

- London, 1976, p. 36.
- 9 Anderson, *op.cit.*, p. 55.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 32-55.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 13 'Politics And The English Language', in S. Orwell and I. Angus (eds.), *The Collected Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. 3, Harmondsworth, 1970, pp. 156-70, p. 168. Referred to hereafter as 'CEJL'.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 168-9.
- 16 Anderson, *op.cit.*, p. 44.
- 17 'The Prevention of Literature', in *CEJL*, Vol. 4, pp. 81-95, p. 92.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- 19 Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice*, London, 1980, p. 7.
- 20 'Politics vs Literature: an Examination of *Gulliver's Travels*', in *CEJL*, Vol. 4, pp. 241-61, p. 243.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 242.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 242.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 254.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 254-5.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- 27 Williams, *Politics And Letters*, *op.cit.*, p. 392.

Antony Easthope

Fact and Fantasy in 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'

Nineteen Eighty-Four, after two decades in which it was read with the utmost seriousness as a political prophecy, is now taking its place ... as a science-fiction story.

Patrick Parrinder¹

When Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, was convicted, the BBC showed footage shot through the front window of a car as it ranged at night through the backstreets of Bradford, Barnsley and Leeds. In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Winston Smith sees a similar townscape:

Were there always these vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions? And the bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air and the willow-herb straggled over heaps of rubble ...²

Britain in 1984 is like that, ravaged not by war but by five years of Thatcherite recession and deindustrialisation. These are the landscapes not so much of Dorking and Basingstoke but of Bolton, Manchester and Rochdale.

Fact and Truth in 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'

Nineteen Eighty-Four has sold over eleven million copies round the world. Published by Secker and Warburg in 1949, it has

gone through forty-one impressions since appearing as a Penguin in 1954. More than any other novel this century – certainly more than any English novel – this book has come to pervade general consciousness. ‘1984’, ‘doublethink’, ‘Big Brother is watching you’ have become shorthand figures, collective images for the fear of bureaucratic, state-controlled totalitarianism.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is very widely known and almost everyone seems to think they know what it is and what it says. One way to begin to unpack the text is to discriminate between fact and fantasy, to move forward from reading the text as a discourse of knowledge to reading it as fantasy in a certain fictional mode (novelistic realism), as literary discourse for which truth or falsity is no longer the most applicable criterion.

Considered as a prediction of the actual political situation in 1984 AD the book has sometimes, but not always, prophesied correctly. Right that the world would be divided into three blocks (Soviet, Chinese, North-Atlantic), each living under continuous threat of war; right also that the purpose of the Cold War is not really a matter of classic nineteenth-century competition for markets, but not quite right to regard war as mainly a means to eat up the surplus of consumer goods (rather than as politically motivated in the military-industrial complexes, East and West). Right that the Cold War functions ideologically for the international benefit of the super-states ‘to preserve the special mental atmosphere that a hierarchical society needs’ (p. 161). Dead wrong that the ruling groups used atomic weapons for a while after 1945 but stopped when they saw that such use ‘would mean the end of organized society, and hence of their own power’ (p. 158).

Of course Britain in 1984 is not a totalitarian dictatorship. But in the past five years it has moved closer towards that formation and away from democracy. By letting unemployment rise from around one to four and a half million (the real figure), Thatcher’s government has strengthened the hierarchic and undemocratic power of capital (both state and private). In the past five years the army and police have been powerfully reinforced and now sometimes act in coalition: on 30 October 1983, in an unprecedented step, some women at Greenham

Common were *arrested* by soldiers.³ Special riot police in shiny new visors now enforce shiny new laws against trade union activity. Central government has effectively taken over the powers of the regionally elected local authorities and is now moving to abolish the county authorities. Poverty has increased. While in 1979 11.5 million people were living below the official poverty line the figure had risen to 15 million by 1981.⁴ Under Thatcherism Britain in 1984 is getting more seedy, more run-down, more unhappy, a zone symbolised by silent people waiting in lengthening queues for the bus, the post office, the hospital, the dole. Five years have witnessed the explicable death of social-democratic England.⁵

As Orwell foresaw, secrecy and surveillance have increased. In Britain freedom of information is restricted by the use of D Notices, the Official Secrets Act, laws regarding libel and *sub judice*. Although the television screen does not spy on us, Orwell was right to anticipate the central importance of television in manipulating public opinion. A secret committee of the BBC, the Director News and Current Affairs Committee, meets every Tuesday morning in Room 7082 at Lime Grove to fix the political line to be followed in news broadcasts.⁶ During the past few years the state has greatly extended its capacity to monitor individual behaviour electronically, for example, by listening to transatlantic phone calls. And yes, we do now generally use a biro, ‘an ink-pencil’ (p. 9) rather than a pen with a nib.

Totalitarianism

To read *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for its accuracy and inaccuracy as a political prediction – look here on this picture (Orwell’s account) and on this (the world in 1984) – is to read the text referentially, as a matter of facts proved true and false. But traditionally there is another, more general level at which a text may be read as truth. For Aristotle the historian differs from the poet in that the historian tells us about facts and ‘what has happened’ while the poet tells us ‘the kinds of things that might happen’ at a level of typicality.⁷ Read as a text affirming some general truth about reality, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be seen as anticipating and in some way leading to the development during and after the 1950s of a particular area in

political theory (I would reserve the term political science), one which identifies both communism and fascism as *totalitarian*. In 1965, in a chapter called 'The General Characteristics of Totalitarian Dictatorship' C.J. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski list six features of this form of society: 'an ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy.'⁸ S.E. Finer later defines 'the totalitarian type' of state according to two features: 'that the entire society is politicised' and that 'the viewpoints which so politicise it are reduced to one alone, from which no dissidence is tolerated.'⁹ On this basis the Soviet system under Stalin during the 1930s and Hitler's Nazi Germany can be equated.

Nineteen Eighty-Four aligns itself with this conception, explicitly so in the section which contains Emmanuel Goldstein's 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism' (pp. 151-174). Noting that the conditions of life in the three super-states of Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia are very much the same, Goldstein affirms that 'Everywhere there is the same pyramidal structure, the same worship of a semi-divine leader, the same economy existing by and for continuous warfare' (p. 160). The rest of the novel seeks to illustrate this view in detail, for instance by making Goldstein himself a composite scapegoat, both the Stalinist's Trotsky and the Nazi's Jew.

As a concept 'totalitarianism' depends more upon ideology than upon science. As Leonard Shapiro says, 'Perhaps as a concept totalitarianism is elusive, hard to define, liable to abuse by the demagogue, and, if wrongly used, a source of confusion when we are trying to find our way through the maze of the many forms which a polity can assume.'¹⁰ His qualifying 'perhaps' is over-cautious. Firstly, because any definition of totalitarianism must efface major social differences between specific examples, even when they may seem as close as National Socialism in Germany and Soviet Communism during the 1930s (for example, while capital was state-owned in the USSR it remained largely privately-owned in Germany). Secondly, because by abstracting and universalising a political system the concept of totalitarianism makes it impossible to understand political effects in terms of specific historical

causes, causes as diverse as the development of Stalinist Russia out of Tsarist absolutism and of Nazi Germany from the liberal democracy of the Weimar Republic. Accordingly, Goldstein's 'Theory of Oligarchical Collectivism', despite its satirical force, is pretty short on explanations. It is left for O'Brien to say that it all comes about because 'The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake ... The object of power is power' (pp. 211, 212). And he is not so much anticipating Foucault as reviving Hobbes: the general inclination of mankind is a 'restless desire of Power after power.'¹¹

Liberalism

The political theory of totalitarianism is deeply penetrated by an ideological commitment to liberal-humanism, as evidenced in the way it works to hypostasise and privilege the liberal-democratic system as *summum bonum* and ideal type of government. Liberal democracy is complicit with the totalitarianism it would condemn in that it supports the undemocratic structures of corporate capitalism and state paternalism. As usual, freedom for the individual really means freedom from social control for the private corporation. Perhaps an extreme instance this, yet no discourse can wholly escape ideology.

A number of somewhat unrelated areas of recent theoretical work, including the Anglo-American philosophic critique of empiricism, the philosophy of science since Kuhn, contributions by Althusser in historical materialism and, within a contrasted problematic, by Derrida, can be summarised, however drastically, in a single statement: since the distinction between 'science' and 'ideology' is not absolute but relative, there can be no corresponding, pure distinction between the cognitive and affective effects of a text, between the text as fact and the text as fantasy. While this may work to the disadvantage of political theory (disablingly so, I would have thought, in the case of the theory of totalitarianism), it works to the advantage of Orwell's novel. It can and has been read in terms of a discourse of knowledge, as a political tract or pamphlet aiming to give access to a reality beyond itself. But it is hard to know what one is doing in trying to *refute* or bring evidence against *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. And if it were compelled

to survive as a text only within the discourse of political theory it wouldn't last very long.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is subtitled 'A Novel'. Among other things this means that whatever is read as the text's assertions at the level of knowledge (and no text can wholly escape these even if it is only the assertion that Sophia is the capital of Bulgaria), they will be 'enacted' or 'dramatised' or 'realised' or 'supplemented' by a fictional narration such that these assertions become re-installed within the category of ideology rather than science. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the novel's abstractable and discursive 'statement' about totalitarianism becomes inseparable from the pseudo-biography of Winston Smith, his love affair with Julia, his betrayal by O'Brien. Inevitably this fictional narrative becomes dream-like, a vehicle for fantasy.

An argument that opens up at this point is whether the device and artifice of the literary text defamiliarises ideology or naturalises it. While Althusser claims that such artifice enables us to 'perceive' ideology, Macherey tends to argue that it naturalises and neutralises ideological contradictions. I suspect that the literary text does both at once, according to its own specific economy, in a simultaneous movement that is ultimately self-cancelling; I am sure that it is up to a progressive reading to make visible the foundations on which the ideological assertions of a text depend.

Certainly the explicit tendency of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is to affirm a liberal notion of the freedom of the individual against all totalitarianism. It aims to do so both thematically, in discussion of the nature of reality, subjectivity, and language, and formally, by offering itself to be read as a realist text. And yet (one reason why it is such a good novel?) this liberalism is worked through so thoroughly in the novelistic forms of dialogue, narrative and the dramatisation of character, and brings into play such a range of heterogeneous discourses that the effect of the text – at least in this present reading – is to undermine precisely the liberal assertion it proposes for itself.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is committed to advocating and defining, sometimes even hysterically, a view of human nature. Or rather one view of human nature against another. Against O'Brien's Hobbesian apology for tyranny the book passionately and explicitly proclaims a notion of self-conscious individuality as

definition of man and source of all value. Through the rendering of Winston Smith and his fictional world this liberalism is explored and extended in relation to epistemological, ethical and ontological discourses. Like a good Cartesian (or, more surprisingly, like a Beckett hero) the first thing Winston Smith becomes certain of is his own inner speech, 'the interminable restless monologue that had been running inside his head, literally for years' (p. 10). Rather than attributing this to the internalisation of various outward discourses, the novel (with Smith) claims it as the private property of the individual – 'Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull' (p. 25). Individual self-consciousness is validated by contrast when the word 'unconscious' is applied to the body and the social. 'Orthodoxy', says Syme, Smith's colleague, 'is unconsciousness' (p. 46, but see also the use of the word on pp. 32, 33, 35, 46, 55). Throughout the novel the individual is accorded value as transcendental subject of knowledge. Winston Smith feels vindicated when he discovers by accident a fact, 'concrete evidence' that the Party has lied (p. 66). He returns obsessively to an empiricist conception of truth as pre-given once and for all in the real such that the individual may be present to himself as bearer of that truth. This underlies Smith's horror of what the Party does, and it is constantly reaffirmed by the text's references to doublethink and Newspeak: 'The empiricist method of thought, on which all the scientific achievements of the past were founded, is opposed to the most fundamental principles of Ingsoc' (p. 157). Significantly (it is an issue to which we shall return), Smith cannot interest Julia in becoming a transcendental subject for knowledge as 'She did not feel the abyss opening beneath her feet at the thought of lies becoming truth' (p. 17). He does.

Corresponding to this imputed priority of individual consciousness are the moral values Smith describes as 'privacy, love, and friendship', a sense of personal loyalty located in the family (p. 28), values which are those traditionally subscribed to by the English gentry (and quite admirable they are as far as they go) but which Smith later discovers among the proles:

They were governed by private loyalties which they did not question. What mattered were individual relationships ... They

were not loyal to a party or a country or an idea, they were loyal to one another. (p. 135)

This is no mere passing phase in Smith's developing experience. Right at the end, after he has tried to refute O'Brien's view that 'Nothing exists except through human consciousness' by pointing to the pre-given truths of geology ('But the rocks are full of the bones of extinct animals ...' p. 213), Smith's liberalism is forced to admit its claim to metaphysical guarantees. O'Brien rightly diagnoses that Smith imagines 'there is something called human nature which will be outraged by what we do and will turn against us'; and he speaks Smith's epitaph: 'You are the last man ... You are the guardian of the human spirit' (pp. 216-217). 'Man', for Winston Smith and Orwell's text, is an abstract essence 'inherent in each single individual' rather than a heterogeneous being constituted in 'the ensemble of social relations.'¹² It's fair to add that O'Brien's Hobbesian anthropology ('The object of power is power') is no less humanist than Smith's liberalism in resting on a view of man as an abstract essence.

This informing liberalism can be easily recognised as holding up one side in a series of well-known ideological contradictions, each handing on a supposedly absolute opposition: subject/object, mind/body, individual/social. Once the text has set up a prior conception of the individual as self-constituted (outside history, language, the psychoanalytic process) it follows inevitably that *anything* which threatens to limit this will appear as unfreedom, all 'Orthodoxy' will be 'unconscious'. Posed as abstracts, the couple freedom/totalitarianism generate and confirm each other, and in this respect the novel only presents an extreme version of the social as itself oppressive, a notion found everywhere from Jane Austen to D.H. Lawrence. And what is thematically asserted in the narrative of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also worked through in the novel's narrative form as a realist text.

A Science-Fiction Story

As Patrick Parrinder well argues, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* must now take its place in the genre of science-fiction, 'not because of the future setting but because of the "estranged" and yet cognitive

status of the Thought Police, the two-way telescreen, Newspeak, and Oligarchical Collectivism.'¹³ These distorted transpositions from our own world become recognisable cognitively but also provide the pleasures of metamorphosis, play and wit. One minor example occurs when Winston Smith expects wine to taste of blackberry jam and have 'an immediate intoxicating effect' (p. 140), and, his palate eroded by years of Victory Gin, is disappointed. Classic science fiction, however, presupposes the realist mode even if in some ways its purpose, like that of coherent meaning in the tendentious joke as analysed by Freud, is to defer and disguise the point so as to make it more suddenly effective.

But *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not classic science fiction. Relatively low on fantasy situations and high on psychological complexity, it is much closer to the traditional realism of the nineteenth-century novel. On the basis of a rendering of individuals situated in an internally consistent world of everyday reality, a narrative is sustained according to the conventional links by which cause and effect are assumed to hook together. This is Barthes's proairetic code, for which an example might be the way the arrest of Smith and Julia at the end of Part Two is followed by his interrogation in Part Three. And the narrative also operates consistently through the hermeneutic code according to which, for example, the seemingly unmotivated appearance of a rat in the lovers' hideaway to be greeted by Winston Smith's words 'Of all horrors in the world – a rat' (p. 119) is explained when 'the worst thing in the world' in Room 101 turns out to be a cage of rats (p. 228). The consistent application of these codes within the narrated, together with the psychological coherence of the presentation of character, tends to efface the means of representation in the novel in favour of the represented, to offer the narrated as an object not constructed by writing, and so transparently accessible to the subject, the reader thus placed in a position of mastery. And this position is confirmed by the generally anonymous and unmarked novelistic style of the text. Yet within the water of its would-be styleless style there float two other distinct kinds of writing, the long extracts from Goldstein's theoretical work and the Appendix on 'The Principles of Newspeak' (pp. 241-252), as well as various

slogans (on p. 86, for example), the voice of the singing prole (pp. 133, 175), slabs of newspeak from Smith's office (p. 34), and a series of extracts (some unpunctuated and all in lower case, as on p. 19) from Smith's diary. In order to substantiate itself as a unity aiming to secure a unitary and transcendent position for the reader, the text establishes these different kinds of discourse and modes of writing within itself only because it is confident it can bind them together into a seamless whole.

'Nineteen Eighty-Four' as Writing

In this the text's project necessarily fails. There are various places where it begins to unravel but possibly two are the most manifest. One is the respect in which *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by directing its attention so forcibly at the topic of writing, comes in consequence to place in the foreground and make a problem of its own discursive origin. Another occurs in the development and dramatisation of Winston Smith's character. Invited, or rather compelled, by the realist narrative to take Smith as the main point of identification, readers find themselves entangled and led elsewhere by a body of fantasy far exceeding the function the text means to assign to it.

A feeling of falling into a Derridean *abîme* afflicts Winston Smith whenever he thinks of 'lies becoming truth' (p. 127). An occupational hazard for him in his work on Newspeak at the Ministry of Truth, it becomes a main constituent in his neurotic obsession with the real:

As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of *The Times* had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted, the original copy destroyed, and the corrupted copy placed on the files in its stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, soundtracks, cartoons, photographs – to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date ... All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as necessary ... (pp. 35-36)

For Winston Smith and for the novel that endorses him, this process of continuous alteration and reinscription is the worst thing in the world (the rats, as will be argued, are but a surrogate for it). Two issues should be separated here. One is the undemocratic manipulation and suppression of information, something which has got worse in Britain in the years up to 1984. The other is the impossibility – in every sense – of a reality which stands (to adapt some phrases from Derrida) as a fundamental immobility, a natural site, absolutely present outside discourse and beyond the reach of the play of the signifier.¹⁴ And yet it is this impossible object which Winston Smith desires.

In the concluding exchanges O'Brien says that 'reality is not external' but 'exists in the human mind, and nowhere else' (p. 200), and again, that 'nothing exists except through human consciousness' (p. 213). O'Brien's idealism (truth exists only in discursive construction) shares the same absolutist problematic as Smith's positivist empiricism (truth exists independent of discursive construction). Winston Smith's mind – his being – begins to crack apart first at the encounter with the disjunction between meaning and referent, then at the slide of signifier over signified. The meaning of history is subject to 'continuous alteration' since it is a meaning constructed in an ever-moving present (though it would not follow from this that historiography does not refer to its own verifiable object of knowledge). And the meaning of a text is transformed if its linguistic components are re-written, if, for example, the Lockean rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence is translated into Newspeak (see p. 251). But the inherent arbitrariness of the relation between signifier and signified does not prevent a stable sign coming about within what Saussure calls 'the social fact' of discourse.¹⁵

By continually enforcing an either/or – either the absolute immobility of the real represented transparently in language, or the abyss of words which are only words – the novel tends to negate what it intended. Instead of confirming the truth of the text it subverts it. Surely the conscientious use of a realist narrative means us to overlook the means of representation in favour of what is represented, to accede to the prose style as something weightless and without origin? And what happens?

Continuous insistence on writing pushes into the foreground the text's own discourse, making us ask what it is and where it comes from. If it originates in the present, how can it have access to this narrative from 1984? And if it derives from 1984, how come it is not written in Newspeak, and what would it be like if it were? Worse follows. For Winston Smith's obsession with finding a truth immune to discursive construction cannot but call attention to the fictionality of this text we are in the process of reading. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as a novel, consists of meanings which do not refer to reality; as such, it can't be distinguished from the material in the Ministry of Plenty which 'had no connexion with anything in the real world' (p. 36). The life, love and subsequent suffering of Winston Smith are themselves nothing but a set of 'lies becoming truths'.

Julia is less susceptible to the horror induced in Smith by the way writing makes truth and lies ultimately though not immediately indistinguishable. As far as he and the novel's avowed purpose are concerned, this counts against her. As main representative of woman in the text Julia is essentialised. She belongs to nature rather than culture (Smith finds her breasts to be 'ripe yet firm', p. 112). She is imagined as all woman, her 'short hair and boyish overalls' only making her 'far more feminine' (p. 117). She is seen as exclusively heterosexual, exclaiming at one point 'How I hate women!' (p. 107), a feature strengthened in Winston Smith's eyes by the number of men she has made love with:

His heart leapt. Scores of times she had done it: he wished it had been hundreds – thousands. (p. 103)

Julia, then, is a figure of masculine fantasy, not unlike Honeychile in Fleming's *Dr No*, the tomboy stereotype of woman, less rational, less conscientious, less aware, less committed to culture, less concerned with absolute truth. 'You're only a rebel from the waist downwards' is Smith's enthusiastic assessment (p. 128).

Part Two follows the course of their love affair, Chapter 2 concluding with their escape from London and the Anti-Sex League into a clearing in the Berkshire woods. Smith reflects that 'simple undifferentiated desire ... was the force that would

tear the Party to pieces' and his view is ratified when, after they make love, the section ends 'It was a political act' (p. 104). So they may believe but we may recall Foucault's more sombre conclusion in *The History of Sexuality* that the 'desirability of sex' makes us think we are affirming it

against all power, when in fact we are fastened to the deployment of sexuality that has lifted up from within us a sort of mirage in which we think we see ourself reflected ...¹⁶

Once again, *1984* reproduces the ideological opposition between the social and the individual, here articulated as that between politics and sexuality.

Fantasy

The intended perspective of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* overlaps largely with the attitudes and experience of Winston Smith, who is offered to the reader as a main point of identification. Smith constitutes a paradigmatic example of the subject of knowledge privileged by realist fiction, like the detective in that genre. He is also the Romantic hero, expressively writing his novelistic inwardness into existence via the 'hurried untidy scrawl' of his diary, just as the hero's represented identity at the beginning of *David Copperfield* seems hardly distinct from his identity in the act of enunciation: 'Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anyone else, these pages must show.' And he is even a version of the existentialist hero. Since orthodoxy is unconsciousness, individuated self-awareness itself is a thoughtcrime meriting death. By entering consciousness Smith acknowledges his contingency, making it over into a motive for action: 'Now he had recognised himself as a dead man it became important to stay alive as long as possible' (p. 26).

Through the rest of the text the reader is invited to follow sympathetically Smith's developing experience, his burgeoning sense of selfhood, his anagnorisis, his love for Julia and their attempt to join the Brotherhood, his arrest, interrogation, torture, and final dissolution into orthodoxy: 'He loved Big Brother' (p. 240). But this psychic passage necessarily betrays the novel into a discourse of the other, a scene for fantasy that

ineluctably unsticks the text's avowed unity and its aim to make readers as present to themselves in the face of the text as Winston wants to be within it. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does this the more radically because it seeks to disavow so curtly the dynamic of the unconscious by ascribing it to a social other (orthodoxy is unconsciousness) or a bodily otherness.

One way to envisage what can figure in the place of an object of desire for Winston Smith is to consider how often and how intensely he recurs to the fantasy of killing a woman – 'He would flog her to death with a rubber truncheon' (p. 16, but examples also on pp. 84, 92, 99, 111, etc.). From this main trajectory his love for Julia brings only a temporary inflection. Traversing the 'official' narrative of the text, running through and across its proffered concatenation of events, there is another narrative. What counts in this other theatre is less the narrative order of events than the order of their narration for Winston Smith. Though a practice of reading will exceed any programmatic analysis, attention can be drawn to some of the more cathected moments of the text.

'The question, as always in classical realism, is one of identity.'¹⁷ *Nineteen Eighty-Four* opens with Winston Smith watched by the castrating gaze of Big Brother and moved by O'Brien's 'curiously disarming' trick of 'resettling his spectacles on his nose' (p. 12). Admitted thus into conscious self-identity and starting a diary, Smith would negotiate the castration complex by locating its site as the maternal body. He hates women, wishes to kill them, dreams that his mother and sister sacrificed their lives for him (p. 27). In the passage from polymorphous perversity to distinct heterosexual preference for a mature object the human subject never loses its bisexual potential. For men the Oedipus complex is both positive (identification with the Father leading to heterosexual object-choice) and negative, a form in which a boy 'displays an affectionate feminine attitude to his father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility to his mother.'¹⁸ Insofar as he is placed in the feminine position towards the Father, Smith feels an ambivalent love towards O'Brien, one on which the text constantly (and otherwise inexplicably) insists. O'Brien knows his thoughts (p. 17), O'Brien promises to meet him 'in the place where there is no darkness' (p. 24), O'Brien has 'a

remarkable grace in his movements' (p. 143). To the end Smith experiences a 'peculiar reverence for O'Brien'. Paranoia ('Always the eyes watching you and the voice enveloping you', p. 25) is induced by Smith's attempt to foreclose his homosexuality.

Against this negative form at a deeper level Smith's heterosexuality acts in a precarious counter-movement. He discovers hatred towards Big Brother (p. 15); works through in dreaming of her something of his feeling towards his mother; while thinking of his failed relationship with his wife, Katherine, he has intercourse with a female prole prostitute (pp. 54 – 59), just – but only just – overcoming his horror of her mouth ('nothing except a cavernous blackness'); writes that '*If there is hope it lies in the proles*' (p. 59) – understanding of this is deferred; and visits an antique shop owned by Mr Charrington, 'perhaps sixty ... with a long, benevolent nose' (p. 79), from whom he acquires the phallus.

It is symbolised fetishistically:

It was a heavy lump of glass, curved on one side, flat on the other, making almost a hemisphere. There was a peculiar softness, as of rainwater, in both the colour and the texture of the glass. At the heart of it, magnified by the curved surface, there was a strange, pink, convoluted object that recalled a rose or a sea anemone. (p. 79)

This glass paperweight is 'heavy in his pocket, but fortunately it did not make much of a bulge' (p. 80), even though it 'banged against his thigh at every step' (p. 84).

Armed with the phallus (whereas O'Brien's grace is 'disarming') and following her message to him, 'I love you' (p. 89), Smith in Part Two enters into his love-affair with Julia. They take a room over Charrington's shop, where Smith keeps the paperweight on a table, gleaming 'softly in the half-darkness' (p. 112). 'Inexhaustibly interesting' (more interesting in the text's own estimation than Julia), it gathers into itself the traditional symbolic resonances of Romantic love, an enclave of reciprocated narcissism, the heart of a heartless world, light, eternity, 'a tiny world', 'eternity at the heart of the crystal' (pp. 121, 124, 127, 131). For Smith love is

represented fetishistically not only by the paperweight but also, now, by the figure of the singing prole, the phallic mother. As 'solid as a Norman pillar, with brawny red forearms', she had a mouth 'corked with clothes pegs'. Her love-song echoes through Part Two, and at one point she is watched by both Smith and Julia (pp. 175-176). Having found this hope in the proles, Smith is now able to recall his own mother, imaged not as death but in terms of a similar phallicism. Working over his earlier dream he sees in his mother a protective 'gesture of the arm' (p. 131) and admits to Julia, 'until this moment I believed I had murdered my mother' (p. 132). In identification (albeit uneasy) with Goldstein and with the (deceptive) appearance of O'Brien as member of the Brotherhood, Winston Smith starts to take political action against an unjust society. But at the end of Part Two Charrington turns out to be a member of the Thought Police, Smith and Julia are arrested, the glass paperweight is 'smashed to pieces' (p. 179).

Delusional jealousy in men is regarded by psychoanalysis as a defence against homosexuality, a projection that can be described in the formula: 'I do not love him, she loves him'.¹⁹ In the more extreme form of persecutory paranoia 'it is precisely the most loved person of his own sex that becomes his persecutor',²⁰ and the corresponding paradigm is: 'I do not love him - I hate him, because HE PERSECUTES ME'.²¹ In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* O'Brien is the focus for Smith's paranoid sense that everyone is watching him and threatening him. At points in the text Smith's homosexual love for O'Brien and his heterosexual love for Julia coalesce in a compromise formation, for example when he fantasises that he might use the paperweight to 'smash her skull in' (p. 84), or again when he tells her, 'The more men you've had, the more I love you' (p. 103). But for Smith the negative Oedipal trajectory wins out in the end.

O'Brien in his role as member of the Brotherhood contacts Smith in the same place and by the same means of a written note as Julia first did (pp. 129-130). In Part Three with the arrest, interrogation, torture and confession Smith finally arrives at his long-promised rendezvous with O'Brien in 'the place where there is no darkness' (p. 196), the constant electric light of the prison-cell. 'I do not love him, he hates me':

O'Brien tortures Smith but still he loves him, says that 'He was the tormentor, he was the protector' (p. 196), and later finds, 'He had never loved him so deeply as at this moment' (p. 202).

Smith's regression from self-identity and heterosexual love for Julia is not completed until the threat of castration is re-instituted in Room 101 (pp. 227-231). Like Ratman in the well-known case-history, he feels that other people, especially O'Brien, know his thoughts. Like Ratman also, who fantasised around the idea of 'a specially horrible punishment used in the East',²² Winston Smith is menaced with what 'was a common punishment in Imperial China'. But the rats would aim at the head rather than the anus. In Ratman, an obsessional neurotic, the idea took the form of anal eroticism and was related to 'the lady whom he admired'.²³ Smith himself has the place of the victim. As usual in the process of the unconscious, the meaning 'castration' is displaced into a marginal signifier, the apparently arbitrary room number. 101, three digits in a binary series, makes up the phallic number with absence at its centre and also connotes the airship which crashed so spectacularly on 5th October 1930.²⁴ Faced with the worst thing in the world ('they attack the eyes first') Smith entirely repudiates his heterosexuality ('Do it to Julia!'). Afterwards, drunk in the café, he 'froze with horror' at the thought of heterosexual intercourse (p. 234); his paranoia has dissolved with full relapse into the feminine position: 'He loved Big Brother' (p. 240).

Dystopia and Paranoia

Rather than diminishing or reducing the text of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the previous account would expand its literary significance. This can be understood in two respects: because fantasy in literature is always imbricated with an ideological formation; because it is a function of literary fantasy to be representative rather than idiosyncratic. There is space here only to point in the directions in which analysis needs to be more fully developed.

Writing not about *Nineteen Eighty-Four* but about the film text, *Dog Day Afternoon*, Fredric Jameson argues that the modern vision of dystopia derives allegorically from 'that immense and decentralised power network which marks the

present multinational stage of monopoly capitalism.²⁵ While older expressions in the utopian/dystopian mode gave a *personalised* account of power as originating, for good or ill, with individuals, this contemporary film renders a sense, 'rarely accessible in figurable terms', of power as hostile, systematic, and marked rather by the absence of personal agency than its presence; a sense

inscribed in the spatial trajectory of the film itself as it moves from the ghettoised squalor of the bank interior to that eerie and impersonal science fiction landscape of the airport finale: a corporate space without inhabitants, utterly technologised and functional, a place beyond city and country alike – collective, yet without people, automated and computerised, yet without any of that older utopian or dystopian clamour ...²⁶

Whether or not we go along with Jameson's willingness to tie back dystopia onto an economic cause, monopoly capitalism, we may still accept that the modern dystopian mode reproduces an ideological formation around anonymous social repression rather than individual agency.

But the account of literature as ideology does not exhaust its effect as fantasy, and for this we must turn to psychoanalysis. Briefly: everyone has fantasies in the form of day-dreams, invariably of an undisguised and narcissistic nature that is boring for others; the aesthetic text, because it provides 'forepleasure' in the 'purely formal'²⁷ (that is, the work/play of the signifier), presents fantasies in such a way that makes it 'possible for other people once more to derive consolation and alleviation from their own sources of pleasure in their unconscious which have become inaccessible to them.'²⁸ While the fantasy in actuality tends towards the merely personal and subjective, the *aesthetic* fantasy moves onto the terrain of the transindividual and intersubjective. And so the fact that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been widely read for nearly two generations is itself evidence that the text can perform as a symptomatic literary fantasy for Europe and North America in the twentieth century.

Nineteen Eighty-Four makes available the fantasy of persecutory paranoia (and it would be a misrecognition to say

that Winston Smith 'really' is being persecuted by Ingsoc). In the course of arguing that 'no meaning given to history, based on Hegelian-Marxist premises' is capable of accounting for fascism, for 'the drama of Nazism', Lacan has suggested that paranoia should be referred to the operation of the death drive:

the offering to obscure gods of an object of sacrifice is something which few subjects can resist ... the sacrifice signifies that, in the object of our desires, we try to find evidence for the presence of the desire of this Other that I call here *the dark God*.²⁹

Again, the issue of historical explanation – monopoly capitalism, Nazism – may be left aside in bringing together dystopia and paranoia.

Just as polymorphous perversity is for utopia, so persecutory paranoia – they are attacking me – constitutes the psychoanalytic lining, the unconscious subtext, for dystopia. As such it constantly recurs through images and narratives of unjust imprisonment and interrogation, not only in popular culture, in film and television, but also in high cultural literary modes: in Kafka (there is 'a small, curiously beetle-like man' in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 52); in Pound's *Pisan Cantos*, in Solzhenitsyn's *First Circle*, and in Pynchon's *V* (especially 'Mondaugen's story'). Linked to a state of global warfare the dystopian/paranoiac fantasy appears in *Catch 22* and *Gravity's Rainbow*; linked to the hospital or psychiatric ward in *Clockwork Orange*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Woman at the Edge of Time*. And, in Norman Bryson's description, it forms the basis for one of the best-known paintings of this century:

Guernica, a specific reaction to a single (if emblematic) political event, by raising the spectre of slaughter from the air, becomes a generalised nightmare.³⁰

The list could be extended. Despite the specific forms taken by secondary revision in each of these different texts – the state institution as bureaucracy, prison camp, Gulag, military base, psychiatric hospital, secret police (whether KGB or CIA) – all can be read for the fantasy of living in what Pynchon names

'The Zone', subject to institutionalised surveillance and persecution by a wholly malign other.

Applying this view to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, my argument would be that the text makes the dystopian/paranoiac fantasy more effectively available in Part One of the novel than later, when, via Winston Smith's affair with Julia and relationship with O'Brien, the text becomes increasingly psychologised and denunciatory in the rhetoric of what Jameson speaks of as 'dystopian clamour'. Continuous international warfare (real or invented), the Thought Police, Newspeak, 'the eyes watching you', the seedy townscapes of London under Ingsoc, these state institutional, cultural, linguistic and subjective apparatuses present in figurable terms what is arguably the most typical contemporary fantasy.

The Novel as Paperweight

There was such a depth of it, and yet it was almost as transparent as air ... as though the surface of the glass had been the arch of the sky, enclosing a tiny world ... He had the feeling that he could get inside it, and that in fact he was inside it, along with the mahogany bed and the gateleg table, and ... the paperweight itself. The paperweight was the room he was in, and the coral was Julia's life and his own, fixed in a sort of eternity at the heart of the crystal. (p. 121)

Since persecutory paranoia is a defence against homosexuality, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may also achieve typicality in its sexual politics. The homosexuality of Winston Smith's negative Oedipus complex leads to reinforcement of the disavowal of castration in the positive form, his love for Julia. Within his fetishistic imaginary Julia figures as the phallus of his fully present heterosexuality. Unable to live with his own divided sexuality, Smith must fix Julia's femininity in place once and for all according to the traditional phallogocentric scenario of Romantic love. Her own sexuality is to be denied so that she can become coral in his paperweight, natural rather than human, mineral rather than organic, like the metallic woman that is Pynchon's V or the Venus Anadyomene in 'Medallion', the last poem in Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*:

Spun in King Minos' hall
From metal, or intractable amber ...

Hence the names: Winston Smith, stand-in for the cigar-smoking warlord, Julia his jewel.

Julia in the paperweight, Julia as the paperweight, is meant to be a mirror in whose reflection Winston Smith may appear fully present to himself in the form he wishes to see himself, a transcendent ego. The paperweight represents 'a sort of eternity', a point at which being is infinitely present outside temporal difference as well as spatial difference, a completed circle. But also, in this variegated symbolism, because it is 'almost as transparent as air', this crystal would provide unmediated access to knowledge, with no means of representation acting to bring subject into relation with object. Winston Smith sees himself inside the paperweight 'along with the mahogany bed' and, in total self-reference, 'the paperweight itself'.

If sexual difference is taken up analogously with linguistic difference, Winston Smith's foreclosure of sexual difference (he is to be all man, Julia all woman) corresponds to his denial that meaning is produced in the process of the signifier. Absolutely opposed to Newspeak, the paperweight for him is 'a little chunk of history that they've forgotten to alter' (p. 120), one of 'a few solid objects with no words attached to them' (p. 127). Even after it is broken, Smith during his interrogation struggles like a tragic hero to retain his conception of himself as a man and a sovereign consciousness able to grasp truth outside words. In the name of the Father, O'Brien in room 101 reinstates for Smith the persistence of human consciousness only in words, text, writing. And the novel intends a reader to take Smith's return to the feminine position only as tragic.

Nineteen Eighty-Four tries to supplement its proffered meaning with the guarantee of a metatext, the 'Appendix'. There, the principle of Newspeak is defined as the intention 'to make speech as nearly as possible independent of consciousness' (p. 248). Aiming to counterpose itself wholly against the possibility of Newspeak, to present to the reader a consciousness as nearly as possible independent of writing, the novel mobilises the realist mode as a would-be transparent

means of access to the truth it would represent. In trying to refound the significance of the text not so much as a picture of reality, to be judged true or false, nor as a general truth about totalitarianism, but rather as a typical form of modern fantasy, this analysis has suggested how the text as writing provokes readings beyond its overt intention. However hard it tries – the more it tries – to tell the truth, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* cannot cover clearly and hold in place the process of the text on which it depends. Literally, a paperweight is something used to hold down pieces of writing. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* cannot be such an object. Nor, for that matter, can this present analysis.

Notes

- 1 Patrick Parrinder, *Science Fiction, Its Criticism and Teaching*, London, 1980, p. 75.
- 2 George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Harmondsworth, 1983, p. 7. All page references are to this edition.
- 3 *Guardian*, 31 October 1983.
- 4 *Guardian*, 1 November 1983, report of *Family Expenditure Survey*, published by the Department of Health and Social Security, 1983.
- 5 For an explanation, see Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', in Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds.), *The Politics of Thatcherism*, London, 1983; for an alternative, see Geoff Hodgson, *The Democratic Economy*, Harmondsworth, 1984.
- 6 'Screening the News', *The Leveller*, No. 11 (January 1978), pp. 14-17.
- 7 Aristotle, 'On the Art of Poetry' in *Classical Literary Criticism*, (tr. T.S. Dorsch), Harmondsworth, 1965, p. 43.
- 8 C.J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965, p. 21.
- 9 S.E. Finer, *Comparative Government*, London, 1970, p. 75.
- 10 Leonard Shapiro, *Totalitarianism*, London, 1972, p. 124.
- 11 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, London, 1957, p. 49.
- 12 Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach' in C.J. Arthur (ed.), *The German Ideology*, London, 1974, p. 122.
- 13 Parrinder, op.cit.
- 14 Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in *Writing and Difference*, (tr. Alan Bass), London, 1978, pp. 278-293.
- 15 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, (tr. Wade Baskin), New York, 1959, p. 113.
- 16 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction*, (tr. Robert Hurley), Harmondsworth, 1981, p. 157.

- 17 Colin MacCabe, 'Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure', *Screen*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Autumn 1976), p. 18.
- 18 Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, Standard Edition, (ed. J. Strachey), London 1953-1974, Vol. 19, p. 33.
- 19 Sigmund Freud, *Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality*, in Standard Edition, Vol. 18, p. 225.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 226.
- 21 Sigmund Freud, *Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)*, in Standard Edition, Vol. 12, p. 63.
- 22 Sigmund Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, in Standard Edition, Vol. 10, p. 166.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- 24 'The number three has been confirmed from many sides as a symbol of the male genitals', *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in Standard Edition, Vol. 5, p. 358; for an attempt to establish 'in the zero number the suturing stand-in for the lack' and the number series itself as 'metonymy of the zero', see Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Suture (elements of the logic of the Signifier)', *Screen*, Vol. 18 No. 4 (Winter 1977/78), pp. 24-34, and cf. the title (and contents) of Mike Westlake's novel, *One Zero and the Night Controller*, London, 1980; 'A quite recent symbol of the male organ in dreams deserves mention: the airship' (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, in Standard Edition, Vol. 5, p. 356), for the disaster which overcame the largest British airship, the R 101, at Beauvais in France, see Norris McWhirter, *Guinness Book of Records*, Enfield, 1979, p. 149.
- 25 Fredric Jameson, 'Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film', *Screen Education*, No. 30 (Spring 1979), pp. 75-92, p. 88.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Sigmund Freud, *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*, in Standard Edition, Vol. 9, p. 153.
- 28 Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, in Standard Edition, Vol. 16, p. 376.
- 29 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, (tr. Alan Sheridan) London, 1977, p. 275.
- 30 Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting*, London, 1983, p. 154.