extent possible, numbing his mental faculties to the totalitarian grasp of the World Controllers. To echo Orwell, the World Controllers “have merely destroyed in themselves all human feeling, all good and evil” (Orwell, *Hideous*). Therein lies part of the genius, as unethical and grossly-misguided as it may be, of the World Controllers’ method of governance. The necessity and natural instinct for human emotion has been erased by a constant push for drug-induced stupor, what Zuboff refers to as the “One Voice” (Zuboff 407), the omnipresent artificial

intelligence watchdog, i.e. Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant, that has infiltrated our daily lives under the guise of improving the efficiency of society. The "One Voice" in Huxley's realm effectively arrests individuals, unable and unwilling to resist due to a lack of understanding as to the true nature of their predicament. In Lacanian terminology, Huxley leaves his citizens in a continual state of jouissance, transforming the brief immediacy of pleasure following pain of Lacan's definition into a constant with soma ever at the ready to return citizens there.

Bernard Marx dares to step outside of his predefined societal box in *Brave New World*, risking great personal and societal peril. Arendt considers an enemy of the totalitarian state to be, among other characteristics, "one who harbors dangerous thoughts" (*Origins* 467) but what exactly is a 'dangerous thought' in that context? The efficacy of the mindset lies in those pursuing its meaning as the totalitarian state seeks to continually change its main 'enemy'. Huxley conditions the individuals of the World State to conceptualize any individual from another social class as inherently subhuman and defective. This response is in relation to the philosophy pushed by the World Controllers to create uniform societies, unable and unwilling to revolt, giving the World Controllers free reign to govern as they please, a philosophy Arendt would consider to fall within the "banality of evil" – the World Controllers are removed from the full scope of their actions. A full analysis of Marx's mannerisms in the novel could provide greater insight but any discussion of him inevitably leads to a comment on alcohol placed in his blood surrogate as a means of illuminating the defection that alienates him from the rest of his Alpha-Plus social class. Bernard's commentaries on free will and contentment in its purest form, rather than government-prescribed, are viewed as "dangerous thoughts" from an individual willing to rebel against the totalitarian order. In simplest terms, his, in theory, societal equals view Bernard thusly: "Odd, odd, odd was Lenina's verdict on Bernard Marx" (Huxley 87). In

reality, Bernard presents perhaps the most sane rejection of totalitarian philosophy among those trapped under the purview of the World State, rejecting the mind-numbing qualities of soma at nearly every turn and standing firm against societal pressures to indulge. Marx highlights the *us versus them* mentality that damages hope of a revolt before it can truly begin as individuals are left fighting amongst themselves.

The intellectual capacity of Marx to reject governmental pressures at the risk of social ostracization and derision speaks to a moral compass that is otherwise lacking in the World State. His name melds both that of a famous crusading medieval Christian saint and a modern atheistic revolutionary theorist. In a 21st-century sense, Marx is the individual who does not possess a smartphone, is inactive if not entirely disengaged from social media and able to think critically. The artificial sources of perceived happiness that provide little more than an outlet to escape the pressures of the world are of little interest to Marx. To relate Marx's philosophy to Solzhenitsyn, he is making a conscious decision "not to notice the doomed person next to one, not to help him, to turn away one's face" (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 645). The idea speaks to a stroke of brilliance in Huxley's work. It is not simply enough to state that many of the individuals in his work are conditioned to agree to the demands of the World Controllers without argument but rather a general lack of acknowledgement to their own demise.

At the crux of Bernard's mental dilemma is the question of purpose in a distinct sense from robotic servitude to the State. The World Controllers have painstakingly created a society of object comfort by all outward appearances and prevented the citizens under their rule from straying from said comfort except for approved absence disguised as demeaning teaching exercises. As such, the citizenry becomes crushed by the weight of expectation without the verbal and philosophical tools necessary to resist in any meaningful capacity. Surely one could

reject the daily prescribed dosage of soma but the action would only provide temporary relief before the associated societal pressure would break even the most-hardened of resistors. In his study of mental capacity and its relation to totalitarianism, *The Matter with Things,* philosopher Iain McGilchrist adds, "It is also much easier to ignore purpose if…we focus on detail to the exclusion of the whole picture" (McGilchrist 1802). The World Controllers offer a performative example of McGilchrist's theory to the highest degree, creating an entire society of exclusionary practices. Should an individual consider themselves to be physically and intellectually superior to another in the World State, any inquisition is derided as beyond the purview of the common man, predestination in its finest, most distilled form. For Marx, a self-described rebel against the World Controllers – if such a role really can exist - to seek no further truth is a cardinal sin for stopping a quest for the truth would mean accepting anything peddled by the World Controllers. Marx has rejected the psychological comforts that numb the senses of his compatriots but effectively stops at his first dose of soma. To continue taking soma would prevent him from forming clear thoughts necessary to resist. After all, the teachings of the omniscient World Controllers contradict any investigative urges as in their view, a caste system has been "constantly proposed, constantly rejected. There was something called democracy." (Huxley 52) The World Controllers see democracy, rightly when considered in the context of their mission, to be harmful and unnecessary. To champion democracy would mean a rejection of the firm control on which their entire philosophy lives – free thought is the clear enemy. Bernard et al are expected to obey and with little choice in the matter, society functions as well as it may.

By design, the World Controllers have introduced an air of predictability to daily life in and around their arena. With citizens inhibited by a drug, both in a physical sense and a metaphorical sense, that carries "All the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their

defects" (Huxley 60), there is nary a care on the minds of Mond and the similar elites. Their subjects are far too preoccupied with the mindless trivialities of Obstacle Golf and promiscuity to notice the mind-numbing properties of control. Drawing on the work of McGilchrist, the World Controllers have carefully constructed a society of "senseless particles…colliding in a predictable fashion, whose existence is purely material, and whose only value is utility (McGilchrist 13)." In so doing, Huxley has struck an important chord in emphasizing the dangers of technological extremism. To a degree the grunt work was completed long before the individuals under their thumb were sentient, leaving the World Controllers to tend to the equivalent of routine maintenance. Should the Bokanovski Process continue to function as intended, and nothing appears to pose even a remote threat, the success of the World State is guaranteed ad infinitum. Generations of societal pressure and ostracization dictates as such. Alpha-Pluses may only interact with others of a similar social caste while the lesser groups are pushed infinitely to the fringes, lest offenders be met with societal scorn and/or death. Much like the Bokanovski Process places individuals into a caste system beyond their control, Zuboff argues that the social credit system in China and spreading to other locations adopts the same premise, as "the system tracks good and bad behavior across a variety of financial and social activities" (Zuboff 419) with the government in firm control of activities meeting each end of the spectrum as well as associated rewards and punishments. Before conscious awareness can take hold, an individual can be placed into a separate social caste, altering their life.

The citizens of the World State are subjected to what Julia Kristeva terms the "totalitarian social contract" (*Flood* 36) under the guise of a free and peaceful society. Building on the ancient concept of social contract theory popularized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the totalitarian social contract forces an individual to disregard all personal freedoms and protections to the

degree demanded by the State in return for the promise of a just society. This is controversial because such a contract is imaginary in the sense of abstract shaping of self (also in the Lacanian sense of imaginary used by Kristeva) and justifying arbitrary oppression, which can cause an individual to only "bang his head and fists against a stone wall" (36), literally or figuratively. However, one could argue that the concept of freedom in a totalitarian society is nonexistent. Kristeva argues that the totalitarian social contract creates "a human existence cut off from public space" (35) and the World Controllers utilize a version of the ideology in crafting their society. The citizens in the World State are not removed from the public space in a traditional, isolationist sense with the physical or metaphorical imprisonment that tends to coincide with such an act but rather they are removed in a philosophical sense. Citizens are not subjected to the ever-watchful eye of the Orwellian telescreen or prison guards abusing them but are slowly being conditioned from a prenatal position forward to accept their every thought and action as simultaneously their own and of State ownership. Lenina Crowne et al among the willing participants in the Lie, excited to toe the State rhetoric line, are simultaneously atomized and fulfilled. Ecstatic to subjugate herself physically and mentally, Lenina functions as a textbook subject for application of the totalitarian social contract.

Application of the totalitarian social contract begins in the World State through societal transmogrification enforced by the selective embryo harvesting of the Department of Hatcheries. The individuals under the World State's purview are therefore stripped of their fraternal freedoms in society before they are salient to their existence. As Tomakin states "We also predestine and condition. We decant our babies as socialized human beings, as Alphas or Epsilons, as future sewage workers or…" (Huxley 23). As alluded to previously, the decision of predestination lying in the State's hands is key to enforcing the totalitarian social contract. But

perhaps the idea of a social contract in any sense is inherently totalitarian as Rousseau seems to allude in the opening lines of his seminal book *The Social Contract*, stating that "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains" (Rousseau 56). Predestination holds a traditionally-religious connotation as a higher power is seen as the only entity capable of imparting will to that extent. However, by endowing the State with power typically reserved for a deity, the State then possesses effectively-limitless authority to control its citizens. As such, the consequence for straying from the "Lie" of Solzhenitsyn's terminology can be as dire as the State intends. The figment of a social contract here takes on a quasi-divine role in a secular system.

John the Savage and Radical Indifference

John the Savage's profound sense of uneasiness was palpable, plucked from the simple comforts of his previous life. With a moniker assigned by his figurative captors, John predictably struggles to adjust to the rigid conformity of the World State. John's ultimate demise in Brave New World is framed as both a rejection of collectivism, as John exits the world of his accord maintaining firm autonomy over his fate, and as inability to adhere to organized society. For the purposes of this study, an examination of the former is warranted. The idea of collectivism in terms of John the Savage is relative as he experienced a form of collectivism on the Savage Reservation - free from the figurative shackles of the World Controllers and with like-minded individuals. However, the adherence or rejection of said collectivism is key to understanding John's position, rejecting any notion of a "permanent lie". John retains his sense of self even if it ultimately kills him.

But to call the rhetoric of the World State shattered in an instant, the spell irrevocably broken would be a false conclusion. As McGilchrist states, '...to exert power over something

requires us only to know what happens when we pull the levers, press the button, or utter the spell" (McGilchrist 10). By contrast, resisting power from an oppressor, whether in a totalitarian state or otherwise involves acknowledging the power and formulating a response through resistance of some sort. The citizens of the World State lack the ability or perhaps more aptly, the desire, to engage with their metaphorical captors beyond the initial step, content to exist in a hallucinogenic coma if not disturbed. Huxley encapsulates the sentiment of the citizenry rather succinctly. If the abolition of religion and free thought carries not just the possibility of animalistic free expression of desire, it is worth the presumed intellectual pain. Even the concept of true psychological pain is dulled at a moment's notice and society operates under blissful ignorance. In the verbiage of McGilchrist, the masses are unwilling to fully engage either part of their brain, not possessing the requisite resolve to explore their world to its fullest and certainly not to exert control over another, or to integrate drives for order and wonder.

Zuboff considers instrumentarian power to be an element of today's surveillance state committed to a destruction of the sense of self. The very nature of the ideology demands that the system govern through a perceived omniscience, ruling over what can and cannot be physically observed. Zuboff applies her theory to the 21st-century technological advances i.e. the proliferation of social media, meant to strengthen human connection, but which have arguably degraded the individual. The lack of a formal governmental entity, or what Hannah Arendt would term "Rule by Nobody", is conceptualized by Zuboff as a reduction of the human experience to "measurable observable behavior" (Surveillance 406). Zuboff continues that instrumentarianism allows for an indifference to the unique human once each has been stripped of their individualism, a term she coins "radical indifference" (406). Predating Zuboff by decades, Huxley, however, applies a similar philosophy to his creation of the governmental

system in the World State. The World State exhibits totalitarian tendencies in the behavioral control of their citizens, through sleep propaganda and government-aided sexual liberation – "The first Pregnancy Substitute" isn't compulsory till twenty-one" (Huxley 44) – but these are obversely lackadaisical once their citizens are sufficiently indoctrinated. In referencing the various bioengineered classes, once convinced that the Betas will only partake in meaningful interaction with other Betas, Gammas will only interact with other Gammas, etc. The World State can assume a position of relative indifference as each citizen is willingly participating in the Lie set before them. Yet there is the illusion of free choice, similar to the marketplace of sex in secular societies today, where people still usually end up forming closest bonds with those in their same socioeconomic bracket.

Collectivism is often viewed in a negative light, and surely in a discussion centered on totalitarianism, absolute worship to the substitute deity of the State would hold a negative impact. However, John's positive collectivism in his native element which in turn shapes his sharp individualism when stripped of his "family" can be gleaned from McGilchrist's writings. McGilchrist explains that the two hemispheres of the human brain perceive the world in vastly-different ways, "the brain's left hemisphere is designed to help us apprehend…the world, the right hemisphere to comprehend it" (McGilchrist 10). The left side of the brain could be said to seek to manipulate the world to fit our lives while the right side of the brain tends to categorize the world through a realist lens as it appears naturally. As Huxley characterizes John, he is consistently seeking to approach the World State by focusing on the traits of its right brain hemisphere, immersing himself in his surroundings to the depths his forced side-show persona will allow. The World State is unfamiliar to John in all aspects from the absentminded reverence of government to the rigid conformity of its citizens. As such, John spends the totality of his

efforts seeking to find a purpose in a world to which he does not belong. A shared interpretation of collectivism causes Bernard Marx to bring John to the "new world" but the uprooting of his common society proves troubling. The convenience of forced community, dispersed by the threatening rhetoric and figurative hand of Mond, is the lone positive attribute of the World State as presumed by an outside of sound mind. Huxley dares to deviate from the delicate balance and dizzying array of Beta-Minuses and Alpha-Pluses through the introduction of the foreign concept of natural birth in the form of Linda, John's mother. Huxley willingly captures the response of the lucky few viewing Linda's imperfect form that freedom allowed as "a gasp, a murmur of astonishment and horror" (Huxley 139) as the citizens of the World State do not possess the emotional qualities needed to adequately process the situation.

Much in the same vein as Solzhenitsyn considers the only available phrase to an arrested individual as "Me? What for?" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 6), those not named Marx are equally puzzled. The mere presence of John and Linda, outsiders from the forbidden Savage Reservation has potentially destroyed the carefully-orchestrated ruse performed by the World Controllers. Much like the unknowing capitulation to evil described by Solzhenitsyn, the citizens of the World State have long ago lost the ability to recognize their own demise and by extension, have entered into a subhuman state. The presence of their human bodily form is of little relief to their altered mind. The idea of altered mind is a key concept here as the impetus for said change reveals its purpose as experimental or sinister. Huxley was no stranger to experimentation with altered frames of mind, later documenting his chosen path of changing lucidity in *The Doors of Perception* but he creates a clear distinction in the response to John and Linda. The citizens of the World State have been subjected to mind-altering philosophies and techniques from the prenatal stages and only in the most extreme opposite of society is the philosophy, in some sense, shattered. One could

theorize based on the McGilchrist model of left and right brain hemispheres that John is situated in realism to a level that makes him incompatible with the World State. Rejecting the soma and promiscuity that would allow his brain to manipulate the world in front of him, John never assumes the level of comfort that is a hallmark of the World State society. When categorized in relation to the World State, perhaps the Savage Reservation allows for far-too-great a degree of freedom for the two philosophies to ever coexist.

John's decaying psychological state and the driving force behind his eventual demise is encapsulated in an inability to freely reject the permanent lie as disseminated by the World Controllers. Perhaps freely is on a surface level, oxymoronic phrasing given the nonexistence of a societal definition of freedom in a totalitarian state but John experiences a near-total lack of suppression while on the Savage Reservation. Thrust into a society that embodies what political theorist Rod Dreher would term "soft totalitarianism" (Dreher 9), John is appalled at the inverse concept of freedom in the World State. He is thereby rejecting the concept of radical indifference that has fully permeated the World State through his isolationary difference. From the prenatal stages and throughout their lives, the citizens of the World State have known only uniformity with individuality swiftly expunged before it can snip the metaphorical marionette strings of society and infect fragile-minded individuals.

The Psychological Consequence of Soft Totalitarianism

Bernard Marx mentally trembled as he perceived the assumed lack of civility in the individual coined "John the Savage", as John expressed admiration for his mother. The full word "mother" is omitted to accommodate the reproductive aim of the World State, "an example of the way in which early conditioning can be made to modify and even run counter to natural

impulses" (Huxley 148). An exercise in the psychology of the soft totalitarianism that encompasses the World State, it is immediately clear that Bernard is conflicted between the belief system forced upon citizens from a prenatal stage and continued through adulthood and the uninhibited freedom of the Savage Reservation. Drawing on his personal experience with totalitarianism, Huxley presents Marx as a tragic catalyst for the enduring influence of the ideology, sensing freedom in his grasp but unwilling to abandon the creature comforts of the society that raised him. Solzhenitsyn might categorize Marx as an individual lured to remain in the psychological Gulag of the World State by the shared misery of his fellow citizens. With free thought all but nonexistent in the World State, mutual mistrust runs rampant and as Solzhenitsyn explains, "This universal mutual mistrust had the effect of deepening the mass-grave pit of slavery" (*Gulag*, Vol. 2, 643). Soft totalitarianism creates a mental vacuum in its victims, enticing a sense of comfort from individuals fearful of an alternative societal death.

Borrowing a conceptual framework from classic totalitarianism, soft totalitarianism operates under an exclusionary umbrella, in terms of binaries such as the World State and the Savage Reservation. However, a key difference lies in the manner in which the perceived enemy is censored with classic totalitarianism aiming to exterminate the lives of those who dare to run afoul of the State while soft totalitarianism eliminates the voice of the centers from the system through the guise of contributing a helping hand to a common good, exploiting "modern man's preference for personal pleasure over principles" (Dreher 11). Huxley parodies this element of soft totalitarianism in crafting soma, leaving individuals in a constant state of personal pleasure and unable to consider the ramifications of their eroding society. In naming one of the crucial characters in his novel after the German philosopher and proponent of class warfare, Karl Marx, Huxley acknowledges the role that a totalitarian ideology can have in disintegrating a sense of

societal conscience. The erasure of a shared conscience and morality through an enforced caste system from the scientifically-engineering womb leaves the citizens of the World State increasingly vulnerable to soft totalitarianism. In the same manner as classic totalitarianism, soft totalitarianism is advanced fundamentally through the Arendtian idea of atomization and a corresponding loss of "the whole sector of communal relationships in whose framework common sense makes sense" (Origins 397). As membership in the societally-approved intelligence caste provides the only form of camaraderie the citizens of the World State have known and will likely ever know, Huxley crafts a network of World Controllers threatening to remove individuals from those communal relationships should they fall out of line. As Solzhenitsyn surmises of his fellow captives trapped under the totalitarian thumb, "we ourselves helped implement that absolute secrecy, absolute misinformation, among us which was the cause of everything that took place" (*Gulag*, Vol, 2, 643).

Fearing the rise of automation in daily work environments that would seep into private lives, Huxley uses a reference to Henry Ford as a term of reverence in the soft totalitarian World State. Introducing the Controller responsible for ruling the World State as "his ford-ship" or often capitalized to "Our Ford", Huxley demonstrates that the citizens of the World State are enraptured by the thought of a ruler to manage every aspect of their daily lives as if unable to cope with their lives themselves. Huxley's introduction of Ford as a referential character in his novel and his introduction of the ideology now termed soft totalitarianism grew from his thoughts on "the dehumanizing nature of modern factory work" (Zuboff 247). Sensing the psychological damage caused by an individual responsible for completing the same mundane task ad nauseum for many hours, Huxley felt that the rise in automated work was robbing "ordinary people of creativity" (247). In a Marxist stroke, individuals were becoming separated

from the end product of their labor without having a true hand in its creation. Rather than producing a product for another's profit as conceptualized by Marx, human existence in Huxley's view had been reduced to one small part of a disconnected larger product, leaving them vulnerable to a rise in soft totalitarianism.

Huxley's belief that automation was slowly degrading the intellectual capacity of society was at odds with the Fordian thought that "mechanisation left the mind free to think of other things" (247). Huxley would find a supporter in Desmet who echoed Huxley's thought by stating that the unbearability of modern work stems from "the impossibility of experiencing meaning and satisfaction" (Desmet 41) in one's work. In a soft totalitarian society through which willful ignorance is meant to provide a sense of meaning in one's life, automation in work can push an individual over the proverbial edge. In *Brave New World*, government-enforced automation causes individuals to acquiesce willingly, without knowledge of a suitable alternative being that the Savage Reservation is considered a primitive society replete with humans at their most-basic form free of the technological and psychological advances that the World State offers. While employment is scarcely mentioned in Huxley's novel, the inability of those trapped in a somatic cycle to experience satisfaction is questioned. Of the individuals engrossed in the World State, Marx evolves to the closest approximation of individual satisfaction but the allure of his base societal comforts ultimately stunts any intellectual growth while on the Savage Reservation. Such is the danger of the concept expressed by Huxley. Soft totalitarianism enhances the psychological necessity for an automation of the mind, often without the individual's knowledge.

The threat of societal death provides a clear enticement to prevent rebellion as totalitarianism in all forms strips a sense of individual identity. The Department of Hatcheries uses this theory to "guarantee outcomes for its actual customers" (Zuboff 344). In concert with

the World Controllers, a society is created wherein individuals simply do not mind the control exerted upon them or have been sedated into a state of compliance. Such a scenario provides the psychological equivalent of Solzhenitsyn's remark on deceased individuals in the Gulag, "Deprived of the right to correspond" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 7). Marx, Crowne, etc. have the innate ability to form a rebellion but fail to see a benefit to leaving their current stasis behind. The predicament has created a scenario in which the citizens of the World State are slaves to their own mind, agreeable to the stunted intellectual growth in front of them for fear of an alternative. Totalitarianism seeks to "censor alternative voices in the private sphere" (Desmet 124) and Marx accomplishes the goal for the World Controllers himself without anything resembling resistance.

For Marx and society at large under the World State, life is a continual battle against succumbing to mass formation ideology. As demonstrated in the novel, most fail swiftly and without much resistance at any attempt to free themselves from the relative comfort of mass formation as Desmet describes it. The Pleasure Principle provides a metaphorical safety blanket under which most citizens can believe that they are thriving without any need to question an alternative. As Crowne states when Marx dares to question what he sees as metaphorical shackles on society, "I don't know what you mean. I am free. Free to have the most wonderful time. Everybody's happy nowadays" (Huxley 90). The statement only draws a laugh from Marx as he has lifted the veil of ignorance under which most of his citizens exist as if a world without the comfort of mass formation has ceased to exist.

Marx's mental state and that of any unnamed individuals briefly considering rebellion in the World State embodies Solzhenitsyn's train of thought in his Commencement Address to Harvard University in 1978. Soft totalitarianism encourages a sense of comfort in the relative banality of one's existence and to break the proverbial mold to rebel would mean eschewing said

comfort for an unknown result. As such, the mind is continually fighting a battle within itself. Glimpses of a world without social credit scores and government-approved ideologies emerge and become ingrained in the subconscious memory, creating a fierce dilemma when navigating scenes in daily life.

Chapter 3. Uncomfortable Lessons: Ji Xianlin's Memoir Style as a Personal Antidote to Totalitarian Systems

Ji Xianlin watched in horror as the Maoist Red Guards destroyed his home, smashing cupboards and reducing Ji and his wife to mere spectators. (Ji 39) Simultaneously crushed and relieved that his youthful robbers were not aware that traditional Chinese methods of torture he knew from his studies included blindfolding victims and pouring "cooking oil into their ears" (39), Professor Ji struggles to find a healthy perspective. Left powerless to stop them, Ji was forced to submit and join the Chinese Cultural Revolution to survive. Ji's memoir, *The Cowshed: Memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* offers a parallel to Solzhenitsyn's exposé *The Gulag Archipelago,* highlighting the constant fear that pervades every element of life in totalitarian society. It shares qualities of memoir and creative nonfiction journalism with Solzhenitsyn's masterwork of totalitarian studies. But it does so less from the standpoint of the latter's combination of investigative journalism and philosophical reflections on totalitarian society at large, and more from a very personal frame of late twentieth-century memoir, informed by Ji's apparent commitment to the traditional Chinese social ethos that he studied as a professor, and his general lack of open confrontation with the Chinese Communist regime of which he remained a citizen to the end. His use of a full memoir approach adds, like Orwell's autobiographically informed fiction and Huxley's engagement with personally experienced intellectual trends in his novel, to totalitarian studies in a distinctive focus, but also a more non-Western one. Ji's book demonstrates how what the ecosemiotician Timo Maran called a "nature-text" can add to the way in which writers can resist totalitarian culture (Nature, 281). This is seen through Maran's adaptation of reader-response theory to take into account a deep sense of environment of a text, including the social and cultural. Ji's work will be examined through that

lens in this chapter as exemplifying how his relatively recent memoir-writing in a highly non-polemic tone adds to subjective literature of totalitarian studies.

While Ji does not openly confront the Communist regime in his book beyond its obvious targeting of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, introductory material to the English edition clearly indicates his sensibilities in his old age as he also prepared the book for publication. Despite his best efforts, Ji could never fully escape his experiences in the cowsheds, the structures designed to psychologically and physically break down intellectuals during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Following the end of the Cultural Revolution with Mao's death in 1976, Ji returned to Beijing University and almost immediately resumed his role as an esteemed academic mind. But his experiences with torture led him to visit university students staging a hunger strike in Tianenmen Square in 1989. Appalled by the students' plight, Ji demanded he be arrested along with the students, determined to not see them suffer alone. The journalist Zha Jianying states, "The policemen were so startled they called Peking University officials, who rushed over and forcibly brought Ji back to campus," without arresting him (Ji, xviii) In reflection, Jianying lauds Ji as a "true Confucian scholar" for his selflessness in establishing solidarity with the students. Ji's quiet lack of overt resistance turns into a source of nonetheless stolid protest through his writing and its effect on readers. When he offered himself up to the police at the local station as a resistor to the regime's deadly crackdown on the students at Tiananmen Square, the police refused to arrest him, seeing in him perhaps both a broken old man and a symbol of moral power channeling past riches of Chinese traditions. In both, at the same time, they were right, illustrating the paradoxes of writers resisting totalitarian cultures old and new through words.

Ji physically experienced his words, communicated in his memoir, as in his account of one of his forced “struggle sessions” or psychological and physical forced breakdowns. Faced with the torture of stones gnashing against his body, fists and feet rhythmically crashing into his ribs, Ji was calm – at least the humiliation would subside in short order. Ji states, “Instead of making long speeches, they limited themselves to punching and kicking and pelting me with stones. I was relieved at not having to hold the airplane position.” (Ji 63). The “airplane position” that Ji alludes to involved forcing him to keep his head down in a crouch with his arms twisted behind, one wrist grasping the other. Struggle sessions, while they may have bonded victims together in shared suffering, ultimately alienated them from larger society, branded as criminals regardless of any actual criminal acts. The grand spectacle, enjoyed by the demented masses gathered on the outskirts of Ji’s cowshed would end, but the resulting atomization lingered and that was the hidden meaning of endless struggle sessions. All this occurred because he had as a professor fallen afoul of another faculty member’s faction on campus during the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution, not because of any alternate political affiliation against the system. Even the rationale of his trials was a delusion.

Ji’s mouth was full of blood from a particularly-horrendous struggle session when he had an epiphany. “If I could survive this, I decided, I had nothing more to fear.” (Ji 57). Ji had grown to appreciate the art of his suffering and it had strengthened his resolve. In a similar manner, Arendt states, “...men in the midst of communal disintegration and social atomization wanted to belong at any price.” (Arendt 270). The emphasis in regards to Ji paradoxically is on “belong” as Ji had discovered the escape route that struggle sessions had provided, in a sense owing his life, or a sense of belonging in it, to Maoism. Ji was in a sense giving thanks to the nature of struggle sessions for providing his life with purpose.

By potentially convincing oneself of crimes or incriminating others in the process, all to release the shackles of pain, victims rapidly reached a point of no return. But Ji never reached that point in which an individual succumbs to the mental and physical anguish by preparing for an inner war. “I am only alive now because I was too stubborn before. It turned out that I could endure greater pain than I realized.” (Ji 58). Drawing from his academic background in Buddhism, Ji stated that one should have, “...actions guided by the conclusion that one gets from seeking truth from facts.” (Yu 32). Factually, Ji was under attack by a misguided threat, but he could still explore the truth that he was alive and apply it to overcoming his obstacles.

His memoir takes readers experientially into the struggle session and all the ambiguities of his physical and mental sufferings. In Maran’s model, this energizes the link not only between reader and author but between text and environment, among all those elements of textual interaction. The result is a spark that subverts the delusion of the permanent lie in reading. Maran concluded that meaning-making “both stabilizes and destabilizes (ecosystems)” (Maran 44). By that, Maran is using a psychological response to one’s surroundings embedded in writing that as a “nature-text” links a reader to an author’s experience. Such a text like Ji’s allows the reader to both familiarize themselves with the narrator and gain a new perspective which may challenge or strengthen their foundational belief system, in this case in relation to modern totalitarian tendencies. Maran relates his theory to instinct, as animals create new “feeding strategies and food sources” (*Ecosemiotics* 44) as necessary to maintain the best chance of survival. In this he follows philosopher Charles Peirce’s idea of abduction or “hunch,” melding in effect induction and deduction, but in the reading experience (Peirce, Stanford). A similar response happens in the mind of a reader for an engaging text, although on a less life-or-death plane. The reader is

challenged to consider their previous experience and potential biases or introductory thoughts while engaged with the text.

Literary critic Hans Robert Jauss considers literature to be an effective tool for learning and analysis only as long as readers are willing to engage with the text, to analyze it, critique, or celebrate it. Jauss continued that this is rooted in the "horizon of expectations of the literary experience of contemporary readers, authors and critics" (Jauss 22). Individuals able to relate to the main events and concepts of a book must find the text sufficiently engaging on an intellectual or imaginary level for its relevance to continue. Memoirs allow the most raw of human emotion and life experience to permeate the readers' subconscious as they consume the text, encouraging the reader to relate with an aspect of the text on a fundamental level. Using Ji's memoir as an example, a reader may not approach the text with first-hand experience of life inside of a forced labor camp but the agony and relentless anguish that dominates the text calls upon the omnipresent human experience. The level of agony and anguish experienced by a reader approaching the text naturally varies but memoir provides a relational connection for the reader. This approach provides especially valuable affective influence on shaping the reader in totalitarian studies, because it can circumvent through affective engagement the type of propagandistic conditioning that Solzhenitsyn termed the "permanent lie."

The Systemic Cost of Cowshed Living

Ji's physical freedom of movement, consumption, and choice is taken away from him when he must move into the prison dwellings known as cowsheds. To refer back to Orwell, freedom under techno-modernity becomes an abstract noun as its original meaning morphs Newspeak-like into the freedom to obey at all costs a "permanent lie." To the contrary,

Solzhenitsyn's fellow Soviet exile the philosopher S.L. Frank advanced the traditional definition of freedom to voluntarily serve truth, enhancing the "good, perfect life" and instilling the "meaning of life" (Frank 34). This definition references truth as the "absolute and supreme good" (xiv) that adopting a religious context can only be found through a deity. That separates Frank's meaning, really of capital-T "Truth," from merely a socially subjective conformity or politically self-assertive truth, or an ideological "permanent lie." The larger "Truth" may be mysterious and even to a good extent unattainable, but lies beyond the political assertion of power.

An educator and scholar, Ji in his new mode of living in the cowshed rather than a faculty office is simultaneously burdened with prolonging his survival while processing the mental guilt associated with a possible contribution to the ideology that imprisoned him. As Ji states regarding his students' participation in the Cultural Revolution, "They may not have learned all that much about Buddhist history or beliefs, but they must have paid close attention to the Buddhist hell…" (Ji 2). Complicating Ji's physical and emotional response to his predicament was the rapidly-shifting ideological environment in a space in which he had fostered a sense of cultural comfort. His new off-campus dwelling is named for a place to house animals in industrializing agriculture, a cowshed, as in Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Replacing the triad of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism in Chinese spirituality was the deified form of Chairman Mao Zedong, immortal to his wayward followers while a source of immense anguish and suffering to the bourgeoisie, in this sense including Ji. Ji elucidates the depths to which blind adherence to classic totalitarianism plunges its members, forcing them into an unbreakable cycle, a no-win binary of sufferer versus suffered that can flip unpredictably. While the Chinese Cultural Revolution promised a more prosperous Communist society and enriched existence, it

precludes an unending sense of constant fear for those unable or unwilling to join the revolution in support of Mao. The ideal elements of Maoism - prosperity and safety chief among them - were thus extended only to those willing to offer complete, undying allegiance to the movement, and like Orwell's Big Brother and Zuboff's Big Other combined, Mao as avatar melded into a systemic established terror.

Mao's influence was tremendous during the Chinese Cultural Revolution but he is perhaps suspiciously absent largely from Ji's memoir. Perhaps this is due to a lack of necessity for Mao's constant rhetoric as it had been drilled into the minds of students serving as his foot soldiers, leading the charges on the ground. Representing Arendt's concept of "Rule of Nobody" stated in previous chapters in this study, the presence of Mao is always felt even if no one is willing to answer for any atrocities. Arendt states "the instinct of submission, an ardent desire to obey and be ruled by some strong man, is at least as prominent in human psychology as the will to power" (Crises 149) and if this logic is followed, perhaps Ji was, in a sense, powerless to rebel at first. His actions detailed in the memoir's middle chapters, of allegiance to Mao and preparation for his own torture sessions lend possible creedence to that logic. Ji is unable to reject the permanent lie of a superiority complex among Chinese youth that sparked the Revolution as he is hyper-focused on his survival. Yet Mao's virtual selfhood melds and catalyzes the egotism of the young people around him even as it suppresses his own.

As indicated in his memoir, Ji allocated much of his "free time" during the Cultural Revolution to preparing for his own demise, such was the delicate nature of his situation. But in this his memoir offers an asceticism parallel to early Christian hagiography of desert fathers preparing for death, but in an enforced situation. In his words, "I had perfected the airplane position, and there was no need for the guards to correct my posture with blows" (Ji 70). Forcing

himself to suffer while in the physical and psychological torture gauntlet instituted by the leaders of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Ji had willingly transferred ownership of his mental state to his enemies. As such, Ji's mind and body could never truly be at rest, either repairing from the latest struggle session or preparing for the inevitability of the next to come. Solzhenitsyn summarized the inevitable waiting game and psychological tug-of-war by stating that "Peace of mind is something that our citizens have never known" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 642). Solzhenitsyn was trapped in a similar Soviet situation to the Chinese re-education camps instituted by the Red Guards, the militant citizen wing of Maoism, and is well-positioned to reflect on the mental erosion of totalitarianism. Solzhenitsyn remarks that "Having passed through the meat grinder of political interrogation, the human being was physically crushed in body…His soul was crushed too" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 503). Much like Ji's account, Stalin serves as the Maoist figure, ever-present ideologically, guiding the guards and forcing the prisoners in line, but rarely ever present physically. With Ji's book taking the form of a memoir, the reader is trapped within Ji's soul-crushing ordeal from the moment it starts to his near-forced end and later to its full conclusion with very little that could be considered a mental break. While Solzhenitsyn occasionally breaks for added historical background, Ji's memoir encapsulates mental anguish repeatedly, forcing the reader to engage with the text. That mental anguish is key for placing the reader, much like Ji, inside the totalitarian mindset. As mental stasis is incongruous to a successful totalitarian regime, its lack is paramount to the disconcertion necessary for the ideology to function properly. Yet, as Solzhenitsyn notes in blessing his time in prison (Gulag, Vol. 2, 624), such enforced ascetic contemplation, if survived, enables a participation in life outside of the permanent lie.

Arendt considered the type of fear that Ji expresses as assuming a pyramidal structure, involving both citizens seeking to survive or escape and rulers seeking to exert power and

complete control over citizens. In Ji's memoir, this unfolds into an added dimension of the relation between the reader and the author. As totalitarianism exists in the space "between lawful and lawless government" (*Origins* 506), its standing as a lasting ideology is continuously in peril. As previously discussed, the object of terror and elimination for a totalitarian ruler is continually shifting out of necessity to avoid self-capitulation (*Origins* 468). Without the threat of mutually-assured destruction of the entire society versus an enemy, whether Eastasia or the crypto-bourgeoise, totalitarianism cannot exert power while maintaining the slow, methodical march necessary for continued success, in whatever form that takes. The system, like a giant expanding organism, considers its governance lawful (after all, a shared belief in a path forward is required to create a complete government entity). Meanwhile the individuals under the pressure of the State offer hints of perplexity at the randomness of their predicament. Ji, an intellectual in the truest sense of the term, is left to ponder the perceived missteps in his life that resulted in an alienation from his colleagues and the removal of his community status. That he had "already decided not to kill myself, but I did not know how to go on living" (Ji 73) demonstrates the toll of living in the void between lawfulness and lawlessness. Ji is unable to ascertain if he resides on the right side of history. But in the writing and reading of his memoir, the interaction of reader and author engages both text and environment in Maran's model, to provide a way out of such internalized pyramids of control.

Through his quiet way of coping, Ji appears to try to focus himself outside of the lawful-lawless binary, away from the true torture of struggle sessions. Ji is a pragmatist at heart, explaining that the presence of struggle sessions "were a temporary reprieve from having to work" (70), simple to meditate on when considering his former students were among his fiercest critics. Returning to "normality" amid the Cultural Revolution for him would have signaled a

betrayal to his newly-formed resolve. Ji's desire to practice for his own suffering amounts to a censorship of his metaphorical voice unable to resist through his words or his resolve. Drawing from his studies in Asian languages and Buddhism, Ji viewed the rudimentary butchering of traditional Chinese culture through both its mental and physical ramifications and tried to accept stoically the result as if on the tradition's terms. Despite efforts to harden his body and mind before enduring torture, Ji suffered from the lashings to his body and the wooden placard hanging from his neck but also from the meaningless suffering of the exercise. He was reduced to repeating a Maoist phrase to diffuse the physical and mental pain searing his body: "Make up your mind to fight without counting the costs, overcome all obstacles, and strive for victory!" (Ji 65). In all this the particular presence or leadership of Mao even so was made irrelevant by the performative nature of the entire system, experienced vicariously by the reader.

Maoist ideology required that all members of a society ascribe to revolutionary teachings, whether willing or forced. Faced with the torture of stones gnashing against his body, fists and feet rhythmically crashing into his ribs, Ji was calm – at least the humiliation would subside in short order. Ji states, "Instead of making long speeches, they limited themselves to punching and kicking and pelting me with stones. I was relieved at not having to hold the airplane position." (Ji 63). The "airplane position" that Ji alludes to perhaps only added to the torturous aspect of struggle sessions, keeping their bodies physically in arduous tangles. The irony of the name "airplane position" lies in its appropriate melding of modern technology with personal humiliation, an updated form of Room 101 without the acute terror but rather a chronic and painful denial of the comfort of Huxley's dystopian Pleasure Principle. Nevertheless it is a reminder too of a sado-masochistic element present in both physical and psychological totalitarian culture, harkening back to Igor Shafarevich's invocation of the death drive as its

psychopathic core (Shafarevich 306). Struggle sessions, while they may have bonded victims together in shared suffering, ultimately alienated them from larger society, branded as criminals regardless of any actual criminal acts, while psychically binding the viewers together at the same time. The grand spectacle, enjoyed by the demented masses gathered on the outskirts on Ji's cowshed would end, but the resulting atomization or breakdown of personal human relations lingered in the formation of the mass from among China's most educated university communities, and that was the hidden meaning of endless struggle sessions.

20th-century totalitarianism sought to dehumanize individuals through a forced willingness to accept a place in the State apparatus that is personified as a giant leviathan-style body. Zuboff suggests that in twenty-first-century terms of the Global West, it is not a government, so much as a system that includes economic and cultural centers of control nominally outside the State (Zuboff 424). Rather than the rejuvenation and grace offered by traditional religions, for example, technological totalitarianism in effect substitutes a systemic culture of happiness. Instead of, in Christian terms, the Church as the Body of Christ, the system becomes the Body of the Nobody who rules. Nominally this could be in older terms Mao, but in 21st-century terms it need not be anyone in particular, in effect a cloud like an AI presence that is systemic in nature. In such a system that is made more difficult to resist by the transcendent or even vanished head, do non-conformists harden and persevere through a life of at least psychological and emotional torture or do they seek an escape? Ji details both options in the binary and ponders both deeply. "There were only two choices open to me. I could either bear my fate or escape it. The former I didn't think I could do, and yet I could barely imagine the latter…" (Ji 48). In a literal dilemma between life and death, Ji delineates one of the horrors of a totalitarian state, the illusion of free will. Ji is prodded to consider the benefits of suicide by the

constant torture of struggle sessions, casting aside Chinese social convention that effectively prohibits taking one's life. But such is the danger present when trapped under the foot of a totalitarian state, in this case, 1960s China. In a sense, perhaps the most important doctrine of salvation for Ji was never revealed in so many words: "Kneel before the altar of Mao or face death." But any proffered salvation was not even that clear; Mao was not present, either.

A clear resolve emerged from Ji's ability to separate his life into two distinct eras – prior to his arrest and after his arrest. He quickly realized his previous status as a respected academic would be of no help to him but was actually a liability. He realized this as his home was ransacked in search of physical traces of what the Communists called the "Four Olds" (Ji 19), prior to his arrest. "The Four Olds" was the collective name given by the Red Guards to the old customs that had pervaded Chinese culture: Old Ideas, Old Culture, Old Habits and Old Customs. In the name of the Cultural Revolution, these were to be replaced with "The Four News": New Ideas, New Culture, New Habits and New Customs. These were slogans, but clearly targeted Ji's past life and interests as a scholar. Sensing the pain ahead, his decision to allocate his free time to practicing for the torture shaped a mental space simultaneously stripped of and dedicated to a mythical sense of freedom, based on his determination that Ji the academic had become essentially nonexistent. Holding the "airplane position" in half-hour increments until he was "sore all over and drenched in sweat" (Ji 65), Ji was training his body and mind for the trials that lay ahead. His mental state can be explained through Solzhenitsyn's moments of memoir. The Russian writer states that "from the moment you go to prison, you must put your cozy past behind you" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 130). Thus Ji first succeeds in plotting his survival, accepting his circumstances after a period of remorse for his former students' ideologies. In

some ways his struggle to survive in the cowshed becomes a kind of penitence for his past work as an academic, given what his students had become.

The assurance of the students running the Cultural Revolution that they were on the side of progress marks a parallel with Zuboff's instrumentarianism, where in a modern hyper-capitalist context the carcasses of material individual identities are picked clean by data to advance technology supposedly to humanity's benefit. Solzhenitsyn raises the question of the relative cost of progress in a totalitarian system, where someone like Ji is positioned on the "wrong side of history": "...might we not lose something in the course of this Progress?" (*Ceased* 544) As he explains further, progress had been primarily afforded in terms of technological advances but had caused a decline in spirituality and overall quality of life, stripping citizens of psychological grounding. In Ji's China, in the name of progress, "Outward expressions of religion were completely forbidden. All religious ritual was discontinued." (Zuo 101). Progress was limited to the ruling class, the peasants and students, and in the process, China's national identity was stripped, removing "the Four Olds" from the collective consciousness as surely as any physical traces of them from the homes of academics like Ji, however committed to Communism they were too. Ji states in his efficient style that the Guards had sent him away "to be reeducated" (Ji 6) and there is a clear break in his mindset, a crack in his will that could be seen as progress to the Red Guards. But the "re-education" term affords a hint to Solzhenitsyn's question about the cost of progress. Ji had started to submit for survival in a losing battle, for despite his dedication to the Progress offered by the system, he was too close in thought and practice to the Four Olds. But his memoir would win.

“Rule by Nobody” and “Nobody is Home”

A similar process to “Rule by Nobody” as outlined by Arendt may occur with the target of systemic domination coming to signal that in effect “no one is home,” in the submissive bodily or intersectional position of erased individual vocation or profession. Ji’s memoir signals how personal resistance can continue inwardly in such situations, however. According to Solzhenitsyn, delineating the past and present for a prisoner creates a steadfast mental resolve. In what amounts to a performative transcendence beyond the system, Solzhenitsyn summarizes the philosophy by stating that “only my spirit and conscience remain precious and important to me” (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 131) when faced with the possibility of death at the hands of totalitarianism. The key here may be more than a break between mind and body, but that spirit implies something larger than merely the abstract mind of conceptualization, rather some kind of unity with a larger sense of reality than the virtual reality or permanent lie of the system. Through a willingness to prepare for the verbal and physical assaults in front of him, Ji is signaling a statement that while his body may be broken beyond repair by the seemingly-endless struggle sessions, his mind can nonetheless endure with it but at the same time beyond it. Ji remarks that his body and mind became so accustomed to the struggle sessions, that he had a chance to focus elsewhere, adding that the spokespeople were “not very clever and the speeches poor” (Ji 64). Once an individual reaches that level and “renounces everything”, the interrogator or assailant is rendered powerless to exert their will upon the prisoner. Faced with crafting a new life and persona from the previous ashes, the prisoner gains the strength in real life to withstand any level of atomization and torture, contra the figures of Winston and John the Savage in the novels studied earlier.

Spiritual discipline as an aid to this internal resistance is communicated in both Ji’s and Solzhenitsyn’s writings, the one from a context of traditional Chinese philosophies and the other

from Orthodox Christianity. Both involve a rejection of self-asserting desire, famously a theme both in Buddhism and in Christian desert-monastic *apatheia*. The resolute nature of those practicing *apatheia* results according to the tradition of the desert fathers in a freedom from material vices and an acceptance of their earthly fate in favor of service to a higher purpose, spiritual or otherwise (Foltz). Devout and unwavering service to a higher purpose has the effect, in Solzhenitsyn's eyes, of turning "one's body to stone" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 131) which he believes is essential to resisting the threat of interrogation and possible execution. In essence, *apatheia* creates a resistance to authority on religious and moral grounds. In such a case, the "rule by nobody" is entwined with a tradition and a spiritual discipline that goes beyond the immediate ruling system. Ji applies this principle to his survival, accepting the wayward path of his former students and forgetting the attraction of molding the minds of the future, at least temporarily.

But discovering a true sense of *apatheia* can be described as a lengthy process and before one can find peace in their predicament, the constant threat of arrest envelops them. Solzhenitsyn empathized with the relative ease of night arrests as at least the soon-to-be prisoners are spared the psychological anguish of society noticing their immediate arrest. The constant metaphorical target on one's back forces Solzhenitsyn to ponder the legitimacy and proper timing for resistance when arrest consists of "incidental irrelevancies" (*Gulag*, Vol. 1, 13) far removed from an individual's consciousness or control. Given that man does not possess the omniscience and foresight to predict their own demise, and at any rate the State can simply "cook up a case" (13) against an individual deemed an enemy, Solzhenitsyn considers submission the best course of initial action for a semblance of freedom at a later date, although he does raise the question of why a larger community resistance was not practiced. Through philosophical thought,

Solzhenitsyn and Ji converge under the umbrella of Daoism as both accept their temporary fate in exchange for a “road to salvation” (Hansen).

In his own words, Ji’s “soul was cleansed” (Yu, 31) through his interest in Buddhism, instilling a universal sense of purity that conflicts with the paradoxically self-assertive yet ultimately self-destructive nature of totalitarian systemics. While Ji viewed progress through revolution as a necessary step, he would have been at odds with the methods used. Ji, devoted to his craft as a professor of languages, largely eschewed avenues for intellectual engagement outside of a university setting. Ji held a disdain for politics, involving himself in the matter more for camaraderie than genuine interest and did not consider himself devout religiously. But perhaps in doing so, Ji had an ability to view his circumstances through a realist lens. To reference his comment that his “soul was cleansed,” Ji imagined substituting for the revolutionary slogan “and strive for victory!” with “and strive not to collapse!” (Ji 65). And collapsing is an apt turn of phrase for an individual struggling to survive – concretely in bodily form and psychologically with his mental faculties undoubtedly frayed. For an individual without a steadfast religious background, Ji was forced to fight endlessly against the escape route offered by suicide.

In Solzhenitsyn’s case, the aptly-named Black Marias (cars labeled as if a Communist alternative to the motherly aid of the Virgin Mary) patrolling the streets in search of legitimate or illegitimate prisoners and the Red Guards in 1960’s China, played similar roles, seeking to meet an ever-changing quota for arrests and extinguishing thought of dissent in the process. The constant threat of arrest created a sense of relief when the inevitable finally arrived as Solzhenitsyn relayed through a priest singing “hymns of praise to God” (*Gulag,* Vol, 1, 13) after being captured following years of constant upheaval in a nomadic attempt to avoid arrest. Ji

experiences a similar sensation after the Red Guards destroyed the sanctity of his home in what can be best described as a psychological shakedown. Ji paints the picture of a broken man upon his arrest as "he stowed away his sleeping pills and followed the Red Guards out meekly" (Ji 54). In the immediate aftermath of his arrest, we see Ji at his most vulnerable, contemplating the expediency with which he might be killed by the Red Guards. In this delicate moment, the State holds the most power over its subjects rendered their most subhuman. As Arendt explains, "Total power can be achieved and safeguarded only in a world of conditioned reflexes" (*Origins* 501) and those subjected to totalitarian rule are, in that moment, reduced to their preconditioned behavior. Prior to gaining a hardened resolve that seemingly only the labor camp can provide, the prisoners are in their most malleable state, one on which the system can feed. Therefore, the important element to consider is an ability to break or disregard that malleability, which refers back to Solzhenitsyn's theory of a prisoner disconnecting themselves from their potential fate. Once this is achieved, the constant threat of arrest and any interrogations that follow hold little significance. Self-assertion when turned into self-emptying in a higher sense of power or life beyond the "permanent lie" shapes a flexible response to totalitarian culture as illustrated by Ji's personal narrative of survival.

Vanished Self, Vanished Dictator, Published Book

Ji had reached a philosophical shattering, the toll of continued resistance becoming too great a burden to bear. With the words "I would die to protect the director of the Great Leader's Revolution!" (Ji 36) passing his lips as a result of his tortures and confinement, Ji had been transformed, in a virtual sense, into his sworn enemy, like Winston at the end of *Nineteen-Eighty Four* declaring his love affair with Big Brother. Totalitarianism, as an ideology and in practice, seeks to strip an individual of their unique sense of self. The sense of self is ultimately lost

through the deification of a mortal leader, in this case, one considered to be Great. One could argue if Ji truly believed his pledge of allegiance to Chairman Mao – and both sides of the argument would make a compelling case – but the words represent a shift in his public-facing ideology, an acceptance of the "permanent lie" in front of him to return to Solzhenitsyn. As such, Ji's resistance efforts become futile, fighting an enemy that has been elevated to a divine pedestal psychologically.

The divine pedestal that totalitarian leaders have demanded to occupy in modern times, whether the Maoist and Stalinist "Great Leader" or the Führer of Nazi Germany among others, creates a mental divide for one simple reason. Capitalization aside, the titles presume a reverence typically reserved for religious leaders or even deities. The elevated status of the titles is effectively stolen. Ji assumes an academic approach to religion, using Buddhism to illuminate his life's work as a professor, but he does not actively practice Buddhist teachings in a non-academic context. Therefore, while the assumption of religious reverence by Mao may not corrupt Ji to the level that it would a devout Buddhist, the introduction of a replacement deity is jarring. Totalitarian studies scholar Waldimar Gurien writes that the aim of totalitarian movements is "the reshaping of the nature of man and society" (4) and Ji's moral constitution is altered by the decision to follow Maoist doctrine.

With a surrogate higher power exhibiting control over his daily life, Ji dissected his Buddhist teachings, clinging to the possibility of an inward spirituality to dismantle the power struggle which led to his suffering in struggle sessions, but without apparent practical effect. "Never having put my trust in any god, buddha, or bodhisattva, I turned instead to the Great Leader. At night, after long days of work and struggle sessions, I would sit up and write letters to Chairman Mao…" (Ji 72). The individual responsible for the formation of the Red Guards, the

institution of struggle sessions and for catalyzing the movement that built the Cowshed in which Ji suffered daily had been extolled by him. In the eyes of psychologist Mattias Desmet, Ji's behavior would place him into one of three categories of growth within mass formation. First is he who lies "in the grip of mass formation and believes the story" (Desmet 122) Desmet considers this group unlikely to resist any rhetoric espoused by the ruling system and most at-risk for turning on their fellow community members in the interest of survival. Belief in the "story," otherwise considered to be the rhetoric espoused by the system and effectively forced into the consciousness of its subjects, separates "totalitarianized" individuals from those oppressed. By publicly sharing his exaltation of Mao, Ji outwardly falls into the web of the "permanent lie" under Solzhenitsyn's terms, and must reinvent himself mentally to endure.

However, Desmet's other two phases of mass formation include a group agreeing with the masses but remaining quiet, and a third group actively speaking out against the rhetoric of the system. The third phase of growth allows for varying degrees of rejection of the "permanent lie". Ji only reaches the final two phases through actively putting pen to paper to write his memoir years after the fact. His memoir provides a self-cleansing vehicle for rejection of the "permanent lie" of Maoist doctrine but during the experience, he lacks the hindsight and psychological well-being to reject the ideology. as doing so could cost his life, although he retains a sense of being both a participant and a distanced observer of detail, in effect paving the way for his future writings. Following his ordeal, Ji romanticizes the ideology that led to his demise, returning to membership in the Communist Party from a sense of duty to the greater ideology, stating, "the most pressing task was to restore order within the Party ranks" (Ji 134). Seemingly disregarding the ideology's targeting of himself, Ji had elevated Mao and Communist ideology above his own well being in a sense, resuming his prior duties when able, even while also arguably responding

positively to them out of concern for his well being. In describing the placing of ideology over person in society, Desmet refers to the "almost limitless tolerance for enormous personal damage" (127) that a population agrees to for the opportunity to advance the overarching mission of the ideology that has caused them suffering. Such damage psychologically reflects Ji's dilemma, similar in some ways to Orwell's doublethink. The Ji that readers associate with through the bulk of the memoir as a forthright chronicler is one powerless to slow the advance of his own demise in terms of reabsorption by the system. Nevertheless his act of writing and publishing the memoir chronicles the chrysalis of an inward process of growth, catalyzed by the trials he shares, and expressed in his support for the later student protest movement for human rights in the late 1980s.

As Ji in the 1960s is actively consumed by the Maoist ideology in front of him, his only path forward is seemingly to wholeheartedly agree with anything pushed forth by the mob and its leaders who together form the classic definition by Arendt of a mass. As such, Desmet asks "For an individual in the grip of mass formation, is there still a reality beyond the one created by the masses?" (127), which raises an interesting dilemma on the meaning of "reality." If mass formation is to involve an unbreakable bond between the previously-atomized individual and the group ideology that provides a solitary being devoid of meaning with something with which they can agree, then the concept of reality would seem to live solely within the masses. But Ji's writing suggests how individuals can be aware (and in his case performatively so as a writer) of two potential realities. A case could be made for Ji recognizing both realities in writing his memoir. The Maoist ideology that came to define the physical and mental torture of his middle age dominates the memoir as perhaps it should but, in his reflection, hints of a proverbial "what if?" scenario rise as Ji ponders an alternative to succumbing to Mao.

Ji chewed on the problematic idea of revolutionary progress in his brain, opening his eyes to the shocking scenes of the Cultural Revolution that threatened to drown him. Without any clear option for survival, he sought a resolution in suicide. His account provides a vivid portrayal of the perverted religious elements of totalitarianism crumbling under the immense weight of rationalizing self-murder. Ji's primary concern is not in the act of pure finality that suicide represents, but in finding the *proper* way to do so. The atomization that characterizes willing dissidents in a totalitarian state is clear to Ji as he remarks, "People would call me cowardly 'for alienating myself from the people' by committing suicide, but I reflected that there was no point in caring what people said about you after you were dead." (Ji 48). Without as he noted a deity to consult, no Buddha or Messiah with whom to share his deepest troubles, Ji was left in shambles after the Revolution had captured his identity. Gurien adds – in reference to Christianity but with a concept that can be applied to any religion – that totalitarian regimes "are bitterly opposed to her doctrine, to her influence on the souls of men." (Gurien 11). For them, outward religion represents competition, an instrument of opposing free thought that must be vanquished. In essence, a totalitarian state is soul-crushing. In that vein, Ji expunges the torturous mental demons of the Revolution by crafting his end-of-life plan, remarking, "Once I had decided to commit suicide, I became clearheaded and calm." (Ji 48). Ji's choice of words in this instance serve as something of an affront to totalitarianism. Calm and clear thought were at a premium in the cowshed, as every word, action or expression was ripe for potential punishment and Ji claims a small victory over his mental captors with a figurative sound mind.

Ji contemplates the various methods of committing suicide as what he views to be the only viable escape. Mulling over the ancient Chinese methods of ending one's life, from falling on a sword to drowning to shooting oneself, Ji finds that none of the methods would be

considered socially acceptable as he is ever aware and concerned of his reputation in the eyes of others, in his communitarian ethos. He decides to hatch his plan for the beginning of winter "to lie down among the rushes and take my sleeping pills" (Ji 52). Considering the plan to be "ingenious" (52) and most importantly, it seems, agreeable to his peers, Ji was ready to end his life in what he considered the most-humane way possible. He gives all his money to his children and wife in preparation. Then as he is about to take the pills, the Red Guards knock on his door, and he has an epiphany that he wants to live. It is as if a greater providence has taken a role in his life. This real-life event occurs without the assertive suicide of John the Savage in Huxley's novel, or the dramatic encounter with Room 101 that sparks Winston's psychological self-cancellaiton in *Nineteen-Eighty Four*.

If Ji, in all of his complicated wisdom, were to have achieved any kind of clean break, physically and psychologically, from the Communist Party at the heart of its worst wrath, a respite from the torture and atomization, what could have been his next step? Like how a religious cult could create a makeshift community from like-minded individuals, the Maoist regime created a community from the despondent masses in the cowshed. As Whittaker Chambers explains in his memoir, the U.S. Communist Party had served as a surrogate family for him, the necessary complete allegiance to the cause alienating him from his actual family. Chambers struggles with the prospect of leaving the Party because doing so would destroy his inner support system and a temporary escape from the Party would offer little more than "an intellectual night's lodging" in a brief break from an otherwise immersive psychological reality (Chambers lxi). Ji appears to embrace Communism in roughly the same manner. As the Red Guards have destroyed his cherished possessions and sense of community, Ji chooses to mend his wounds and struggle again. "I was free to go, and felt like a death row prisoner in the old

novels receiving a pardon." (Ji 57). But then came the process of memoir-writing that marked the unfolding of his inner resistance.

Ji seemed to have in effect canceled himself by his capitulation to the system of his persecutors. In one sense he "disappeared." But so by the time he collected and polished his memoir in the 1990s had the Big Brother figure of Mao. Both himself and the dictator had vanished, in line with Arendt's observation that totalitarian dictators become easily expendable in oppression that is systemic (*Origins* 449). Ji's writing of his memoir indeed seemed to morph his own identity, toward a meld between his scholarly interest in the "Four Olds" and a selfhood in the post-Mao China where he could support a human rights movement by students however quietly as an elder now himself. This is in line with Maran's model of the "nature-text" as a reciprocal interaction of elements that can shape identities for both reader and author, and perhaps even the environment or physical-social context of the narrative. If Arendt's "Rule by Nobody" is a transcendent exaltation of an avatar of an individual human being as totalitarian ruler (however replaceable) into a system, Ji's memoir indicates in personal terms how its mass formation likewise involves a re-molding of the subject of the system as well, adapting to changes in the narrative of the system's "permanent lie" while also potentially contributing to changes in it. There is no evidence that Ji's memoir had the impact of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, which did much to destroy the Soviet Union's moral capital internationally in the 1970s. But at the same time his memoir contributed, as he wished, to keeping the memory of the Cultural Revolution alive as a totalitarian cataclysm, whose trajectory deserves study to avoid emergence of any new forms.

Reclaiming Identity After Totalitarianism

If we remember the concept of atomization theorized by Arendt, that a totalitarian society creates a hyper-individualized citizenry detached from one another and the greater public, a process to reacclimate oneself within the public discourse must be endured once freed from direct shackles. This is what makes the "comeback" aspects of Ji's memoir in part a kind of potential user's manual today for personal resistance to the culture of soft techno-totalitarianism warned of by Zuboff. For Ji, this process lasted decades after his original ordeal, and ultimately concluded with his memoir. His approach draws on a Chinese philosophical background in a way reminiscent of C.S. Lewis' theme during the anti-fascist battles of World War 2 in his book T*he Abolition of Man,* in which he invoked cross-cultural natural law in resistance to totalitarianism. Lewis called this cross-cultural convergence of basic values "the Tao," or "the Way which every man should tread in imitation of that cosmic and supercosmic progression, conforming all activities to that great exemplar." (*Abolition* 10) Focusing on the holistic self and adhering to a mythical center of stasis, the Daoism with which Ji engaged provided a moral path forward, a firm standing on which to compose oneself after totalitarian society has destroyed all previous sense of self.

Maoism sought to destroy the "Four Olds" of customs, values, ideas, and traditions, reshaping Chinese culture and disintegrating the national pride at the heart of Ji's identity and the identity of many in China. In fact, as expatriate Chinese journalist Zha Jianying notes, "To Ji and perhaps many others, to have endured unspeakable debasement and humiliation, and survived somehow reflects a weakness in one's moral character and is therefore a continuous source of shame." (Ji xvi). The Maoist "religion" forced the Chinese intelligentsia to capitulate any sense of social order other than one country under Mao. But extreme self-deprecation worked both

ways: A source of submission to the system, it could also be a source of escape from it through a type of self-emptying that avoided the self-assertion (of "survive at any price") promoted paradoxically under totalitarian rule. By erasing previous Chinese culture and replacing it with false idolatry, Maoism left individuals devoid of an immediate promising return to their past life, which could become a second "struggle session" to rediscover their inner purpose after enduring the pain and torture of reeducation camps. Arguably China in the 1990s and early 2000s paralleled Ji in dealing with its Cultural Revolution past, in quietly reconciling with non-Communist traditions. Lewis noted during World War 2 of the human encounter with totalitarianism, "If the Tao falls, all his own conceptions of value fall with it" (Lewis 20). With the destruction of the Four Olds, the sense of national pride and identity that had sustained Chinese citizens on a spiritual level had been shattered in many ways. Yet this also marked a departure from an old sense of comfort, which had been a hook for totalitarian control among those fearing the loss of comfort. Ji's therapeutic act of writing offered a quiet personal antidote for totalitarian trauma and control. It reminds 21st-century readers, immersed in what Zuboff terms a growing instrumentarian system of digital/AI control, of the power of what Maran calls the "nature-text" of experiential storytelling. The latter highlights a horizon of truth beyond the totalitarian system's "permanent lie" and grounded in larger reality.

Epilogue

The sanctity of thought and free expression has long been considered a hallmark of free society. But given the seeming push for intellectual uniformity in oppressive regimes of all types today, the freedom therein stands on perilous ground. In many ways, classic liberalism has come under fire for bias and limitations, however, critical and creative totalitarian studies show the continued relevance of a concern for freedom of expression to not only individuals but various cultural groups in a multipolar world. Hannah Arendt's study of totalitarian ideology, updated by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's investigative study as well as Mattias Desmet's psychological exploration on which Shoshana Zuboff provides a technological "soft" totalitarian version, provide the framework for a theoretical canon in totalitarian studies in the 21st century. But alongside the theoretical, literary works such as those studied by George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Ji Xianlin deserve a place in this imaginary canon, providing a necessary personalization through novels and memoir. Drawing on individual experience with what has been termed "classic totalitarianism", Orwell, Huxley and Ji blend the ideological framework with an ability to engage with the reader from a personal level. As such, the reader is able to grasp the literary "warning" without needing to have lived in the classic totalitarian societies of Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia or Communist China. As constant digital surveillance and propaganda continue to become an accepted – and by some, welcomed – part of modern society in the so-called "Global West", the importance of such literary works continues to grow. With the previous "East" and "West" cultural markers replaced by a seeming worldwide acceptance of corporate and governmental overreach and technocratic attacks on personal freedoms under the guise of safety, the social divisions may be defined by political ideological differences still echoing the Cold War. But, given that the technological march into automated society shows no signs of slowing

down, literary exploration of the dangers of totalitarianism may provide a key to resisting what Arendt and Desmet called “mass formation” and what Solzhenitsyn termed “the permanent lie”, across political and national borders of all kinds. Mass formation and the permanent lie both seek to replace free thought with socially-accepted ignorance and confusion, to which open discussion of morphing totalitarian forms and technologies and their underlying constant psychology provides a potential antidote. The ability to keep the reality and memory of past experience alive in a society that increasingly seeks to shorten collective memory may prove crucial to any hope of a truly free future society.

Orwell explains through Winston Smith in *Nineteen-Eighty Four* that any hope of a sustained resistance against the IngSoc Party rests with the proles, the individuals living free of the Party’s influence and damaging rhetoric. To potentially eradicate totalitarian ideology, a similar scenario may need to happen currently. First-hand accounts detailing the dangers of totalitarianism like the books detailed in this study offer a path forward if the information can be adequately shared with the masses before any totalitarian influence can take hold. Totalitarianism as an ideology has proven its resiliency time and time again as resistance efforts have pushed it out of the collective consciousness for a time only for it to return in periods of economic or cultural strife. As such, the key to resistance may lie in the movements similar to the underground groups that safeguarded the work of Solzhenitsyn and others from discovery and destruction. Individuals outside of the power structure reading these screaming works of literature to share free from the potential corruption of mass influence over others may hold importance to a sustained resistance. Orwell states in his novel that “Whoever controls the past controls the future. Whoever controls the present controls the past.” The meaning of the line may prove evermore important in a 21st century society that moves increasingly fast with no signs of

slowing as attention spans recede. The philosophical and historical works studied in this thesis serve to allow the horrors of past history to never stray from the collective consciousness of society but it may be just as crucial to study previous triumphs against totalitarianism as well to allow for a strain of hope against an ideology that seeks to erase it…permanently.

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