Utopia, Dystopia, and the Middle Class in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

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Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written directly or indirectly against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it.

—George Orwell, "Why I Write"

The collapse of Stalinism and Fordism, the end of the cold war, and the brutal *Gleichschaltung* being imposed on humanity by a now untrammeled capitalist world order underscore the need for a return to George Orwell's famous dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Such an effort is particularly timely for a Marxist tradition heretofore so engaged in ideological polemics with Orwell's cold war appropriators that it has hardly begun the task of providing a Marxist theoretical analysis of the novel itself. These cold war polemics have focused on the empirical validity and historical applicability of the concept of totalitarianism or on the personal integrity of Orwell and his credentials as an honest witness to the important events of his time. Both admirers and detractors alike have tended to assume Orwell's notion of totalitarianism to be straightforward and thus unworthy of any par-
ticular theoretical reflection.¹ Both sides also seem to have fallen under the spell of Orwell's persona and a narrative prose style aiming at the clarity of a windowpane.²

I propose a different strategy. Utilizing concepts of ideology, literary production, and utopian discourse developed by Pierre Macherey, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Louis Marin, I will investigate the ideological “deep structure” beneath the surface narrative of Nineteen Eighty-Four.³ I will be concerned, in other words, with Orwell’s “democratic socialism”—specifically with the binary opposition of socialism and totalitarianism that constitutes its utopian and dystopian poles⁴—and with the absolutely crucial, yet curiously unrepresentable, place and function of the middle class within his political ideology. I argue two theses. The first, minor thesis is that because Orwell’s democratic socialism is explicitly and militantly anticapitalist, his concept of totalitarianism must be distinguished clearly from


that of his cold war appropriators. Clarifying this difference allows us to see the literary figuration of totalitarian Oceania as more complex and politically radical than is commonly supposed: what is conventionally reduced to a narrative of the destruction of a middle-class individual by totalitarianism is, in fact, an impassioned representation of totalitarianism as the historical destiny of middle-class individualism.

However, and this is my second, major thesis, Orwell's critique of middle-class individualism and his vision of a progressive, antitotalitarian alternative are deeply compromised from within by what I will call, following Jameson, the "political unconscious" of his ideology of democratic socialism. Orwell's representation of Oceania is incoherent, and its self-contradictions cluster, symptomatically, around its figuration of the middle-class Outer Party and the struggle for freedom of its middle-class protagonist, Winston Smith. The ultimate source of the novel's incoherence is an irreducible tension between Orwell's conscious commitment to an egalitarian, populist alliance of the middle and working classes, and his unconscious identification with elitism and the will to power of innately superior individuals. Superficially masked by a Manichaean contrast of socialism and totalitarianism, the determining presence of Orwell's unconscious elitism is revealed when he tries to put this ideology of Good versus Evil to work in the form of fictional institutions, individuals, and events—when he attempts, that is, to represent the middle class of Oceania as both the agent and victim of totalitarianism, and therefore as both enemy and ally of the working-class proles. Ultimately, as I will show, the political unconscious of Orwell's socialism demands the impossible, a "middle-class hero" who will be both innately superior to the working class and morally superior to the ruling class. This is a standard to which neither Winston Smith nor the capitalistic middle class measures up—hence the failure of Winston's rebellion and the depiction of capitalistic individualism as the origin of Oceania—but, insofar as such moral elitism bears an uncanny, and for Orwell, intolerable, resemblance to totalitarianism itself, it is also a standard that cannot be represented at all, one that must be repressed from the narrative altogether.

The novel's deep structure of democratic socialism, the place and function of the middle class within it, and the contradictions between its dystopian and utopian moments—Oceania is portrayed as invulnerable to progressive change, yet the "author" of Winston's story writes from a post-totalitarian, socialist future—are all virtually unexplored topics. However, I also believe a critical reexamination of Orwell's populism is particularly relevant to contemporary politics given the reemergence of middle-class
resentment as a significant political force. Similarly, Orwell’s anti-Marxism is of continued interest given the (latest) death of Marxist social theory, and the recent revival of the political theories of Albert Camus, Hannah Arendt, and other antitotalitarian “rebels” of Orwell’s “hard-boiled” generation, whose “existentialist” vision of democracy—democracy of, for, and by “authentic” individuals—is again being deployed against those who dare, or dared once, to defend Marxism. Finally, from what is only seemingly an opposing direction, Orwell’s attempt to fashion progressive politics in terms of cultural values remains instructive in light of a new postmodern leftism that also asserts the autonomy of culture and the primacy of ideological over economic determinations of class. In short, the relevance of Nineteen Eighty-Four remains surprisingly undiminished by the victory of capitalism over peasant-based revolutions in the so-called developing nations. Orwell demonstrates that, as long as capitalism dominates the world system, totalitarianism remains a real possibility, and the notion of a progressive alliance of the middle and working classes a chimera.

A preliminary methodological note is in order. While I am neither performing nor defending classical semiotic analysis here, I will be making heuristic use of the semiotic square developed by French linguist A. G. Greimas. The square takes the general form depicted in Figure 1, and it demonstrates how a single term, S (let us say truth), implies an opposition, S and not-S (truth and falsehood), that is always more complex than it appears. In our example, truth and falsehood are actually compound, or “synthetic,” terms: truth is a “complex” term unifying and transcending a more basic “contrary” opposition between being and seeming (s₁ and s₂), while falsehood, the negation of truth, is a “neutral” term unifying and transcending another contrary opposition between the simple negatives of being and seeming, not-being and not-seeming (not-s₁ and not-s₂). The two transverse axes, s₁ and not-s₁, s₂ and not-s₂ (being and not-being, seeming and not-seeming), specify “contradictory” tensions distinct from

5. For representative examples, see Margaret Canovan, Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Jeffrey C. Isaac, Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). See also my review of these books in American Historical Review 99, no. 2 (April 1994).

6. This example is taken from Algirdas Julien Greimas, On Meaning: Selected Writing in Semiotic Theory (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 110. My description of the general form of the semiotic square follows that of Jameson’s foreword to this volume.
the contrary oppositions, while the synthesis created by uniting the two “complementary” sides of the square, s₁ and not-s₂, s₂ and not-s₁ (being and not-seeming, seeming and not-being), suggests two alternative terms, A and B (secret and lie), outside or beyond the initial opposition of S and not-S.

The square, then, generates at least ten positions from the initial term truth. Its critical value, according to Jameson, one of its most accomplished users, is that it provides “a virtual map of a conceptual closure, or better still, of the closure of ideology itself; a mechanism which, while seeming to generate a rich variety of possible concepts and positions, remains, in fact, locked into an initial aporia or double bind that it cannot transform from the inside by its own means.”

Totalitarianism and Socialism in Orwell’s Political Ideology

The ideological project of Nineteen Eighty-Four is to represent the destruction of human individuality and human community by a totalitarian state. Let us begin, therefore, by clarifying what Orwell means by totalitarianism. The term originates with Italian fascists, who used it to designate the constitutional theory of a state whose legitimacy springs from its real-

ization of the national idea rather than from the divisive mechanisms of electoral politics. 8 During the thirties, however, Orwell, along with Franz Borkenau, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, and a few other writers on the Left, began using the term totalitarianism to denote the perversion of socialist ideals under Stalin and the paradoxical similarity between Stalinism and the political style and methods by which Hitler had “resolved” the contradictions of capitalism. As a self-proclaimed antifascist and democratic socialist, Orwell was profoundly disturbed by the “inhumane collectivism” of the Soviet Union, in particular, by what he perceived as the ruthless “ends-over-means” mentality of the Communist Party dictatorship and by the “total” control over society systematically exercised by the bureaucratic apparatus of the Soviet state. For Orwell, this conjunction of party dictatorship and state power constitutes the essence of totalitarianism, and, therefore, he does not hesitate to identify Russian communism with Italian fascism and German Nazism despite the otherwise profound, class-based differences between them.

As is shown in Figure 2, Orwell’s conception of totalitarianism has important ideological, as well as analytical, implications. Totalitarianism is a complex term unifying and transcending a contrary relationship between the nihilistic will to power of party dictatorship and the rational, bureaucratic organization of state power. The latter terms are contraries in the sense that will to power implies an irrational, unceasing, and unlimited war of all against all incompatible with social order and stability, while bureaucratic organization implies a rational, rule-governed and goal-directed authority incompatible with social disorder and instability. The tension between party dictatorship and state power seemingly raises significant questions regarding their coexistence and at the very least indicates a need for further analysis, ultimately a social scientific theory of the ends and means of totalitarian power. However, it is precisely the ideological function of the term totalitarianism to preempt further investigation by subsuming the contrary relationship between will to power and bureaucratic rationality under a higher, mythic unity, whose very existence guarantees their compatibility and naturalizes their coexistence. 9

Totalitarianism
(communism, fascism, Nazism)

Party Dictatorship
(will to power of ruling elite)

State Power
(bureaucratic control of society)

Figure 2. Orwell’s Concept of Totalitarianism

Thus, totalitarianism is something more than an analytical, empirically derived concept, and its connotation of an unrelied, almost demonic evil raises the suspicion that it serves interests other than the production of knowledge. Totalitarianism is an ideology in the classic Althusserian sense of describing not real social relations but rather the “lived experience” of real social relations by a social subject for whom practical and personal interests are predominant.10 Being subject-centered and practically oriented (as opposed to object-centered and knowledge-oriented), ideology tends to answer the scientific question “Why?” in terms that are psychologically and sociologically satisfying. Of course, an ideological explanation may be true or false—the social scientific value of totalitarianism does not concern us here—but its defining characteristic is its personal meaning and significance. Our task, therefore, will be to discover why the concept of totalitarianism is so ideologically compelling for Orwell.

Figure 3 specifies the remaining elements of Orwell’s political ideology. For Orwell, socialism and totalitarianism exist as a binary opposition of good and evil, with the neutral term socialism negating the complex term totalitarianism by unifying and transcending the simple negatives of party dictatorship and state power. To provide substantive content for the positions not–state power and not–party dictatorship, I have included familiar, hopefully noncontroversial attributes culled from texts representative of the three generally acknowledged stages of Orwell’s political development, from

Totalitarianism
(communism, fascism, Nazism)
(inhumane collectivism)

Party Dictatorship
(will to power)
(ruling elite)

State Power
(bureaucratic control of society)
(middle-class functionaries)

Superior Individuals
?

not–State Power
(libertarian values)
from 

from 
 Nineteen Eighty-Four:
(individual freedom)
The Road to Wigan Pier:
(liberty)

from “The Lion and the Unicorn”:
(political democracy)

Hypothetical class-basis:
(middle class, mental labor, Orwell)

not–Totalitarianism
(Socialism)
(humane collectivism)
(national family, populism)

Inferior Individuals
?

not–Party Dictatorship
(egalitarian values)

(human community)

Figure 3. Orwell’s Model of Totalitarianism

_Nineteen Eighty-Four_ itself (published in 1949, during Orwell’s last, “pessimistic” years), from _The Road to Wigan Pier_ (1937, prior to his formal commitment to socialism), and from “The Lion and the Unicorn” (1941, during his “optimistic,” socialist period).\(^\text{11}\)

In _Nineteen Eighty-Four_, as we shall see, not–state power corresponds to “individual freedom,” and not–party dictatorship to “moral community.” In _The Road to Wigan Pier_, Orwell refers to socialism as a “league


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of the oppressed” united against “tyranny at home and abroad” (222) and for “liberty and justice” (216). Orwell frequently refers to socialism as “humane” collectivism,12 and in his most specific formulation, in “The Lion and the Unicorn,” he defines socialism as “political democracy” and “equality of income” in the context of state ownership of the means of production (79). Incorporating these characteristics into the square, we find the contradictions of bureaucratic state power to be liberty, individual freedom, and political democracy, and the contradictions of party dictatorship to be justice, moral community, and social equality. Furthermore, those values associated with not–state power may fairly be labeled libertarian, while those associated with not–party dictatorship may be designated as egalitarian.

The Class Politics of Socialism and Totalitarianism

But this is not all. To grasp adequately Orwell’s category of totalitarianism, it is necessary to consider how he defines socialism in class terms and premises the transition to socialism on a populist alliance of the middle and working classes. In The Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell pleads for a socialism that would attract rather than repel middle-class voters who are, he maintains, proletarian in an economic sense but still separated from the working class by deeply ingrained class prejudices and cultural differences. The absence of a populist ideology, Orwell warns, not only restricts socialism to a small minority of working-class militants and middle-class intellectuals, it actually antagonizes the white-collar working class and drives them into the arms of fascism. “Millions of office workers and black-coated employees of all kinds,” Orwell insists, “have the same interests and the same enemies as the working class. All are being robbed and bullied by the same system. Yet how many of them realize it? When the pinch came nearly all of them would side with their oppressors and against those who ought to be their allies. It is quite easy to imagine a middle class crushed down to the worst depths of poverty and still remaining bitterly anti–working class in sentiment; this being, of course, a ready-made Fascist Party” (225–26). In order to attract the “exploited” middle class, it is best for socialists to accept temporarily the reality of cultural class differences and to avoid hypocritical or divisive tactics that ignore or forcibly suppress them. Once a socialist

12. For example, Orwell approvingly cites Franz Borkenau’s opposition of “a freer, more humane form of collectivism to the purge and censorship variety.” See “Review of Borkenau,” CEJL, 2:26.
movement has been built, “then perhaps this misery of class-prejudice will fade away” (231) and the middle class might come to reject its cultural pretensions and to accept the reality of its proletarian status. “When we get there,” Orwell concludes, “it will not be so dreadful as we feared, for, after all, we have nothing to lose but our aitches” (232). The use of the first-person plural is important; while he defends socialism throughout The Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell explicitly identifies himself with the middle class and the values he ascribes to it. “Here I am with a bourgeois upbringing and a working-class income. To which class do I belong? Economically I belong to the working class, but it is almost impossible for me to think of myself as anything but a member of the bourgeoisie” (225).

In “The Lion and the Unicorn,” Orwell depicts socialism as a combination of libertarian populism and state socialism. Under socialism, the economy will be reduced to a technical and administrative problem no longer complicated by class conflicts. “The state, representing the whole nation, owns everything, and everyone is a state employee. . . . In a Socialist economy these problems [overproduction and unemployment] do not exist. The state simply calculates what goods will be needed and does its best to produce them. Production is only limited by the amount of labor and raw materials” (79–80). In keeping with his essentially frictionless model, Orwell envisions a socialist revolution based on an ideology of national community and patriotism capable of uniting the middle and working classes against the decadent aristocrats and imperialist plutocrats of the ruling class. Capitalist England is portrayed as a dysfunctional Victorian family: “It has rich relations who have to be kow-towed to and poor relations who are horribly sat upon, and there is a deep conspiracy of silence about the source of the family income. It is a family in which . . . most of the power is in the hands of irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts. . . . A family with the wrong members in control—that, perhaps, is as near as one can come to describing England” (68). As he did earlier in The Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell acknowledges class differences and continues to define them culturally, as differences of accent, tastes, clothes, and lifestyle, rather than economically.13 However, in “The Lion and the Unicorn,” the middle class

13. My criticism of Orwell’s “cultural materialism” is not a denial of the fact that “accent, tastes, clothes, and lifestyle” have no class valence. Nor am I advocating a “vulgar” Marxist reflection theory whereby class valences are conceived as logically deducible from, or mechanically coordinated with, the dominant mode of production. Rather, I am contending that the class valences of cultural production are only relatively autonomous with respect to the forces and relations of production that set limits of correspondence and
is no longer depicted as sinking into the proletariat; now it is the workers who are being raised into the ranks of the middle class. Orwell admits that “unjust” distinctions remain, but he insists that “real differences” are diminishing as a “new middle class of managers, salesmen, engineers, chemists, and technicians of all kinds” expands “upward and downward” within the social hierarchy. The more prosperous workers are becoming visibly middle class, and the “old classification of society into capitalists, proletarians and petty-bourgeois (small property owners)” is becoming obsolete. A certain classlessness inevitably accompanies growing prosperity and extended education and communication. “In tastes, habits, manners and outlook the working class and the middle class are drawing together. The unjust distinctions remain, but the real differences diminish” (77).

While it is accurate enough to claim that “in this way of thinking Orwell prepared the orthodox political climate of a generation,”14 it is still the case that in “The Lion and the Unicorn,” Orwell remains an unregenerate advocate of a socialist overthrow of capitalism. Not only does he continue to deplore the ongoing social injustices of capitalism, he remains convinced of the economic inefficiency of “private capitalism” in comparison with “socialist” economies—namely, the state-regulated economy of fascist Germany that has, in Orwell’s opinion, reduced capitalists to mere managers, and the state-owned economy of the communist Russia that has eliminated the capitalists as a class. Orwell not only continues to believe in a populist socialist alliance, he believes that the war against fascism will noncorrespondence on them. Althusser’s notion of structural causality as a parallelogram of simultaneous but unequally acting forces best expresses my meaning. A similar point must be made regarding the autonomy, or primacy, of psychological determinations: identity and fantasy are irreducible facts of human subjectivity, but the language and culture with which we identify and through which our fantasies are embodied are sociologically determined. For opposing Weberian and Lacanian views, see, respectively, Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), and Slavoj Žižek, For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor (London: Verso, 1991).

itself be an agent of socialist transformation. If the war against Germany is to be won, he argues, a socialist revolution based on a “patriotic class alliance” between the middle and working classes is necessary. Furthermore, the war has made a socialist revolution possible by creating a feeling of national solidarity, greatly reducing class distinctions, and revealing the self-interested incompetence of the ruling class. “War is the greatest of all agents of change. It speeds up all processes, wipes out minor distinctions, brings realities to the surface. Above all, war brings it home to the individual that he is not altogether an individual. . . . If it can be made clear that defeating Hitler means wiping out class privilege, the great mass of middling people . . . will probably be on our side” (94–95). Of course, the elite will “obstruct” for all they are worth—at some point or other it may be necessary to use violence—and even the middle classes will “writhe” when their accustomed way of life is menaced. “But just because . . . patriotism is finally stronger than class-hatred, the chances are that the will of the majority will prevail” (95).

Leaving aside the admittedly fascinating degree of insight and error contained in these views,15 we may fairly conclude that Orwell’s vision of socialism and of the socialist revolution is based on an alliance of the middle and working classes, an alliance premised, in turn, on the absence of fundamental economic conflict between the two classes and on a populist ideology bridging the gulf of cultural difference that actually does divide them. Orwell’s vision of a socialist alliance of the middle and working classes has important implications for our model of totalitarianism. It suggests, as shown in Figure 3, a correspondence within Orwell’s political ideology between the middle and working classes and the libertarian and egalitarian values that define socialism as the negation of totalitarianism. The association of the middle class with libertarian values of political democracy, liberty, and individual freedom, and the working class with egalitarian values of social equality, justice, and moral community defines class relations ideologically rather than economically. By ignoring relations of economic ownership and

the social division of labor, Orwell’s populism evades the uncomfortable fact of middle-class domination and exploitation of the working class by means of the distinction between mental and manual labor and the monopolization of educational qualifications, managerial skills, and bureaucratic positions. The structural-economic relation that allies the middle class with the capitalist system and against the working class is simply eliminated. Furthermore, by unifying and transcending the contrary relationship between liberty and equality under socialism, even the cultural-ideological differences that Orwell acknowledges as existing between the middle and working classes are effectively neutralized. Their coexistence at a higher level transforms the contrary relationship between middle- and working-class values into a complementary one, and their “natural” compatibility is further reinforced by their common moral goodness and their common opposition to the evil of totalitarianism.

The combined effects of the opposition of socialism and totalitarianism are particularly satisfying for Orwell, insofar as they permit him to identify with the middle class and its values while, at the same time, committing himself wholeheartedly to the cause of socialism and the values of the working class. However, as we can see from Figure 3, the existence of classes and class-based values within the category of socialism reveals the specter of an underlying elitism repressed by Orwell’s morally principled opposition to totalitarianism. Figure 3 suggests that Orwell’s political ideology is riven by a tension between his conscious commitment to both libertarian and egalitarian values and an unconscious impulse to valorize superior individuals at the expense of the inferior masses. If this is the case, and I believe it is, then the fact that Orwell is undeniably opposed to capitalist elitisms of wealth and totalitarian elitisms of power raises an important question: just what kind of an elitist can he possibly be? Finally, the introduction of class and class-based values into the model creates an interesting asymmetry between socialist class relations, where the middle and working classes are allied, and totalitarian relations, where party dictatorship is associated with a ruling class of the leader and the party elite, and state power with a middle class of bureaucrats. If the middle class is allied with the working class under socialism, how can it be allied with the ruling class under totalitarianism? These questions are of great significance for an analysis.

of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. However, before they can be addressed satisfactorily, it is necessary to examine the cold war concept of totalitarianism, compare it to Orwell’s, and explain how an avowed socialist and anticapitalist such as Orwell could be appropriated so easily by militant defenders of capitalism against socialism.

**Orwell and the Cold War Concept of Totalitarianism**

Used in the thirties and forties by socialists critical of Stalin’s dictatorship, the term *totalitarianism* was enthusiastically taken over by liberal and conservative political scientists during the fifties and carefully crafted into a formidable instrument of antisocialist propaganda.17 Advancing further in the direction taken by Orwell and the dissident socialists, American cold warriors elaborated a concept of totalitarianism that obliterated the differences between Soviet communism and European fascism and studiously avoided any analysis of the historical relationships between these regimes and the uneven development and global expansion of capitalism. Totalitarianism ceased to be understood, as it had been for Orwell and the rest, as a product of the contradictions of capitalism itself, an inhumane collectivism to be opposed in the name of humane collectivism, democratic socialism, not capitalism. In the hands of the cold warriors, it was the restructured capitalism of the United States, not socialism, that became the moral antithesis of totalitarianism. In its final form, depicted in Figure 4, the cold war concept of totalitarianism contrasted a demonized Soviet Union and a mythic America, a binary opposition whereby the incarnate evil of totalitarianism implied the inherent goodness of capitalism and the existence of inequality and injustice in the United States and throughout the American-dominated “Free World” became, literally, unrepresentable.

The valorization of capitalism was subtly concealed behind the synthetic term *pluralism*. The contrary relationship between economic inequality and political equality was transcended and subsumed by pluralism, so as to naturalize the compatibility of capitalism and democracy and mask the dominance of the former over the latter. By the terms of the cold war model, capitalism and democracy are represented in exclusively positive

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Figure 4. The Cold War Model of Totalitarianism

terms. Capitalism is defined in terms of “civil society” and “civil rights,” while private ownership of economic property is represented as a symbol of the liberty of all citizens. The existence of class struggle and the economic exploitation of nonpropertied workers by a class of property owners is ignored. Similarly, democracy is characterized by “representative government” and “universal suffrage” in the context of “popular sovereignty” and competing political parties, and not as a plebiscitary oligarchy, wherein political parties, candidates, and issues are controlled by the wealthy with little or no active political participation by the vast majority of citizens. Furthermore, the term totalitarianism was used to discredit all forms of critical or utopian thinking as inherently dangerous.

Totalitarianism became dystopia, or rather a dystopian parody of utopia itself, while American pluralism was transformed into the highest form of good that could be “realistically” expected from a human society. In response to the changing needs of American imperialism, the Soviet Union was gradually identified as the archetypical form of totalitarianism, while fascism, uncomfortably similar to a growing number of American-supported dictatorships throughout the Third World, was quietly dropped from the cold warrior lexicon. The possibility of a not-capitalist democratic society, demo-
cratic socialism, was repressed from the model, much as fascism had been, and those socialists who had earlier opposed both Stalinism and capitalism proved either unable or unwilling to resist the extreme pressure toward political conformity generated by the condemnation of Soviet totalitarianism. It was but a short step to an identification of the actually existing democracy of capitalist America with the very principle of goodness, a move that rendered any dissenting view totalitarian by implication.

The cold war conception of totalitarianism fundamentally differs from Orwell’s. Most obviously, Orwell’s political ideology is radical, anticapitalist as well as antитotalitarian, while the cold warriors are conservatives who define any form of anticapitalism as totalitarian. Orwell defends a socialist (democratic not-capitalism) negation of totalitarianism, while the cold war model completely excludes democratic socialism from representation. Orwell’s conception of totalitarianism emphasizes the conjunction of the will to power of a ruling class and the imposition of bureaucratic control over the whole of society—characteristics that apply not only to Russian communism and European fascism but to monopoly capitalism as well\(^\text{18}\)—while the cold war model represes any connection between fascism and capitalism and represents pluralism as uncontaminated by either a ruling class or bureaucratic organization.

These important differences notwithstanding, American cold warriors were able to appropriate Orwell with great enthusiasm and little difficulty. Orwell’s socialism has, of course, undeniable affinities with American pluralism, which also valorizes the “common” man and national community, defines class on the basis of income and lifestyle, and reduces social to moral problems. More importantly, Orwell and the cold warriors are linked by their common opposition to Stalinism and by their mutual antipathy toward Marxist theoretical principles of economic determination and class struggle. Orwell often ridicules the crudeness with which certain Marxists espoused their faith in the “historical necessity” of socialism and the politically disastrous effects of such simpleminded views on the struggle against fascism.\(^\text{19}\)


19. For a discussion of Orwell’s knowledge of Marx, see Zwerdling, *Orwell and the Left*,...
However, his antipathy to Marxist analysis goes deeper than simply an intellectual rejection of “vulgar” Marxism. Remember, it is only by ignoring structural-economic relations and by defining class distinctions in cultural-ideological terms that Orwell is able to subsume the contrary relationship between the middle and working classes and sustain his own faith in a populist anticapitalist alliance. Only by masking the tension between middle- and working-class values is Orwell able to assert their compatibility and identify himself with the “common man” and the national family. Orwell’s preemptory rejection of Marxist analysis is, therefore, a rejection of a theoretical framework that explains existing social conditions in such a way as to invalidate his own ideology. It is this move that unites him with the cold warriors. In precisely the same fashion as it allows Orwell to represent socialism as the compatibility of the middle and working classes, the exclusion of Marxist principles of economic determination and class struggle allows American ideologues to represent pluralism as the compatibility of capitalism and democracy. This homology suggests a deeper affinity: elitist convictions unconsciously sublimated by the competing pro- and anticapitalist ideologies of pluralism and socialism and projected by each onto its opposite, the category of totalitarianism. It is an underlying, unconscious elitism, then, that makes the term totalitarianism so ideologically compelling and psychologically satisfying for both the radical Orwell and the conservative cold warriors. Can the political unconscious of antitotalitarianism itself be, somehow, totalitarian?

**Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Dystopian Frame**

Turning now to the novel, we can observe the profound effect of the concepts of socialism and totalitarianism on its narrative figuration. Not the least interesting thing about *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the manner in which Orwell attempts to incorporate the utopian and dystopian elements of his political ideology within an evolutionary, historical perspective. As shown in Figure 5, Orwell’s representation of Oceania combines two temporal frames, pretotalitarian, capitalist England of 1948, and postcapitalist, totalitarian Oceania of 1984. The values and relationships that generate the contrast of 1948 and 1984 are actualized as fictional characters and char-

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acter traits structured as good or evil according to the dictates of the ideology of totalitarianism: the “good” traits of individual freedom and human community (represented by Winston and the proles) are associated with the pretotalitarian past, while the “evil” traits of will to power and state bureaucracy (represented by O’Brien and the Outer Party cadres) are associated with the totalitarian present. It is significant that Orwell represents capitalist England through the memories of Winston, a middle-class dissident, and through Winston’s interpretation of the values and lifestyle of the working-class proles. Winston represents a vestige of the union of middle-class individualism and working-class community that Orwell believes to be the agent of socialist transformation. Although its perspective is middle class, the opposition of good and evil depicted in Figure 5 corresponds neither to the cold war opposition of pluralism and totalitarianism nor to any nostalgia for a mythical “golden age” of capitalism on the part of Orwell himself. Rather, Oceania is a dystopian negation of Orwell’s vision of England as a “family with the wrong members in control.” The ruling class of “irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts” is gone; instead of a middle- and working-class alliance and a utopian negation of their class differences under socialism, we are presented with a rigid caste distinction between the two classes and a dystopian naturalization of their differences under totali-
tarianism. Thus, Oceania is not just a satire on the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, or merely a warning of a global tendency toward totalitarianism, or, finally, simply a piece of antitotalitarian propaganda designed to scare people out of their complacency.\(^{20}\) Oceania is all of these things, but before it is any of them, it is a parodic inversion of Orwell’s own populist socialism, and, therefore, the opposition of totalitarianism and socialism may be said to constitute the novel’s deep structure.

However, by giving literary form to his ideology of totalitarianism, Orwell activates its latent contradictions and antagonisms. As the narrative figuration of Oceania develops, a subtle and disruptive shift of emphasis takes place—a shift away from the intended, straightforward opposition of good and evil toward an excluded, subversive opposition of superior individuals and inferior masses. Orwell’s text produces something unexpected: a world organized not, as we would expect, on the basis of good and evil social relations but rather on the basis of classes of superior and inferior individuals, an opposition that is formally excluded from the representation of Oceania as it is from Orwell’s political ideology. Rather than uniting “good” with “good” (middle-class dissident Winston with the working-class proles) in accordance with the binary opposition of totalitarianism and socialism, the narrative works to unite “good” and “evil” (Winston with O’Brien as superior individuals, and the proles with party functionaries as inferior masses). Orwell’s ideological project is to portray Winston and the proles as complementary forces of individual freedom and moral community destroyed by totalitarianism. However, this intended effect is subverted by Winston’s superiority and the inferiority of the proles. While consciously insisting on the common interests of Winston and the proles, the text unconsciously undermines the notion of a populist unity of individualism and moral community by suggesting the inevitable dominance of the former over the latter.

A middle- and working-class alliance uniting the alienated party-member Winston and the exploited proles is impossible because there can be little common ground for a cooperative relationship between superior and inferior beings. A revolution of the proles is simply unthinkable within

the dystopian framework of Oceania. “If there was hope, it lay in the proles,” Winston muses, but when one “looked at the human beings passing you on the pavement . . . it became an act of faith” (73). The reason, according to Winston, is the fact that the proles are incapable of thinking. “They were like the ant, which can see small objects but not large ones” (79). Still, the proles “had remained human” (135), capable of personal loyalty but only because they are also unthinkingly orthodox: “They simply swallowed everything, and what they swallowed did them no harm because it left no residue behind, just as a grain of corn will pass undigested through the body of a bird” (126). Faith in the proles, Winston concludes, is a “mystical truth and palpable absurdity” (70). Class prejudices such as these separate Winston from the values of social equality and moral community, and place him, however reluctantly, on the side of elitism. The contrary relationship between Winston and the proles, ostensibly subsumed (and masked) by their common state of victimization and their antitotalitarian values, weakens the moral contrast between the national family and totalitarianism by introducing into the representation repressed antagonisms of superiority and inferiority.

Winston’s ambivalence toward the proles is, of course, widely discussed by Orwell’s critics. However, the unconscious force exerted by Orwell’s elitism produces less recognized, but equally disruptive, effects on the other relationships depicted in Figure 5. In the case of the contradictory intraclass opposition between dissident Winston and loyal functionaries (Symes, Parsons, and Ampleforth), we find that it is Winston’s intelligence and independence as much as his sense of human decency that distinguish him from their passive, unthinking careerism. The conforming Outer Party cadres are defined in a doubly negative sense. In keeping with the category of totalitarianism, they are negatively valued by their lack of human decency (which distinguishes them from Winston and the proles), but they are even more negatively valued by their inferiority, by a lack of critical intelligence and will to power (which distinguishes them from Winston and O’Brien). The characterization of the party cadres as gullible flunkies and the proles as herd animals so strongly reinforces the complementary relationship between them that the primary contrast of good and evil between state power and moral community becomes confused. By the conventions of totalitarianism, the Outer Party functionaries should be exploiters benefiting from their privileged position as representatives of state power, but they are represented instead as unwitting dupes, as much the victims as the conscious agents of the evil system they serve. For the cadres, as for the proles, inferi-
ority naturalizes subordination. Because they are inferior, the Outer Party functionaries “naturally” accept and reproduce their own dehumanization as well as that of the proles; because the proles are inferior, they passively accept their dehumanized existence as the “natural” state of things.

The innate superiority of Winston to the proles parallels the innate superiority of the Inner Party elite to the middle-class members of the Outer Party. The figuration of the contrary relationship between O’Brien and functionaries Parsons, Symes, and Ampleforth should be reconciled by emphasizing the social superiority they share by virtue of party membership and by de-emphasizing the personal attributes of intelligence and will to power that decisively separate Inner from Outer Party members. However, the unity of will to power and bureaucratic organization, naturalized and guaranteed by the synthetic term totalitarianism, is actually undermined by the opposition of superior and inferior individuals, which positively values the Inner Party while casting the Outer Party members into the ranks of the inferior masses. Even the contradictory relationship between O’Brien and the proles fails to conform unambiguously to the opposition of good and evil implied by the category of totalitarianism. Despite the fact that their sense of moral community is uncorrupted by will to power or party membership, the positive valuation of the proles is weakened by the fact that their moral community is identified as much with their innate inferiority as their innate decency.

The opposition of superiority and inferiority undercuts the moral condemnation of O’Brien and the Inner Party, and lends an aura of inevitability, if not outright legitimacy, to the totalitarian concentration of power. The tension between conscious condemnation and unconscious, hence unrepresentable, justification makes the complementary relationship between Winston and O’Brien the central focus of the novel. The implicit opposition of superior individuals and inferior masses will unconsciously work to foreground those similarities between Winston and O’Brien that Winston’s rebellion and O’Brien’s triumph function to obscure. The conventions of antitotalitarianism require that the opposition between individual freedom and party dictatorship be a struggle between good and evil, yet the moral significance of the conflict is necessarily weakened by the fact that it occurs exclusively within the ranks of superior individuals. The climactic confrontation between Winston and O’Brien will be determined by the complementary nature of will to power and individual freedom, while the tragedy of Winston’s defeat will be lessened by the fact that in certain, as yet unspecified respects he is more like O’Brien than unlike him.
Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Utopian Frame

The existence of a utopian frame is both a most interesting and frequently overlooked feature of Nineteen Eighty-Four. It exists as the post-totalitarian world of the “author,” whose footnote, early in the first chapter, serves to inform us that we are reading a historical novel written sometime after the demise of Oceania, and whose appendix, “The Principles of Newspeak,” takes the form of a scholarly monograph looking back on Oceania as an extinct and almost incomprehensible civilization. Because it is figured as the (socialist) negation of the (totalitarian) negation of capitalism, the importance of the utopian frame for Orwell is undeniable,21 and, yet, despite its ideological significance, we are given almost no substantive information about this posttotalitarian world. As shown in Figure 6, the existence of the “author’s” society is purely formal, the spaces of not–party dictatorship and not–state power are empty of content, and the populist alliance of middle-class dissidents and working-class proles is hardly more than a logical possibility in the mind of Winston Smith. The posttotalitarian space of the “author” is truly utopian—it is a “no-place” that cannot exist given the sociological reality of Oceania but at the same time does exist and, by fact of its existence, asserts that a revolutionary overthrow of totalitarianism has taken place. Somehow, middle-class dissidents and working-class proles have rebelled, and somehow, the party’s invincible system of political terrorism, ideological manipulation, and warfare economics has collapsed. The coexistence of utopian and dystopian frames creates an unbearable contradiction within the novel, which wants to portray Oceania as both plausible and absurd, stable and unstable, the epitome of rationality and irrationality alike.

The posttotalitarian frame is utopian in the way Louis Marin has taught us to understand the term, namely as an “ideological critique of ideology”—a fictional (and thus ideological) negation of ideologically perceived (but objectively existing) social contradictions in advance of their

21. Orwell refused to allow the Book of the Month Club to cut either the “Appendix on Newspeak” or Goldstein’s “Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism.” “I can’t possibly agree to the kind of alteration and abbreviation suggested. It would . . . leave out a good deal that is essential” (CEJL, 4:483). In his biographical study, Crick insists that Orwell’s refusal stems from the fact that the Goldstein book and appendix are very much part of the meaning of the novel, and “if readers could not see their significance, they could not understand the book” (Crick, George Orwell, 386).
Totalitarianism
(Oceania, Eastasia, Eurasia)

Party Dictatorship
(will to power)
(Inner Party elite)

State Power
(bureaucratic control of society)
(Outer Party middle class)

Unconscious Opposition:
Superior Elite
(Inner Party elite)

Inferior Masses
(Outer Party middle class and working-class proles)

Not–State Power
(empty)
(middle-class dissidents?)

Not–Party Dictatorship
(empty)
(working-class proles?)

Unconscious Opposition:
Not–Inferior Masses

Not–Superior Elite

Not–Oceania
(world of the “author” of Nineteen Eighty-Four)

Figure 6. Orwell’s Posttotalitarian Frame

theoretical comprehension and historical transformation.²² Orwell’s utopian frame negates the pessimistic “end of history” presented from within the dystopian frame of Oceania, but it does so by an ideological leap of faith rather than by advancing a plausible theory of historical transition. Indeed, as Figure 6 shows, no theory of transition can be imagined from within the limits of Orwell’s political ideology. If totalitarian Oceania is represented as an immoral alliance of the ruling and middle classes while its negation is represented as a moral alliance of the middle and working classes, then the middle class has to be both moral and immoral, totalitarian and anti-totalitarian. If the middle-class Outer Party is immoral and a beneficiary of totalitarianism, what conceivable motive could it have for an alliance with

the working-class proles? On the other hand, if it is moral and a victim of totalitarianism, how can the Outer Party plausibly be represented as an ally of the Inner Party, the willing agent of its own oppression?

If we add to Figure 6 the unconscious opposition of superiority and inferiority, then the possibility of representing a transition to socialism is foreclosed from another direction. In terms of superiority and inferiority, totalitarianism separates the superior individuals of the Inner Party from the inferior masses of the Outer Party and the proles. Such a division does place the middle class on the side of the workers, but only by representing them as too weak and stupid to revolt in the first place. By the unconscious logic of superiority and inferiority, the oppressed middle class would have to be superior in order for their revolt to be successful; but if they were superior, then they would be in the Inner, not the Outer, Party! If Outer Party members were to be represented as both moral and superior, then their collaboration with totalitarianism becomes incomprehensible—they would all be rebels like Winston Smith. If they are represented as immoral and superior, then they must be either members of the Inner Party themselves or proponents of a new elitism seeking to supplant, rather than abolish, the despotism of the Inner Party (they might, for example, become advocates of a return to capitalism, as actually happened with the ex-Soviet elite).

Orwell’s inability to represent a posttotalitarian world follows directly from his contradictory figuration of the middle class, both in pretotalitarian England and in totalitarian Oceania, and this contradiction is determined, in its turn, by the unresolved tension between unconscious elitism and conscious egalitarianism within his political ideology. From the sheer absurdity of its elements—masses that are not-inferior (i.e., not the masses) and an elite that is not-superior (i.e., not an elite)—it is obvious that a socialist negation of totalitarian elitism is logically unrepresentable in Orwell’s terms. Like the repressed drive that forces itself to consciousness in the form of a neurotic symptom, Orwell’s repressed elitism expresses itself indirectly through the absence of content in the utopian frame, through the self-contradictory figuration of the middle class of Oceania, and through the tortured resolution of Winston’s quest for freedom.

**The Contradictory Middle Class of Oceania**

I am not denying the imaginative genius or emotional power of Orwell’s representation of totalitarianism. Oceania is composed of brilliant and terrifying caricatures of certain characteristics of Nazi and Bolshe-
vik regimes—combined with ominously prescient insights into the administered culture and politics of what Herbert Marcuse would later call the “one-dimensional” society emerging in the actually existing democracies of industrial capitalism. Perhaps only Kafka has managed to convey so successfully the experience of powerlessness and oppression. Nor am I denying that many of the horrifying details of Orwell’s totalitarian world of political coercion, ideological manipulation, and warfare economics are sufficiently plausible technically to justify his loathing and fear of them. My point is simply this: however frighteningly realistic or satirically successful it may be in certain respects, Orwell’s representation of totalitarianism is incoherent and implausible.

In order to demonstrate its incoherence, I will make use of the account of Oceania presented in the form of Emmanuel Goldstein’s book, “The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism.” Admittedly, using Goldstein’s text in this way is not without problems. As I have already noted, explanations of the workings of Oceania offered from within the anti-utopian frame of 1984 cannot be taken at face value once we realize that Oceania is not infallible, that it has not, in fact, survived. Further difficulties emerge from the discovery that the book is not even “authentic,” that the actual author is O’Brien, and that the book itself is a prop in an elaborate counterrevolutionary operation controlled by the Inner Party. Nevertheless, I still believe Goldstein’s account is intended to be taken as a substantially accurate account of the history and structure of Oceania. For one thing, O’Brien himself states that, although the revolutionary program it sets forth is “nonsense,” the book is correct “as a description” (215); for another, Goldstein’s account of how Oceania works and how it came to be fully conforms to Winston’s experience and to the evidence given to us by the rest of the novel.

We may begin with the revolutionary transition to totalitarianism during the mid-twentieth century. Of interest here are three facts: first, that previous history is represented as a cyclical struggle of the high, middle, and low classes of society, a struggle that is devoid of any real history (166); second, that it is the “new” middle class of “bureaucrats, scientists, technicians, trade-union organizers, publicity experts, sociologists, teachers, journalists, and professional politicians” that makes the totalitarian revolu-

tion (169); and third, in comparison with previous revolutionary groups, this new middle class was “less avaricious, less tempted by luxury, hungrier for pure power, and, above all, more conscious of what they were doing” (169), namely, “arresting progress and freezing history” (168).

Goldstein’s account of the transition to totalitarianism is notable for its voluntarism and its elitism, tendencies rendered even more extreme by the fact that the new middle class is able to come to power under circumstances of increasing economic development and prosperity, circumstances that “threatened the destruction—indeed in some sense was the destruction—of a hierarchical society” (156). Paradoxically, the principal cause of the totalitarian revolution was the fact that, “as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, human equality had become technically possible” (168). While it was still true that men were not equal in their native talents and that social functions had to be specialized in ways that favored some individuals against others, “there was no longer any real need for class distinctions or for large differences of wealth” (168). However, from the point of view of the ambitions of the new middle class—ambitions that the reader can only assume to be innate and instinctive since they are otherwise unmotivated—“human equality was no longer an ideal to be striven after, but a danger to be averted” (168).

Such a representation of the origins of totalitarianism could hardly have been welcomed by critics and enthusiasts anxious to erase class struggle from the rhetoric of the cold war. More interestingly, we see Orwell speaking out here as populist tribune and moral critic of capitalism, asserting the objective possibility of social equality, and forthrightly condemning the professional middle class for betraying it. Clearly, Orwell recognizes and condemns the immorality of middle-class elitism, but, just as clearly, he is silent with respect to the structural-economic taproot of their behavior. Indeed, the very possibility of economic motivation is denied in the text’s representation of world history as a ceaseless struggle between “high, middle, and low.” Instead of social circumstances explaining elitism, we are presented with elitism as an explanation of social circumstances—will to power bereft of any purpose or goal other than the perpetuation of class inequalities that are no longer rational or necessary. In short, the totalitarian revolution is caused by the intelligence and will of innately superior individuals. These individuals are immoral, to be sure, but far from being a disadvantage, a lack of morality seems to be a sign of the superiority of the victorious new middle class. Despite economic conditions objectively ripe for a utopian transformation to a moral society, we are presented with
the triumph of dystopian immorality. However implausible such an account might appear from the perspective of social science, the triumph of totalitarianism is entirely consistent with the voluntarist and elitist assumptions of the ideology of totalitarianism itself. The totalitarian revolution is only plausible, in other words, under conditions that obtain after totalitarianism has triumphed: the division of human society into a superior, striving minority and an inferior, passive majority; the absence of any economic determination or economically motivated class struggle; and the predominance of a voluntaristic ideology of history wherein will to power is the necessary and sufficient cause of social change.

There is, however, an interesting gap in Goldstein's account of the transition to totalitarianism. The revolutionary transition is represented as the triumph of a middle class characterized by its diabolical will to power and rationality, yet the fruit of its victory is a social formation wherein the victorious middle class has become divided into an Inner and an Outer Party. We are not told how this division came about, or why it might not happen again. We are simply presented with a social structure divided, first into an exploited proletariat (the lower 85 percent of the population) and the party (the upper 15 percent); and, second, into the Inner Party ruling class (about 2 percent of the population) and the remaining cadres of the Outer Party. Not only has the party been split, the Inner Party has managed to exclude the Outer Party from ownership of the means of production and to restrict greatly the opportunity for upward mobility. “The Inner Party owns the means of production collectively,” and although it is theoretically a meritocracy, there is only enough mobility to “ensure that weaklings are excluded from the Inner Party and that ambitious members of the Outer Party are made harmless by allowing them to rise” (172).

The class structure of Oceania is a deliberate creation of the Inner Party, rationally designed by them to maintain their absolute control over both the Outer Party and the proles. However, the credibility of Orwell's representation of total power relies heavily on the use of class stereotypes. We have already noted that the proles are portrayed as subhuman—not as human beings who have been forcibly reduced to a subhuman level and who must be constantly monitored in order to keep them there but as innately inferior beings who can be safely treated as such without supervision or fear of revolt. “The Proletarians are no threat, of course, they are left to themselves to work, breed, and die. They lack the impulse to rebel or even the power of grasping that the world could be other than it is. Their opinions are a matter of indifference and they can be granted intellectual
liberty because they have no intellect" (173). This view of the proles is not inconsistent with Orwell's representation of the working class within the national family and the popular alliance against capitalism. As we have also already noted, Orwell's notion of capitalist England as a family with the wrong members in control recognizes the working class as a positive force, but only for its alleged capacity for human solidarity and moral community, not for intelligence or initiative, capacities Orwell reserves exclusively for the middle class. Whether he represents them as moral or immoral, socialist or totalitarian, Orwell invariably represents middle-class individuals as intellectually superior to their working-class counterparts. The class alliance posited by his populist socialism may be negated in Oceania, but the class stereotypes remain unchanged. Moreover, neither utopian class alliance nor dystopian class antagonism is economically determined. In both instances, class stereotypes are substituted for class interest, although in the utopian case, the absence of economic exploitation serves to enhance the plausibility of class collaboration, while in the dystopian case, it simply renders the posited antagonism between the middle and working classes incomprehensible.

Inferior by nature, the proles may be safely left alone, but it is different with the Outer Party, that is, with middle-class individuals endowed with a capacity for thought and action. In a party member, "not even the smallest deviation of opinion on the most unimportant subject can be tolerated. A Party member lives from birth to death under the eye of the Thought Police" (173). A party member "is expected to have not only the right opinions, but the right instincts. He or she is expected to have no private emotions and no respites from enthusiasm" (173). However, the introduction of such a degree of control over party members introduces a serious anomaly within the figuration of Oceania, one ultimately rooted in the contrary relationship.

24. In The Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell remarks that "no genuine working man grasps the deeper implications of socialism" (176). Orwell evinces a profound suspicion for working-class intellectuals and seems to believe that workers who become educated necessarily betray their fellow workers: "It is of course true that plenty of people of working class origin are Socialists of the theoretical bookish type. But they are never people who have remained working men. . . . They . . . belong to the type who squirms into the middle class via the literary intelligentsia, or the type who becomes a Labour MP or a high-up trade-union official. This last type is one of the most desolating spectacles the world contains. He has been picked out to fight for his mates, and all it means to him is a soft job. . . . Not merely while but by fighting the bourgeoisie he becomes a bourgeois himself" (177). Orwell seems to imply that a working man can only become a socialist by becoming middle class, while if he remains a worker, he cannot really be a socialist at all.
between the nihilistic will to power that animates the Inner Party and the bureaucratic rationality associated with the Outer Party cadres. For members of the Inner Party, support for the goal of perfect orthodoxy and a comprehensive supervisory apparatus is plausible, because it is they who have freely designed the entire system, and because it works entirely for their material benefit. Not only does an Inner Party member participate in the exercise of total power, the luxuries he enjoys—“his large, well-appointed flat, the better texture of his clothes, the better quality of his food and drink and tobacco, his two or three servants, his private motorcar or helicopter” (158)—set him in a different world from members of the Outer Party. Members of the Outer Party, by contrast, are frightfully oppressed by Oceania’s repressive state apparatus. Although we are told that the Outer Party has a “similar advantage” (158) over the proles as the Inner Party has over them, in actuality, it is the proles who are better off. Not only are the proles relatively free (able to enjoy love, friendship, and privacy—to name only the more important things denied to members of the Outer Party), they live relatively securely, if poorly, and although uneducated, they are, for the most part, happy in their ignorance. By contrast, the domination endured by members of the Outer Party is so oppressive and so all-encompassing that their ability to survive at all strains our credibility while the enthusiasm for serving the party attributed to them is completely unbelievable. Unlike the proles, members of the Outer Party are not ignorant. They know, for example, that the state of continuous warfare by which the economic surplus is wasted is a complete hoax and that popular loyalty to the regime is assured only by the grossest deception and manipulation. They know, in short, that things are needlessly oppressive and, more importantly, that the sufferings they themselves endure are utterly unnecessary. Like every middle class known to history, the Outer Party is absolutely essential to the ruling class of exploiters they serve; however, unlike any middle class known to history, they receive no benefits for their service and no incentive for accepting and reproducing the ideological values of the dominant class. Instead of being relatively privileged exploiters of others, the members of the Outer Party are unprivileged victims of oppressive acts for which they themselves are responsible.

The Outer Party is an impossible combination of total coercion and total cooperation. Having no plausible motive for ideological self-deception and possessed of very real knowledge of the deceptions they perpetrate, the question arises as to how the members of the Outer Party can be represented at all. The fundamental contradiction between the total coercion
exercised against the Outer Party and the total cooperation they nevertheless provide is a paradox only apparently “resolved” by means of Oceania’s extreme voluntarism. As Goldstein’s text explains it, “speculations which might possibly induce a skeptical or rebellious attitude are killed in advance by his [the party member’s] early acquired inner discipline.” Many variations of this “mental discipline” are described, but, ultimately, we are assured, they are all reducible to a single form: doublethink.

Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. The Party intellectual knows in which direction his memories must be altered; he therefore knows that he is playing tricks with reality; but by the exercise of doublethink he also satisfies himself that reality is not violated. The process has to be conscious; or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision, but it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity, and hence of guilt. (176)

Thus, it is doublethink, and doublethink alone, that purports to explain the behavior of Outer Party members. However, such a solution does not work, not because doublethink is oxymoronic—although the fact that the credibility of the concept of totalitarianism ultimately rests on an absurdity is significant—rather, it does not work because it is logically impossible for a member of the Outer Party to want or to be able to exercise doublethink.

Doublethink is an oxymoron, but it is perfectly consistent with the extreme voluntarism characteristic of Oceania. Doublethink is the highest expression of will to power, the attribute that marks party members as superior beings, and therefore its existence and exercise is consistent with the premises and the self-interest of the Inner Party.25 Doublethink is insane, but from the perspective of the Inner Party, there is method in its madness. The problem with doublethink lies elsewhere, in its exercise by the Outer Party:

25. Thus, only with respect to the Inner Party can we accept the commonplace interpretation of doublethink as a satire on Nazi or Soviet elites. With respect to the Outer Party, Orwell’s use of doublethink crosses the line from satire, an impossible exaggeration of reality, to fantasy, a realistic treatment of an impossibility—a shift motivated by contradictions within his political ideology not by any lapse on his part. On fantasy in the novel, see Anthony Easthope, “Fact and Fantasy in Nineteen Eighty-Four,” in Norris, ed., Inside the Myth, 263–85; Alex Zwerdling “Orwell and the Techniques of Didactic Fantasy,” in Hynes, Twentieth-Century Interpretations, 88–101. On the relation of satire to the genre of utopia, see Robert C. Elliott, The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); see also Gary Saul Morson, The Boundaries of Genre (Evanston: Northeastern University Press, 1981).
even if we grant the diegetic reality of doublethink, there is no plausible motive for a member of the Outer Party to exercise it. Indeed, by the logic of Oceania, the exercise of doublethink by anyone outside the Inner Party is self-contradictory. Because superiority is a function of will to power, and because the exercise of doublethink is an expression of precisely such will and such superiority, the capacity for doublethink must be a sign of Inner, not Outer, Party membership. If individuals of the Outer Party were capable of exercising doublethink, then they would be superior; but if superior, they would be members of the Inner Party rather than its victims. Obversely, if they are excluded from the Inner Party (and its privileges), then they must be inferior; but if inferior, they cannot be capable of exercising doublethink. By the terms of his political ideology, Orwell is obliged to represent the middle class as moral enough to support socialism, yet immoral enough to collaborate with totalitarianism; sufficiently superior to escape the hopeless idiocy of the proletarian masses, yet sufficiently inferior to be excluded from membership in the ruling class; the most oppressed victims of totalitarianism, yet its most enthusiastic servants; the only possible source of antitotalitarian resistance, yet the class that created totalitarianism in the first place.

**Winston’s Struggle for Freedom**

Winston’s reading of Goldstein’s book breaks off on the threshold of the revelation of “the central secret” of Oceania, “the original motive, the never-questioned instinct that led to the seizure of power and created doublethink and the rest of the coercive paraphernalia afterwards” (178–79). When the long-awaited secret is finally revealed by O’Brien in the course of his brutal interrogation of Winston, the effect is thunderously anticlimactic. “The object of persecution is persecution,” O’Brien patiently informs the suffering, but intensely curious, Winston. “The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power” (217). For an explanation of power, Orwell substitutes an explanation by power, a move that has been consistently dismissed by Marxist critics as a mysticism of cruelty. While such a dismissive attitude is understandable, particularly by those who insist on evaluating literary practice by its social scientific truth or political consequences, it has the unfortunate effect of overlooking what is most interesting about the confrontation between Winston and O’Brien, namely, Orwell’s attempt to represent the possibility of middle-class resistance to totalitarianism, or to say the same thing in a different way, to represent a member of the
middle class who is neither inferior nor immoral. Neither prole, loyal party functionary, nor member of the Inner Party elite, Winston is a contradictory figure. Possessed of intelligence, personal initiative, and decency in a world where these attributes cannot exist together, Winston is indeed the “last man,” as O’Brien mockingly describes him, the last vestige of the progressive middle class on whom Orwell’s populist ideology of socialism depends. He exists, and only exists, so that the evil of totalitarianism might be recognized and resisted from within. However, because Winston is a middle-class individual, we must not lose sight of the fact that his struggle for “individual” freedom is inseparable from its origins in “bourgeois” freedom.

In conformity to the opposition of socialism and totalitarianism, Winston’s quest for freedom and his defeat at the hands of O’Brien reinforce the contrast of good and evil that formally constitutes Orwell’s populist ideology. Like the proles, Winston is a victim of the totalitarian system, and his defeat negatively affirms the necessity of a socialist alliance of the middle and working classes. At the same time, however, the clear-cut moral contrast between Winston and O’Brien is subtly blurred by the repressed opposition of superior individuals and inferior masses. The confrontation of good and evil—a struggle where nothing less than the future of civilization is at stake—takes place exclusively within the ranks of the middle class, and it is determined, in the last instance, by innate characteristics of psychological strength and critical intelligence. Given these stakes and these conditions, the ideological significance of Winston’s struggle can hardly be exaggerated, and yet we find Winston depicted as objectively inferior to O’Brien and, in the end, completely defeated, his spirit crushed. This outcome is all the more curious, since neither Orwell’s conscious opposition of totalitarian immorality to socialist morality nor his unconscious opposition of superior individuals to inferior masses precludes a representation of Winston as a superior individual of sufficient intelligence and strength of character to stand up to O’Brien and to die beaten but unbroken. Of course, Orwell’s desire to convey the experience of totalitarianism to his middle-class readers implies a figuration of Winston as outwardly unexceptional, but even this consideration hardly requires that he be mentally or morally inferior to O’Brien. Why, like Ernest Everhard, the charismatic revolutionary of London’s Iron Heel, does Winston not join the proles, become a leader in the struggle against the party, and, with his soul mate Julia, die a martyr to “the good old Cause”—a mythic ancestor for the posttotalitarian “author” of his saga (and, of course, an exemplary figure for the middle-class reader of 1949)? After all, Orwell’s figuration of Oceania points toward just such a hero. So
strong is this ideological predisposition that I believe it is only against the background of the missing middle-class hero that we can make any sense of the existing Winston narrative at all.  

As a potential “man of the people,” Winston is curiously compromised. He is torn between his admiration for the moral community of the proles and his sense of superiority over them. Because he takes their inferiority for granted, Winston is psychologically incapable of “dropping out” of his middle-class existence in order to join the proles, and therefore his rebellion is diverted into forms that are either apolitical (personal nonconformity and sexual escapism) or, at least from Orwell’s point of view, politically pernicious (conspiratorial terrorism). His rebellion is simultaneously a regression, a repetition, and an anachronism. Instead of rising to the occasion and finding within himself the strength and insight to overcome his middle-class prejudices, Winston simply reenacts the pattern of moral failure and personal weakness by which the pretotalitarian middle class had betrayed the national family and given it over to the forces of totalitarianism. The secret of Winston’s failure—and by failure, I am referring not to his capture, torture, and death but rather to the banality of his rebellion and to

26. For the most part, this unspoken desire for heroism has gone unrecognized, although Richard Rees criticizes Orwell for demanding “superhuman bravery” from his characters and Nineteen Eighty-Four as a grim culmination of this “all or nothing” philosophy. See Richard Rees, George Orwell: Fugitive from the Camp of Victory (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), 103–4. For Orwell as a heroic liberal in a decadent post-liberal age, see Philip Rieff, “George Orwell and the Post-Liberal Imagination,” in Harold Bloom, ed., George Orwell: Modern Critical Views (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 45–62.


28. James Connors, “Do It to Julia! Thoughts on Orwell’s 1984,” Modern Fiction Studies 16 (winter 1970/71): 463–73, argues that Winston is “so corrupted by his work on behalf of the Party that he is doomed to failure in his half-understood and belated attempt to revolt against a group of men whose views and values he shares far more than he realizes” (466). While Connors is correct to see shared views and values, and correct to point out Orwell’s strategy of scattering clues throughout the first two-thirds of the novel that serve to identify Winston as a man unable to sustain a successful rebellion against the party, his interpretation cannot account for the fact that Winston is able to rebel in the first place. Winston is simply another in the long line of lower middle-class protagonists whose conflicting tendencies of rebellion and conformity were Orwell’s constant preoccupation; see Terry Eagleton’s brilliant analysis, “Orwell and the Lower Middle Class Novel,” in Exiles and Émigrés (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), 78–108.
his inability to resist to the very end—is that he is neither moral enough to transcend his class prejudices nor strong enough to win his battle of wills with O’Brien. By choosing the path of personal escapism, Winston becomes morally complicit in his own destruction, while his failure to stand up to O’Brien psychologically testifies to his inferiority and justifies his defeat in purely naturalistic terms. Orwell’s sadistic delight in punishing Winston (and our vicarious pleasure in reading about his suffering?) stems in large part from the recognition and condemnation of his weakness.

Winston’s superiority to the proles and his inferiority to O’Brien combine in a scandalous revelation of an underlying similarity between his middle-class individualism and totalitarian will to power. From the outset, Winston is fascinated by power and fatally disempowered by his belief in the hopelessness of rebellion and in the omnipotence of the Inner Party. In the early stages of his interrogation, at a moment when he is still fully lucid, Winston realizes that “what most oppressed him was the consciousness of his own intellectual inferiority [to O’Brien]. . . . O’Brien was a being in all ways larger than himself. There was no idea that he had ever had, or could have, that O’Brien had not long ago known, examined, and rejected. His mind contained Winston’s mind” (211). In precisely the same manner that he accepts his own superiority to the proles and Outer Party cadres, Winston acknowledges O’Brien’s superiority to himself. Because his own worldview is organized around categories of will to power and contrasts of superiority and inferiority, it is impossible for Winston not to equate the power of the Inner Party with the personal superiority of its members. As he is unconsciously repelled by the inferiority of the proles and other members of the Outer Party, Winston is unconsciously attracted to O’Brien, from whom he seeks recognition as a fellow superior individual.29

On the surface, O’Brien appears evil and insane, but it is he, not Winston, who grasps the deeper truth of their relationship, the fact that Winston’s defense of human decency and individual freedom is somehow, in the vernacular of existentialism, “inauthentic.” The fact is, Winston cares only about himself. His refusal to love Big Brother and his resistance to the party’s domination is, at bottom, an egoistic drive indistinguishable from

29. In The Orwell Mystique: A Study in Male Ideology (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), Daphne Patai provocatively explains this attraction in terms of a masculine ideology of “gamesmanship,” whereby Winston can assert his significance and attain approval from O’Brien. For Patai, competitive games embody a “cult of masculinity,” a gratuitous struggle for domination, which explains both O’Brien’s sadism and Winston’s desire to be a worthy opponent.
O'Brien's willing submission to Big Brother and his pleasure in destroying Winston's individuality. Winston's fascination with power and his fatalistic conviction of his own inferiority and ultimate defeat are tinged with Nietzschean resentment and inflected with what Orwell elsewhere disparages as the "power worship" of the middle classes.30 O'Brien's brutalizing of Winston is Orwell's own relentless exposure and condemnation of the psychology of will to power in both oppressor and victim.31 Winston's claim to moral superiority is discredited by a tape recording of his own voice promising "to lie, to steal, to forge, to murder, to encourage drug taking and prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases, to throw vitriol in a child's face" in order to promote the revolutionary overthrow of the Inner Party (222–23). When he finally screams, "Do it to Julia!" in order to save himself from the rats, Winston is forced to acknowledge, in the same terrible instant, the primacy of his own will to power and the enormity of his personal defeat. It is this double realization that breaks Winston's will and propels him into the open arms of Big Brother.

Although it would be ridiculous to deny, or even attempt to minimize, the moral condemnation of totalitarianism implied by Winston's destruction, it is also wrong to portray Winston as an innocent victim. In representing the evil of totalitarianism, Orwell is also exposing an elective affinity between

30. See "James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution," CEJL, 4:160–81. Orwell's debt to Burnham for the basic framework of Oceania is universally acknowledged, while his criticisms of Burnham's "power worship," his tendency to assume that the drift toward totalitarianism is irresistible (163), to associate greatness with cruelty and dishonesty (169), and to predict the future as a continuation of whatever is happening at the present time (172–73) are either ignored or assumed abandoned by a later, more pessimistic Orwell. I am arguing that Winston's character preserves Orwell's critique of Burnham. For his most well-known discussion of power worship, see George Orwell, "Raffles and Miss Blandish," CEJL, 3:212–24; Orwell's conception is defended in Gorman Beauchamp, "From Bingo to Big Brother: Orwell on Power and Sadism," in Jensen, The Future of Nineteen Eighty-Four, 65–85. See also, Gerald Fiderer, "Masochism as Literary Strategy: Orwell's Psychological Novels," Literature and Psychology 20 (1970): 3–21.

31. Here it is customary to cite Orwell's remark that Jack London "could foresee Fascism because he had a Fascist streak in himself" ("Introduction to Love of Life and Other Stories by Jack London," CEJL, 4:23–29). This remark is usually taken to explain Orwell's own capacity for writing so powerfully about totalitarianism. Much rarer are quotations of the complete sentence, which ends with "or at any rate a marked strain of brutality and an almost unconquerable preference for the strong man against the weak man" (25). Also absent from the critical literature are remarks about London's "instinct" toward acceptance of a "natural aristocracy of strength, beauty, and talent" (26). It is precisely this elitism that Orwell unconsciously recognizes as his own.
the ideologies of middle-class individualism and totalitarian will to power. Winston's quest for individual freedom has been not a moral quest for a universal human freedom but an egoistic search for his own personal freedom, a desire to escape from the oppressive domination of the Inner Party above him without slipping into the ranks of the inferior masses of the proles below. Winston fervently desires the destruction of the party, but he cannot repudiate standards of superiority and inferiority with which he himself identifies. Winston's rebellion cannot succeed, because, in his own mind, he is inferior to O'Brien. Conversely, O'Brien's superiority negates rather than validates the tragic dimension of Winston's defeat precisely because he is not the antithesis of Winston, he is Winston—at a more advanced stage of development. From the moment we discover that it has been initiated and controlled by O'Brien, the authenticity of Winston's rebellion is called into question. His quest for personal freedom is devalued by its own history—the history of bourgeois freedom—a history that has already arrived at its appointed destination in the meritocratic despotism of the Inner Party. Winston's attempt to revive an escapist, petty bourgeois vision of individual freedom is revealed as retrogressive within the terms of the fiction itself.\(^{32}\)

Pursued to its internal limits by Orwell's uncompromising representation, middle-class individualism reveals its own secret history buried within the concept of totalitarianism. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we see the repressed history of capitalism's own ruthless and dehumanizing struggle of all against all projected onto the "other" of totalitarianism.

Here Orwell reaches the ideological limits of his narrative figuration. Ultimately, the fact that Winston is neither a hero nor a martyr is not a truth about capitalism, fascism, or communism but merely a truth about Orwell's political ideology. It is the point at which Orwell encounters his own repressed elitism as an insurmountable obstacle. Winston fails because of his moral complicity with totalitarianism, but his immorality is itself rendered ambiguous by his inferiority to O'Brien and by the inference that it is his inferiority that renders him unable to rise above his class prejudices, power worship, and personal egoism. Orwell's unconscious elitism reorients the moral opposition of totalitarianism and socialism in such a fashion that socialism can only be represented as a victory of superior individuals.

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Winston fails, and must fail, because he does not measure up to the standard of superiority implicit in Orwell’s political ideology, but his defeat leaves open the possibility that another, superior middle-class hero will yet emerge to organize the proles and defeat the party. Because the utopian frame declares that totalitarianism will be overthrown, Winston’s defeat cannot mean the end of socialism. The fact that this particular Winston is corrupted by petty bourgeois weaknesses does not, therefore, resolve the mystery of the missing middle-class hero whose presence is implied by the demise of Oceania but who appears nowhere in the existing text. The absent presence of the middle-class hero can only be explained by the tension between Orwell’s populism and his elitism that renders both the utopian frame and the middle-class hero who will call it into existence unrepresentable. Able to portray evil elites but not the evil of elitism, Orwell may be justly accused of perpetrating a dystopian mysticism of cruelty; unfortunately, his utopian negation of cruelty—the (socialist) negation of the (totalitarian) negation of capitalism—is itself no more than a mysticism of morality.

Conclusion: The Paradox of the Middle-Class Hero

Orwell’s socialism is premised on a contradictory synthesis of natural distinctions of superiority and inferiority, and moral distinctions of equality and inequality. Because he is an intensely moral individual, Orwell cannot help but condemn the social injustice and class exploitation that has attended inequality under capitalism, as well as fascism and communism, but because he also has an elitist bias in favor of superior individuals, he cannot avoid expressing a certain degree of fear and contempt for the working class, direct democracy, and social equality. The opposition of socialism and totalitarianism that constitutes the deep structure of Nineteen Eighty-

33. An attitude Orwell, characteristically, disarms by reluctantly acknowledging, for example in the famous remark in The Road to Wigan Pier, “The lower classes smell” (127). Contrast this approach with his criticism of Jean-Paul Sartre for pretending to be above anti-Semitism, for associating it with the petty bourgeoisie, and for implying that the anti-Semitic is always the same kind of person (“Review of Portrait of the Anti-Semite by Jean-Paul Sartre,” CEJL, 4: 452–53). Sartre’s deadly critique of the politically reactionary need for a fixed identity and unalterable values coupled with a need for an evil enemy to fear and blame might as well have been aimed at Orwell personally, while his unimpeachable moral integrity, war record, and commitment to socialism—all from a “pansy intellectual” who refused to leap aboard the antitotalitarian bandwagon—must have outraged Orwell even more. For Orwell’s anti-Semitism, see David Walton, “George Orwell and Anti-Semitism,” Patterns of Prejudice 16 (1982): 177–82.
Four functions to mask these conflicts. It preserves elitism by dividing it into moral and immoral aspects, projecting the latter onto totalitarianism and subsuming the former under socialism and the national family. Similarly, elitist fear of, and contempt for, equality is sublimated as an attack on the totalitarian regimentation of “individualism,” leaving within the category of socialism only a faint residue of condescension—an elitist association of the inferior masses with herd-like solidarity and moral purity uncorrupted by either intelligence or experience. Orwell’s elitism is such that he cannot represent equality except in terms of mediocrity, weakness, and decline. Yet he cannot represent the defeat of totalitarianism by superior individuals without bringing to consciousness the class-based elitism on which his ideology of socialism rests (and without threatening his psychological identification with the Orwell persona of populist tribune and honest witness). Thus, with Nineteen Eighty-Four, we reach not the point at which the middle class has nothing progressive to say—this point had already arrived with the bureaucratic anticapitalism of Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward—but rather the point at which even its paranoia ceases to be authentic.

However, the fact that the Orwell outside the text cannot transcend the ideology of totalitarianism should not blind us to the insights produced by the Orwell inside the text who struggles to give this ideology plausible form and content. Prominent among these insights is the similarity that exists between the ideologies of bourgeois individualism and totalitarian will to power and the elective affinity between the concept of totalitarianism and those for whom the religion of liberty is no more than a theodicy of the struggle of all against all. The cold war ideology of totalitarianism allows proponents of bourgeois individualism to project their own will to power and contempt for equality onto totalitarianism, while legitimizing the economic struggle for power under capitalism within a “moral” framework of pluralism. Orwell’s ideology works in precisely the same way, of course, but because his elitism is anticapitalist as well as antitotalitarian, he is able to identify and condemn the egoism underlying not only O’Brien’s totalitarian sadism but Winston’s petty bourgeois individualism as well. The problem for Orwell’s elitism is rather different: from within his own anticapitalist opposition of socialism

34. See, for example, “Will Freedom Die,” Left News (Apr. 1941): 1682–85, where Orwell expresses fear of a loss of liberty with the passing of capitalism and the advent of socialism. Significantly, this piece is omitted from CEJL. Such elitist attitudes make it possible for neoconservatives such as Norman Podhoretz to lay an otherwise specious claim to Orwell’s legacy. See “If Orwell Were Alive Today,” Harper’s, Jan. 1983, 30–37; see also Christopher Hitchens and Norman Podhoretz, “An Exchange on Orwell,” Harper’s Feb. 1983, 56–58.
and totalitarianism, Orwell can find no plausible motivation for superior individuals of the middle class to act morally and take the side of the inferior masses of the working class. This important, if unintended, insight provides one important clue to the mystery of the absent middle-class hero within the novel. The Orwell inside the text tries valiantly to provide viable images of the national family—the Outer Party as middle-class victims as oppressed in their own fashion as the working-class proles, and Winston as a middle-class dissident who admires the prole’s humanity and recognizes in them the hope for the future—but he succeeds only in representing the impossibility of an alliance of the middle and working classes. Orwell believes the middle class has “nothing to lose but its aitches,” but in putting this ideology to work, he comes up against profound structural-economic antagonisms that resist being (mis)represented as merely cultural-ideological. In the very act of denying it, Orwell is compelled to represent the incoherence of a middle class victimized under totalitarianism and the coherence of middle-class support for the exploitation of the working class under capitalism. The national family cannot be coherently represented, because, within a capitalist society, the middle class has no coherent reason for abolishing the exploitative distinction between mental and manual labor that is the source of its class status and power.

His notion of the national family may be objectively false, but Orwell’s inability to depict even its subjective truth illuminates a final contradiction within his political ideology: the discomfiting similarity between his own middle-class populism and that of Hitler’s. Characteristically, Orwell openly acknowledges his ambivalent attitude toward fascism. In a review of Mein Kampf, for example, he makes the following pronouncement, “I should like to put on record that I have never been able to dislike Hitler. Ever since he came to power . . . I have reflected that I would certainly kill him if I could get within reach of him, but that I could feel no personal animosity. The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him.” 35 Specifically, Orwell finds appealing Hitler’s pose as a “Promethean, self-sacrificing hero fight-

35. George Orwell, “Review of Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler,” CEJL, 2:13. Even those who label Orwell a “Tory radical” are looking backward, almost always admiringly, to Cobbett and Hazlitt, and never situate Orwell’s radical conservatism in the context of fascism—a lower middle-class reaction to the pressures of capitalist transformation and the threat of a revolutionary working-class movement. See William E. Laskowski Jr., “George Orwell and the Tory-Radical Tradition,” in Rose, ed., The Revised Orwell, 149–90. Daphne Patai, comparing Orwell’s novel with Katherine Burdekin’s Swastika Night, does note a connection between the inner characteristics of “fascist man” and those qualities Orwell extols—male dominance and a cult of masculinity (Patai, Mystique, 316 n. 32).
ing against impossible odds," his grasp of the "falsity of hedonism, security, and the avoidance of pain," and his appreciation of "patriotism and military virtues."36 In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell notes the broad appeal of fascism: "In order to combat Fascism it is necessary to understand it, which involves admitting some good as well as much evil. . . . To anyone with a feeling for tradition and for discipline it comes with its appeal ready made" (213). Nor does he make any secret of his own preference for a socialism that will be "simpler and harder" rather than "safe and soft." Although he supports a state-controlled economy and equality of incomes, Orwell has nothing but contempt for a view of socialism that would be, as he cuttingly puts it, "a paradise of little fat men" (193). His notion of the national family is deeply rooted in a world we have lost, a largely mythical world of collective individualism combining yeoman independence and rural village community, a world that corresponds uncannily to the Nazi mythology of peasant community, hard work, family values, and national patriotism. The worlds of both Hitler and Orwell are based on the traditional virtues of the petty bourgeoisie, the ideological unity of the middle and working classes, and superior individuals defined in terms of moral purpose as well as strength of will. Of course, the reality of Hitler's brutal methods more than offsets the appeal of National Socialist ideals in Orwell's eyes, but his ambivalence toward Hitler is perhaps another important clue as to why Orwell is unable to translate his own elitism into a literary image of the middle-class hero. The ordeal of Winston amply testifies to Orwell's contempt for both weakness and inferiority, but to portray Winston as a superior individual leading the inferior masses to victory would come too close to affirming the kind of revolution that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is intended to condemn. Although Orwell is unconsciously drawn toward the necessity of a middle-class hero and a protofascist revolution (and to foreclose all other possibilities), his conscious moral commitment to social equality and his opposition to totalitarianism preclude the actual representation of such an outcome. Orwell is capable of recognizing an underlying similarity between the ideologies of bourgeois individualism and totalitarianism, but he is necessarily blind to the existence of a homologous relationship between totalitarianism and his own moral elitism. This relationship can only be represented by an absence, the symptomatic absence of the middle-class hero.