The Literature of Neurosis:

An Exploration of Psychology within Dystopian Fiction

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Contents

Introduction

'Poetry . . . is capable of saving us; it is a perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos'[1]

- I.A Richards, *Science and Poetry*

The future has captivated the minds of writers throughout time, from space exploration to the wonders of science on Earth. However, we have reached a point at the end of empires, the closure of space as a new possibility and the promise of science has fallen into an everyday reality. From this, dystopian fiction rose from the minds of authors who perceived the darker possibilities the future could hold.

It is I. A Richards, a renowned literary critic who specialised in New Criticism who believes that 'Poetry . . . is capable of saving us; it is a perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos'[2], suggesting that poetry and arts such as literature have some inherent property that can be, in some way, our salvation. Richards endeavoured to understand how literature functions as an aesthetic object which was both self-contained and self-referencial, and believed literature and art to have an inherent power within what it means to be human. This seems to be a rather grandiose statement indeed. But what exactly does this quotation mean and, in terms of dystopian fiction, is this true? Authors from George Orwell to Alan Moore as well as critics such as Tom Moylan and Fredric Jameson appear to believe that dystopian fiction has the power to awaken individuals and eventually bring into effect a change so large that the entirety of society will benefit. Of course, it is very difficult to say with certainty whether or not this is true, but one thing that literature both creates and reflects,

[1] I. A. Richards, *Science and Poetry* (London: Methuen, 1926), pp. 82-3.
[2] Richards, pp. 82-3.

specifically dystopian fiction, is anxiety. Anxiety that nothing can truly change, that utopia is unreachable, and that no one can be trusted.

This anxiety is not without good reason. Utopia promises perfection, which is an ideal constantly out of reach. Tom Moylan, a Marxist literary critic and author of such works as *Demand the Impossible* and *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, tells us that 'There can be no *Utopia* but there *can* be utopian expressions that constantly shatter the present achievements and compromises of society and point to that which is not yet experienced in the human project of fulfilment and creation'[3], which suggests that while Moylan has admitted that utopia cannot be achieved, he is also saying that it is the idea of utopia that leads to progress. Utopia is an unreachable goal simply because there will always be one more step to take, for 'the utopian impulse is at the centre of the process of radical rupture that is necessary for the constant striving of humanity for a world free of oppression and full of satisfaction'[4]. Though we advance further and further with every year that passes, there is always another goal to reach because total freedom and total satisfaction are never truly possible; there will always be desire for more. The 'promise of specific gratifications'[5] which Moylan believes is granted by the concept of utopia is always dangled in front of us like a prize we can obtain if only we work a bit more, but then it is wrenched even further away as soon as we feel as though we have reached it. Our lives are in constant shift, but always in a state of a very precarious balance between the prospect of finally achieving utopia or descending into absolute chaos, or worse, falling into dystopia. It is this balance from which society is created, and our endless striving for utopia only increases the risk of us falling back into the very chaos we fear.

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[3] Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York: Methuen Inc., 1986), p.28.
[4] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible,* p.20.
[5] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible,* p.19.

The idea of utopia is therefore a constant reminder of a hope for a better world, and yet that world can never really exist. Dystopia is formed out of our frustration over this fact, our anxiety over what is to come, and our inability to do anything to control it. While we may claim that we want the world to change, we cannot really imagine this change. Writers of dystopian fiction are stuck in the position of wanting a change they cannot actually create. Tom Moylan claims that 'If humanity becomes too much taken with the present, we lose sight of the possibility of imagining a radically other future'[6], which outlines the necessity to *imagine* the future, but he neglects to mention a necessity to achieve it - perhaps because it is not in fact achievable. It is our fantasy of utopia which drives us, regardless of whether or not we ever reach it. After all, it is never possible to see the future, and not even possible to really imagine a world far removed from that which we have already. It is much easier to stand apart from the crowd as someone who claims to have superior knowledge of the dystopian, capitalistic ways of our society than as one who actively tries to change it. In that way, we distance ourselves from the regime in our own minds, but are still very much a part of it.

It is actually Tom Moylan's writings on utopia, dystopia's opposite, which sparked my interest in the psychological implications of dystopia. In Moylan's *Demand the Impossible*, he references both Freud and Bloch in conjunction with each other when speaking of utopia. He highlights Freud's belief of utopia being 'a quest for what has been repressed or denied'[7], which refers to the belief that society has removed some necessary part of the individual, and so the individual is less because of society. The individual who feels this lack is therefore driven to search for that which they perceive as being taken from them. This links this to Bloch's theory that there is a 'sense of *home* which includes happiness and fulfilment and which the human collectivity has never known'[8], noting that both theorists take a psychological approach to attempting to understand the drives behind society and

[6] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible,* p.21.
[7] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible,* p.34.
[8] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible,* p.34.

dystopia. When analysing dystopia in his work *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, much of Moylan's criticism turned towards the 'constantly mutating capitalist system'[9] which has contributed to a constantly widening chasm between classes and has disturbed a previously perceived fairer society with rules, regulations and restrictions as well as endless production leading to mindless consumption. This, of course, examined society collectively. What I found intriguing was the psychological aspects of individuals within these societies, touched upon by Moylan in earlier chapters on utopia. I wish to explore this further in relation to dystopia, and have decided to follow Moylan referring to the work of theorists Sigmund Freud and Ernst Bloch.

In particular, it is Freud's later work in which I found the most inspiration in my research. I examined theories on the id and the ego within the divided psyche and the conflicting instinctual drives, especially the libido and the death drive, and found these to be especially useful in aiding my work. From these theories, which I will examine in far greater detail throughout my dissertation, I struck upon the notion that dystopian literature was not just a critique of society as a whole, but a literature of neurosis. I discovered there to be an individual neurosis identifiable in all of the protagonists and many secondary characters in the novels I studied. That neurosis manifested itself in several different ways, and yet it always appeared to span from and return to the same set of psychological conflicts.

It was Ernst Bloch who aided me in connecting the neurosis identified by Freud in studies on real individuals to the fictional representations of individuals in dystopian societies. Bloch draws attention to the fact that all art, including if not especially literature, is no more than a grand illusion. However, he also highlighted just how integral this illusion was to the happiness of individuals, and just how strong this illusion can be; so strong that critics such as Richards believe that it can be our salvation. It is the illusion itself which has

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[9] Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), p.112.

the power to reveal or conceal any information it wishes, pushing consumers to think for themselves while simultaneously swaying them against the accepted norm of society. Ultimately, it comes down to what Freud called phantasy, a desire for an imagined better situation. It is phantasy which creates the illusion Block speaks of, and phantasy which gives the illusion its strength. Neurosis is what arises when the illusion cannot be realised, and this is often, if not always, the case.

It is an interesting phenomenon that dystopian fiction tends to be produced by those that position themselves on the political left. Why would those who dream of a more liberal, freer future be motivated to write such dark predictions for the future? The political left is a position which promotes equality, fairness and socialism, and yet when these writers, such as Huxley and Orwell, produced future worlds in which equality, fairness and socialism were in place, these utopias were presented as illusions which covered up a darker totalitarian state. Dystopian writing appears to be driving us towards deconstructing totalitarian ideals, but in doing so, deconstructs the faux-utopia of those fictional worlds. However, how are we to know that this *is* faux-utopia, and not simply the closest to utopia that we can get? Fredric Jameson tells us that 'Utopia is a transparent synonym for socialism itself, and the enemies of Utopia sooner or later turn out to be the enemies of socialism'[10]. Jameson studies the contradictory nature of dystopia in its rise from and criticism of socialist ideas. In his book *The Ideology of Theories,* Jameson sets out to analyse how we might go about 'bridging gaps between the individual and the social, between fantasy and cognition, between economics and aesthetics, objectivity and the subject, reason and the unconscious, the private and the public'[11]. Both writers of dystopian fiction and critics of utopian and dystopian writings can be seen as enemies of utopia, at least enemies of the utopias presented in these works of fiction, and yet are they not enemies of the socialist ideals they claim to represent? It

[10] Fredric Jameson, 'Of Islands and Trenches: Naturalization and the Production of Utopian Discourse' in *The Ideologies of Theory* (London: Verso, 2008), p.388.
[11] Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, p.ix.

becomes apparent that utopia and dystopia can be co-opted from a critical position to one implicated in ideology and power, both providing a commentary and critique of current society while also providing the very ideology that creates the anxiety it utilises.

Jameson too turns to Bloch's idea that the location of 'art in the deepest and most primal longings of the collectivity'[12], and uses this to find the synthesis between the contradictory elements of human existence. In fact, Jameson repeatedly returns to Bloch, especially his 'rediscovery and renewed study of the inexhaustible anticipatory "philosophy of the future"'[13]. It becomes apparent that socialist critical theory is incomplete without the psychological aspect provided by the likes of Freud or the aesthetic understanding of Bloch, and as such, these two theorists were integral to my research.

In dystopian fiction, the story starts with a focus on individual rebellion rather than mass rebellion. The protagonist is an individual who either remains an individual or becomes representative of a cause. There never seems to be a group of people acting within this rebellion that can be trusted, only the protagonist. Again, this returns to the idea of suspicion which comes very close to being paranoia that no one else can be trusted, and may be the root of the problem that dystopia faces in its inability to actually stir up change. If we are constantly at odds with each other and are unable to trust each other due to our belief that it is only ourselves as individuals who are enlightened, change cannot come about as one person is incapable of changing the world – though we might like to believe this to be the case. Even if many people shared the same views, they would never come together in any sizeable group as paranoia would divide them.

Dystopian fiction is often written about in terms of Marxism, a critical response which is certainly apt to the content. However, I was fascinated even more so by the psychological aspects of dystopia, and so looked to Sigmund Freud and others who studied in

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[12] Fredric Jameson, 'Criticism in History' in *The Ideologies of Theory* (London: Verso, 2008), p.133.
[13] Jameson, 'Of Islands and Trenches', p.388.

psychoanalysis in order to develop my thesis. Where many have looked at dystopia in terms of the many, I wanted to explore dystopia in terms of the psychology of the individuals who experienced it. To do this, the novels I have chosen to work with are Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, Phillip K Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*. However, to begin, I will explore two of dystopian fiction's most famous novels, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

I. The Dystopian Vision in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

When studying dystopia, it would be an oversight to ignore the contributions of two of the most well known novels of the genre. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* both show very different dystopias which yield very similar results, and may in fact offer the most support to my thesis. *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* explore a vision of dystopia that has become a recurrent theme in much of dystopian fiction, and that is complete failure to change anything whatsoever. In *Brave New World*, we are introduced into a world where all basic desires are fulfilled and there is no conflict, but there is a haunting soullessness to the society which causes ripples of dissatisfaction even where every effort has been taken to prevent it. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the totalitarian regime is much harsher and the rigid oppression is much more obvious, where the looming threat is death if one dares to step outside the teachings of the Party. The greatest similarity that *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* share is the fact that they offer a grim certainty that nothing can change.

In several instances, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* claims that the world is inherently unchangeable to any great degree. In the fictional Emmanuel Goldstein's *Theory and Practice of Collective Oligarchism*, commonly referred to by Winston simply as '*the book*'[14], Winston is informed of that which he already knows, that 'no historic change has ever meant much more than a change in the name of their masters'[15], especially for the proles. This suggests that while there may be small changes in who exactly is in charge, society itself does

[14] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 6th edn (London: Penguin Books, 1949; 2008), p.208.
[15] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.210.

not change in the manner in which it runs. People may come into power and they may lose it, but for the majority of the population, no notable change takes place. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* it is stated that 'Even after enormous upheavals and seemingly irrevocable changes, the same pattern has always reasserted itself'[16], showing that despite being exposed to oppression and overcoming it, the only thing we are capable of doing in society is repeating our past failures.

This same theory can also be applied to *Brave New World* in a different way. The upheavals are all in the relative past of the novel, but the 'irrevocable changes'[17] spoken of in the novel are just strengthening the hierarchy already established. Rather than having the vague class system that we have in our society today, in *Brave New World* this society has strictly defined and ranked classes. While there is a sense that 'everyone works for everyone else. We can't do without anyone'[18], there is also an echo of Orwell's theory he presented in *Animal Farm*, that 'all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others'[19]. In the case of *Brave New World*, everybody is happy and has roles to suit their ability, so there is no reason for anyone to feel like they are treated unfairly, but it is clear that the Alphas are favoured. Despite 'utopia' being achieved in *Brave New World*, it is not a utopia as we would describe it. It is a world in which utopia has been moulded to match society rather than the other way around, because the easiest way we can achieve utopia is by enforcing what we already know and just forcing ourselves to like it that way.

Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch explains this inability to break the pattern simply. In one of his most famous works, *The Principle of Hope*, he developed theories that became fundamental to the connection of Marxist criticism and Christianity. In *The Principle of Hope* Bloch concludes that throughout human history, humans have always strived for ideological

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[16] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.192.
[17] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.192.
[18] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, 3rd edn (London: Vintage, 1939; 1994; 2007), p.64.
[19] George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, 5th edn (London: Penguin Books, 1945; 1951; 1987; 1989; 2008), p.90.

perfection, a desire which shows itself in art, religion and utopian ideals. The result of this constant struggle can only be absolute perfection or absolute destruction. One route to perfection, for the individual, is to have all desires satisfied. Bloch believes that it is not necessarily *change* that we seek, though we may think so. It is just that we want the power ourselves. Bloch writes 'it does not hate exploitation but only the fact that it is not itself an exploiter, so virtue does not hate the slothful bed of the rich, but only the fact that it has not become its own and its alone'[20]. In this sense, it is not *freedom* that we want. It is to be in control, to exercise our own will rather than working to the will of some oppressive power. Winston does not appear to want to be an oppressor as such, but he certainly does want power. Initially it seems he just wants power over his own life and actions but the more Winston achieves this freedom, the more he craves it. His longing for control extends from wanting autonomy of himself to wanting power over Big Brother, which manifests in his desire to destroy the Party and the concept of Big Brother entirely.

In Bernard Marx's society in *Brave New World*, every emotion is satisfied as much as possible. Where conditioning and normal life fail to provide satisfaction, *soma* is available to rectify this. Bernard, however, is not happy. It is implied, though not confirmed, that Bernard's development was hindered at an early stage when somebody 'put alcohol into his blood surrogate'[21], that normal conditioning and the life he was grown for were not actually suited to him, and therefore he is destined to feel like an outsider. Initially it seems that, like Winston, Bernard will use his status as an outsider to work against the social order, but this is not the case. When Bernard brings John the Savage back into civilisation he gets a taste of what it is to be accepted by society and no longer wants society to be any other way. Bernard's own individual rebellion is purely because he wishes he could be like the others, and once he begins to fit in and starts gaining the benefits of the society to which he was

[20] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986), p.31.
[21] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p.39.

previously an outsider, his success 'completely reconciled him... to a world which, up till then, he had found very unsatisfactory. In so far as it recognized him as important, the order of things was good'[22]. This is explained by Freud's idea; 'The narcissistic satisfaction provided by the cultural ideal is also among the forces which are successful in combating the hostility to culture within the cultural unit.'[23] Bernard, once an outsider, gains the 'narcissistic satisfaction' Freud speaks of when he begins to fit in with society, and as such, loses his desire to be free of that very society and begins to act just as everyone else does. He becomes a part of the regime he once protested, and so he is neutralised as a threat, no longer hostile to the culture which once rejected him.

Freud goes on to say that society benefits when 'This satisfaction can be shared in not only by the favoured classes, which enjoy the benefits of the culture, but also by the suppressed ones, since the right to despise the people outside it compensates them for the wrongs they suffer within their own unit.'[24] This is a very good way of viewing the society in *Brave New World*, where each caste despises the others, and yet they would rather be a part of the system than outside of it. It is better to be part of a caste, any caste, than be an individual, at least in the eyes of society and those who follow the regime. However, initially, Bernard stands apart from this, although his reasoning is largely based in jealousy. In *Brave New World*, Bernard Marx is clearly envious of the other Alphas, who are physically superior to him owing to his small stature, which is considered 'horribly and typically low-caste'[25]. He despises that he is made to 'feel an outsider; and feeling an outsider he behaved like one, which increased the prejudice against him'[26]. Bernard wishes he could have what the other Alphas have access to. To counteract this envy, Bernard sets himself apart from the other

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[22] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.146.
[23] Sigmund Freud, 'The Future of an Illusion' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.13.
[24] Freud, 'The Future of an Illusion', p.13.
[25] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.39.
[26] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.56.

Alphas as *their* superior due to his intellect and his ability to see through the illusion of society and becomes 'elated by the intoxicating unconsciousness of his individual significance'[27], and by establishing his individuality, gains the feeling of power he previously lacked. In this respect Bernard and Winston are strikingly similar, though their need for individuality is expressed in different ways. Winston's drive for individual power and freedom leads to him actively working against the Party in order to allow himself to believe his rebellion is for a greater cause. Bernard, however, expresses his individuality for individuality's sake, as a sort of badge of honour that no one else recognises or respects, and allows himself to feel like he 'stood alone embattled against the order of things'[28]. However, both are ultimately striving for the same 'individual significance'[29] in order to feel as though they have some power in the world, and more importantly, some kind of importance beyond just being a part of the machine of their civilisation. Bernard shows no desire other than individuality and Winston's is ultimately for his own gain even under the guise of there being a greater cause.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston is under no illusion that any change will occur within his lifetime. From the moment Winston writes in the diary in the very first chapter of the book, we are told in no uncertain terms that 'The Thought Police would get him just the same... sooner or later they were bound to get you.'[30] Even when he meets others of a similar mindset, Winston gains no hope. He tells Julia 'We are the dead'[31] and never once seems to believe that he will survive, let alone make any vast change to the society he lives in. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* instead insists not just that there will be no improvement, but that even if there was some kind of revolution, things would only revert to the way they were because the same order will always be restored, 'just as a gyroscope will always return to equilibrium,

[27] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.85.
[28] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.85.
[29] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.85.
[30] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.21.
[31] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.142.

no matter how far it is pushed one way or the other.'[32] So what, then, is the point? If there is no hope of change, why does Winston continue to resist? He is experiencing what M Keith Booker calls an 'individual neurosis'[33], an idea which he believes spans from an individual feeling not only separate from society, but completely irreconcilable with it. Those suffering this neurosis cannot escape it, but they still resist accepting society as it is because of their belief that even against all logic and all evidence, there is some 'mute protest in your own bones'[34]. For Winston this is 'the instinctive feeling that the conditions you lived in were intolerable and that at some other time they must have been different.'[35] To base the need for revolution on a 'feeling' rather than any concrete reasoning is arguably not only facile but illogical, but is that not the precise problem? Logic and emotions are often at odds, and on a societal level, it is easy for logic to prevail. However, on an individual basis, it simply cannot. One cannot tell oneself not to feel, no matter how illogical those feelings may be. In fact, it is emotion, empathy and consciousness that make us human, and it is this humanity which gives us the drive to progress. Emotions are integral to humanity; Freud recognises emotion as 'one of the foundations of civilization'[36] which provides individuals with 'the prototype of all happiness'[37]. However, emotions are disadvantageous to the Party, as emotions, as previously stated, are not within our power to control. The Party is attempting to control emotion, suppressing the very thing that makes us human, and thus destroying humanity without actually destroying the humans themselves.

So, if not logic, what reason does Winston have to oppose the Party? I have already established that he doesn't believe there is any chance of his own success. At most, he thinks

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[32] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.192.
[33] M Keith Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (Connecticut, Greenwood Press: 1994), p.12.
[34] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.76.
[35] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* pp.76-77.
[36] Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, d. By James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.101.
[37] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.101.

that there is a possibility of success far in the distant future, long after his own death. Here I draw attention to Sigmund Freud's reality principle, which is the concept that the ego, which 'represents what may be called reason and common sense'[38] can act as substitute for the pleasure principle driven by the id, 'which contains the passions'[39], a concept first fully explored in Freud's 'The Ego and The Id', written in 1923. The reality principle dictates that a human being's ego drives through suffering with the promise of reward at the end of this suffering, which Freud refers to as delayed gratification. One of the main examples of this, and the one most appropriate to the example of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is religion. In Booker's work, he turns to Freud to highlight the human tendency towards religion, in which he describes 'the need for religious belief'[40] as one of our 'inborn instincts'[41]. Because of the reality principle, people are willing to suffer as long as they have a promise of reward in the afterlife. This is a gratification only achieved after their death, and is not even certain, yet it is enough to keep them going. In the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* there is no God, and the closest substitute is Big Brother himself. Winston is not a follower of Big Brother and he is not religious, so it cannot be said that Winston is straying from the Party's teachings in order to gain the favour of any divine figure. However, his aim is much the same as that of religion; he suffers not for himself, but for some kind of reward after his death, acting as a Christ-like sacrifice for the salvation of others. The interesting difference is that he does it not for his *own* reward, but for the people of the potential future. In this sense, Winston's drive is unique. Freud states that the reality principle is a way of inhibiting the pleasure principle driven by the id, but both ultimately strive towards pleasure. Winston is living his life entirely for a reward he does not think he himself will achieve. So why is he doing it?

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[38] Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX 1923-25*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.25.
[39] Freud, 'The Ego and the Id', p.25.
[40] Booker, p.11.
[41] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (London, The Hogarth Press Ltd: 1948), p.5.

Again, to try to explain this, I must return to the idea that there is an 'instinctive feeling'[42] at work which overrides logic, and if we are to speak of 'inborn instincts'[43] in Freudian terms, we must examine not just the ego, but the id. I have already stated that there is no obvious and much less logical reason for Winston to go against the party, but I have also claimed that logic plays no role in this digression from the rules of the society in which Winston lives. In Winston's case, there is a mixture of the reality and pleasure principles at work. Freud would claim that the pleasure principle, which is an instinctive drive towards pleasure and the avoidance of suffering, is overridden by the ego's reality principle, which 'without giving up the intention of ultimately attaining pleasure... demands and enforces the postponement of satisfaction'[44]. Winston's only discernible reason to stray from the teachings of Big Brother is instinct, and desire for instant gratification which shows itself most obviously in his sexual desire for Julia and his desire to oppose the Party against impossible odds. It may initially seem that Winston is making himself something of a martyr for a pointless cause, enacting a selfless act of defiance in order to make a political statement so that others may follow in his footsteps. For the most part this may be true, but in no way is this selfless. In fact, it is entirely selfish. Winston may think he is only acting in pursuit of a better world, and while he may be doing so, this is actually only an advantageous side effect of his true intentions, which are to satisfy his id in providing the immediate gratification which society is denying him.

In *Brave New World* it is John the Savage rather than Bernard Marx who truly opposes the regime of society, but John is in a particularly interesting situation as he is not only an outsider in the society he is brought to, but also to the one from which he was taken. His outsider status drove him away from his home to the 'brave new world'[45] of civilisation,

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[42] Orwell, p.76.
[43] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p.5.
[44] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* p.5.
[45] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.120.

but this repetition of 'brave new world' becomes a mockery when John realises he is just as much of an outsider to this civilisation. He initially tried to fight against the oppressive regimes of the new civilisation, especially in his confrontation with Mustapha Mond, but ultimately he cannot argue the case for unhappiness when his only justification mirrors the very same 'instinctive feeling'[46] that Winston identifies in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. However, Mond argues that instinct is non-existent, that conditioning can prevent instinct, and therefore John's only argument crumbles. He finds himself torn between two worlds, unable to reconcile himself with either, and ultimately his only solution is to end his own life.

Huxley himself believed 'The time is not far off when the whole population and not merely a few exceptionally intelligent individuals will consciously realise the fundamental unlivableness of life under the present régime'[47], a belief he expressed in his essay 'Revolutions', in which he spoke of the flawed nature of society, especially societies with communist values. In *Brave New World*, we see the exceptional individuals in the likes of John and even Mustapha Mond. John can certainly see the unlivable nature of society. He believes that 'tears are necessary'[48], he vouches for the need of 'self-denial'[49], 'everything noble and fine and heroic'[50], even that it is '*natural* to feel there's a God'[51]. John calls society 'too easy'[52], claiming that 'nothing costs enough'[53]. Mond obviates his protests by aligning these same human emotions by decrying them as 'symptoms of political inefficiency'[54], leading to 'instability'[55] which 'means the end of civilisation'[56]. Mond speaks to Helmholtz prior to his discussion with John, revealing that there is a cost, a cost for everyone who is

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[46] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.76.
[47] Aldous Huxley, 'Revolutions' in *Selected Essays of Aldous Huxley*, ed. by Harold Raymond (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p.96.
[48] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.210.
[49] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.209.
[50] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.209.
[51] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.207.
[52] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.210.
[53] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.211.
[54] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.209.
[55] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.209.
[56] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.209.

outside of the norm, perhaps everyone regardless. Mond tells Helmholtz 'you happen to be too much interested in beauty. I was too much interested in truth'[57], and his sacrifice was 'choosing to serve happiness'[58] rather than pursuing his own interests. The cost of happiness is therefore unseen other than by those who have had to pay it themselves. Happiness and comfort come at the expense of not only art, culture, history and emotion - the prime enemies of the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* - but also scientific progress. Where science and art are often seen as opposing forces in literature in which art hinders and science aids, here, Huxley displays both as a hindrance. In fact, progress itself is viewed as a hindrance in *Brave New World*. What the civilisation advocates is stasis, a comfortable equilibrium in which happiness is not only the most important aim, but the only aim. John the Savage, who is considered less than his fellow humans, is the only one who, when faced with the threat of being 'unhappy... to grow old and ugly and impotent... to have syphilis and cancer... to have too little to eat... to be lousy... to live in constant apprehension... to be tortured by unspeakable pains'[59] reclaims his humanity, reclaims his 'right to be unhappy', his right to experience what it is to be human for both the good and the bad, and states in the face of all of these horrors, 'I claim them all'[60].

Winston encounters a song early in the novel with lyrics that are as follows: '*Under the spreading chestnut tree, I sold you and you sold me: There they lie, and here lie we, under the spreading chestnut tree*'[61]. This song is most likely adapted from a folk song which had the lyrics 'Underneath the spreading chestnut tree, I loved her and she loved me, There she used to sit upon my knee, 'neath the spreading chestnut tree' and continued on about a couple who eventually got married and had a family. This is obviously very different to the tone of the adaptation in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which while functioning as a symbol of the

[57] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.201.
[58] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.201.
[59] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.212.
[60] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.212.
[61] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.80.

Party's ability to change and warp whatever they wish, also provides distinct foreshadowing of the relationship between Winston and Julia. Freud points out that dystopian society has an 'antagonism to sexuality'[62] which is certainly present in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, though challenged by Winston and Julia. They are in love, and yet when the time comes, they betray each other in order to save themselves. When he is tortured, for a while, all that Winston can cling to after losing everything else is that he 'had not stopped loving her, his feelings towards her had remained the same'[63]. However when Winston's torture becomes more intense he soon realises that there is '*one* person to whom he could transfer his punishment'[64]. Almost instantly, he is begging O'Brien to harm Julia, not himself. When they are both later released, having been converted from their deviancy, they admit to each other 'I betrayed you'[65], and we are reminded of that same song, '*Under the spreading chestnut tree, I sold you and you sold me*'[66]. Winston and Julia have been broken, betraying each other to save themselves, soon to die with only the mocking symbol of the chestnut tree reminding them of false hope for the future.

The very title of Huxley's novel, *Brave New World*, functions in much the same manner as the song in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. When it is first mentioned by John the Savage, it is in a state of exultation when he realises he will be able to witness civilisation. He says 'To think it should be coming true – what I've dreamt of all my life... How beauteous mankind is! ... O brave new world'[67] when he is told he will be granted access to that which he has only heard of in stories from his mother. However, when exposed to the reality of civilisation, of 'utopia' at the expense of humanity, the words instead 'mocked him through

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[62] Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.109.
[63] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.287.
[64] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.300.
[65] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.305.
[66] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.307.
[67] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.120.

his misery and remorse, mocked him with how hideous a note of cynical derision'[68]. Again, like the words of *The Spreading Chestnut Tree*, 'brave new world'[69] has become a symbol of false hope. That these words were chosen as the very title of the book is telling of their power, a book which promised a futuristic world of progress and happiness instead revealed just another failure of humanity, another faux-utopia. The betrayal John is exposed to is not that of another individual, but of society as a whole.

It is after Winston's and Julia's torture is complete that we see the extent, or the weakness, of human nature. Julia admits that one diverts pain away from themselves because 'You think there's no other way of saving yourself, and you're quite prepared to save yourself that way. You *want* it to happen to the other person. You don't give a damn what they suffer. All you care about is yourself.'[70] When really tested, there is no thought for a better world, no thought even for anyone else at all. Ultimately, it is self-preservation, self-gain that we act for, even if that is well hidden under a guise of revolution to favour everyone. Winston claims that in loving Big Brother, 'He had won the victory over himself'[71]. This shows us that the Party has such power as to make one see oneself as the enemy to be overcome. Again, this is evidence of their total ability to control reality, even altering the very instinct of people in order to gain complete control over them. Winston's early belief that 'If you can *feel* that staying human is worth while, even when it can't have any result whatever, you've beaten them'[72] completely falls away, as he no longer feels the need to stay human in the sense that he no longer has the instincts that made him oppose Big Brother and the Party. One is reminded of Winston's claim that 'some kinds of failure are better than other kinds'[73], and it becomes clear that in this world, there is only one kind of

[68] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.184.
[69] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.184.
[70] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.305.
[71] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.311.
[72] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.174.
[73] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.142.

failure, and the worst one at that. That failure is succumbing completely to the Party, as they even refuse to let you die if you do not.

Can John's suicide be seen as failure? A failure to adapt, certainly, but he has not fallen prey to the same failure as Winston. He himself has not been changed, and so in that sense he succeeded where Winston did not. However, he did not enact any change and he could not adapt to fit into society, so in that sense he failed where Winston succeeded. Ultimately, neither of their 'successes' can truly be called such. Suicide cannot be considered a victory nor can complying with the very regime you once protested. Both protagonists, despite taking the only paths available to them, failed. From the perspective of Orwell and Huxley, it seems that there can be no victory over these dystopias, no victory over the utopian desire. The failures of the protagonists show this: when given a utopia, or as close to utopia as could be attained, they were still unhappy and had to take extreme measures to escape their own need for something else.

I would also like to explore the concept of reality control. Winston fears that 'both the past and the external world exist only in the mind'[74] and that 'the mind itself is controllable'[75]. Again this is just one of Winston's anxieties throughout *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but it does indeed seem to come to pass. Homi K. Bhabha, who dedicated his essay 'Doublespeak and Minority of One' to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s protagonist, immediately highlights the psychological attack on Winston. He speaks of the nature of doublethink, the propaganda of the Party, the 'manipulation of his thoughts or memories'[76], all of which lead to 'The destruction of Winston's "intellectual apparatus"'[77]. Freud himself supports the concept of there being a sort of built in reality control in our minds, an idea he visits not only with the

[74] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.84.
[75] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.84.
[76] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Doublespeak and Minority of One' in *On Nineteen Eighty-Four: Orwell and our Future*, ed. by Abbott Gleason, Jack Goldsmith, Martha C. Nussbaum (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.32.
[77] Bhabha, p.32.

reality principle but also with trauma theory. In 'Civilization and its Discontents' Freud tells us that humans show within their psyche:

> ...an intention of making oneself independent of the external world by seeking satisfaction from the internal, psychical processes... the connection with reality is still further loosened; satisfaction is obtained from illusions, which are recognized as such without the discrepancy between them and reality being allowed to interfere with enjoyment.[78]

We can control what we remember in order to protect our minds. However, this works only on an individual basis, and is under our own control, even if this control is subconscious. Winston's fear is that this control would be removed from us and instead be placed in the hands of our oppressors, in his case, the Party. Here, I would like to take the first look at the work of Jean Baudrillard, especially *The Spirit of Terrorism*. Baudrillard has often spoken of the ability of media to influence and even control the minds of the population. After all, as he says, 'How are things to stand with the real event, then, if reality is everywhere infiltrated by images, virtuality and fiction?'[79], which is a very real concern to individuals in dystopian societies. If the real is so rarely shown, and when it is, so twisted and corrupted by the ideals of the Party, what is to be believed other than what is shown, falsely, as the truth? After all, 'There is no 'good' use of the media; the media are part of the event, they are part of the terror'[80], and media is the very thing which gives the Party its power to spread false information to the masses. They edit historical documents, restrict education and spread lies in the news, but Winston does not at first think them able to actually limit thought. In this he

[78] Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, d. By James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.80.
[79] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism' in *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (Berkshire: Open University Press, 1992; 2002), p.228.
[80] Baudrillard, p.229.

is proven to be wrong. Winston's colleague, Syme, already predicts this early in the novel, saying 'Every year ... the range of consciousness always a little smaller'[81]. The question is how the Party could monitor or control thought, and that is through accessing the very instincts that work against it and redirecting them. If the Party is not redirecting anger outwards towards their enemies, they manipulate fear until self-preservation overrides logic, as it did with Winston in his ultimate defeat when he finally admitted, after torture and humiliation by the party, 'He loved Big Brother'[82].

Tom Moylan claims that 'If humanity becomes too much taken with the present, we lose sight of the possibility of imagining a radically other future'[83], and lists this as one of the reasons humanity turns to utopia for hope. We must strive for something more than what we have, otherwise there is no progress, no purpose, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows this. The Party has removed the idea of change from society in order to maintain its position of power, so no one, other than a tiny minority, can even imagine a world, future or past, that is any different to the present. However, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, wider society treats this as a positive thing. If people cannot imagine change, they cannot want it, other than by the force of 'instinct', as mentioned previously. Winston *can* imagine change, but this is nothing but problematic for him. Only when he abandons the notion of change can he become assimilated into society and only then can his suffering end. Where Moylan claims that the prospect of Utopia offers us hope, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggests otherwise. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows that our desire for a utopian society, while it is ingrained within our psyche, is not the end goal of our suffering but the very cause of it. The notion that utopia is possible makes humans want to strive towards it, only to be met by failure and the crushing realisation that utopia is a fallacy.

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[81] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.55.
[82] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.311.
[83] Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York: Methuen Inc., 1986), p.21.

However, this does not answer the question of why Winston has this desire when others seemingly do not. Moylan's claim is that becoming taken with the present will remove our desire for a different future, which appears to be true, but becoming taken with the present can come about in one of two ways. First, to have a present which is significantly better than the past so that people are satisfied. Second, to remove the past so that people have no basis of comparison and therefore simply believe that the present is the best it can ever be. The Party does exactly the latter. It alters the past, both distant and recent, so that the present always appears to be at a constant. Occasionally there will be an alteration, such as the feigned increase of the chocolate ration, to make the present seem better than the past, but this is an improvement over a past that did not really exist, and so is purely a tactic to increase love towards Big Brother. Essentially, the people who are controlled by the Party have no past. However, Winston does. He remembers a time before the Party were in power, when things were different and, in his opinion, better. It would appear then that Winston's desire for a different future is not a desire for the future at all, but a desire to return to his past.

This becomes yet another reason why utopia is, in this sense, unachievable. We simply cannot go backwards. Not only can we not restore what once was as things just cannot be unlearned, unseen or unexperienced, but our memories are flawed. We remember what we want to remember and forget that which is undesirable. In actuality, our utopia, at least our own individual idea of utopia, exists only as a construction of our imperfect memories. What makes this unachievable ideal all the more frustrating is that it is added to every time we experience something new that is positive, as this too is added to the bank of ideals that we wish to return to but cannot. Our wants are cumulative as we gain new experiences. For example a child of ten may remember when they did not have to go to school, and their utopia would be nothing more than playing at home. That same child thirty years later, an

adult of forty, will likely remember such things as being younger, having no financial responsibilities, being physically fitter, being in a perfect relationship, to name but a few. All of these memories and regrets build up into the taunting utopia we perceive as being ahead of us, because to recognise it as being a construction of the past would be to have nothing to look forward to, and no reason to continue.

However, there are other ways to find justification for human existence. Freud believes that human beings have a tendency to look towards religion for comfort and purpose. He highlights a higher power, usually a patriarchal figure who must stand in for God when God is not available, for the function God has is indispensible. In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud explains the human tendency to desire to believe in a higher power as follows:

> Everything that happens in this world is an expression of the intentions of an intelligence superior to us, which in the end, though its ways and byways are difficult to follow, orders everything for the best – that is, to make it enjoyable for us. Over each one of us there watches a benevolent Providence which is only seemingly stern and which will not suffer us to become a plaything of the over-mighty and pitiless forces of nature.[84]

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Big Brother is the god figure which matches all of these functions and promises. Winston wants to defeat Big Brother, a desire enforced with his repeated writings of 'Down with Big Brother' in his diary, even though society around him worships Big Brother. Winston, however, has identified that Big Brother is restricting him, oppressing him and trying to remove his more primitive desires. Winston becomes the individual against the state. However, there is no pretence that Winston wishes to destroy Big Brother, his

[84] Freud, 'The Future of an Illusion', p.19.

'God', for the betterment of society as a whole. Winston only wants to remove 'God' so that he can become his own god, the maker of his own rules, therefore realising his own personal utopia, not the utopia of wider society.

John the Savage actually supports the notion that God is necessary, whereas society has attempted to remove God. He thinks it is 'natural to think about God'[85], that there seems 'to be a God managing things, punishing, rewarding'[86], that 'God's the reason for everything'[87]. To oppose this, Mond states that 'civilization has absolutely no need'[88] of God, that 'People believe in God because they've been conditioned to believe in God'[89], and that this new society has not received any such conditioning, so God is unnecessary. However, in this instance, John is the one who appears to be right. This civilization does have a god, or at least a stand in for a god, and that is Ford. They even use very well known phrases twisted to suit their own beliefs, such as 'cleanliness is next to fordliness'[90], and replace using the lord's name in vain with using Ford's name instead. Mond is wrong, conditioning alone cannot make or remove God. God is necessary, whatever form that may be, as people require the idea that someone has created them, that everything they do is for some reason. Whether it is Ford or Big Brother, a god figure is required. Freud calls 'those ideas – ideas which are religious in the widest sense – are prized as the most precious possession of civilization, as the most precious thing it has to offer its participants'[91]. After all, what else but an imaginary being can promise an imaginary prize? And yet it is that very aspect, that it is imaginary, which gives it such power. The religious ideal can be moulded to fit any and every individual, and similarly, promises any and every individual a reward which is not available within reality.

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[85] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.207.
[86] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.208.
[87] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.209.
[88] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.209.
[89] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.207.
[90] Huxley, *Brave New World,* p.94.
[91] Freud, 'The Future of an Illusion', p.20.

Both John and Winston show the same desire to defeat the dystopian regime and with John it is easy to identify why this is – he is from a different culture and entered a new one, yet is already an outsider to both. Why would Winston, though, feel this way when few others in his society do? Or, if they do, why do they do nothing about it? The answer is simple, and identifiable in the real world. When exposed to traumatic events, it is simply easier on our psyche if we can ignore them or justify them with ideas given to us by higher powers. Sometimes it is too difficult to find justification ourselves as this means trying to find reason in a world in which things can be utterly horrific seemingly without cause. Sometimes, unconsciously, we edit out undesirable thoughts and knowledge, managing to win 'victories over your own memory'[92] or 'to know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully-constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing both of them; to use logic against logic'[93], or, as the Party would call it, 'doublethink'[94]. Freud calls this 'the creation of a new reality which no longer raises the same objections as the old one'[95], essentially allowing an escape from a previously held truth by accepting a new set of beliefs as truth. This is not only the easier option for individuals if they are able to ignore their 'instincts' that things should be otherwise, but it is desirable for oppressors, or the Party, as it makes people easy to control. In fact, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it makes it possible for the Party to create their own ideology and their own truth, even their own account of history, which people dare not defy. Even when the facts change on the spot, the people are able to dismiss what they knew only seconds ago and replace the old lies with new ones to align themselves with the reality that the Party has created for them. This is not to say that they are

[92] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.37.
[93] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.37.
[94] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* p.37.
[95] Sigmund Freud, 'The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX 1923-25*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.185.

consciously complicit in the plans of the Party, but shows the strength of the ideological system that has been enforced upon them.

The likes of Winston, John the Savage and even Bernard Marx all come down to the same thing; they desire a reality different to the one which has been presented to them, and they are willing to fight to get it. All of their struggles are 'attempts to replace a disagreeable reality by one which is more in keeping with the subject's wishes.'[96] It is with this desire that we strike upon a theme that is central to the next chapter, and that is Freud's notion of phantasy. To replace reality, there must be 'the existence of a *world of phantasy*, of a domain which became separated from the real external world at the time of the introduction of the reality principle,'[97] and this 'world of phantasy plays the same part in psychosis and that there, too, it is the store-house from which the materials or the pattern for building the new reality are derived.'[98] Essentially, there is a desireable unreality within the psyche of individuals which leads them to pursue an unobtainable ideal within reality. I plan to examine this in more detail in reference to Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and how phantasy can control us just as much, if not more, than reality itself.

[96] Freud, 'The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis', p.187.
[97] Freud, 'The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis', p.187.
[98] Freud, 'The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis', p.187.

II. Phantasy and the Illusion of Art in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*

In dystopian literature, society is often hostile towards art. Sometimes it is simply cast aside, treated as a thing of the past, whereas at other times it is actively altered to suit the new dystopian society or even destroyed altogether. Art is seen as a way of preserving history and culture, a basis from which we learn and grow from the past, but it is not this that I wish to explore. Instead, I plan to delve into Ernst Bloch's theory that the importance and power of art lies in the fact that it is all an illusion, and how this intertwines with Freud's theories of phantasy and the death drive.

Bloch states that 'artists are devoted to illusion from beginning to end. They have no proclivity for the truth; rather the opposite'[99], an idea which alters what we may have believed about dystopian societies' anxieties over art and literature. Bloch believes that is not that the arts hold truths that these societies have strived to hide, but that they contain illusions, fantasies and ideas that would lead the population to aspire to something more than that which society already provides, for when it comes to reality, art 'enlarged it and made it more precise in a desirable and significant manner'[100]. It is not simply oppression that leads to revolution, but the concepts that provide the oppressed with desires for something better, and the belief that their own actions can cause change. In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, books are destroyed by the firemen, seen as useless if not dangerous relics of the past that are incompatible with the society in which they live. Books are regarded as full of nonsense by most of the population, but the existence of the firemen proves a fear of the power of that

[99] Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, trans. by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1975) p.142.
[100] Bloch, p.145.

which they contain, resulting in a 'specific hostility towards art'[101]. This is revealed when Beatty says 'Read a few lines and you go over the cliff. Bang, you're ready to blow up the world, chop off heads, knock down women and children, destroy authority.'[102] It would appear on the surface that these two perceptions of books are contradictory, but they actually exist in tandem. It is not that books are filled with the truth which exposes the lies of society, but that they are filled with lies, embellishments and idealistic fantasies that inspire the everyman to stand up to oppressive authorities, believing in and thus mimicking fictional heroes that never truly existed. It is the inspiration given by books that is the power that they hold, not the truth.

Bloch believes that 'the arts make the vision of life more bearable'[103] in a way that is entirely separate and incomprehensible to the world of science. Freud would agree with this observation, himself stating that art offers 'illusions in contrast with reality, but they are none the less psychically effective, thanks to the role which phantasy has assumed in mental life'[104]. Both theorists believe that art serves a psychological purpose that science cannot even begin to acknowledge within its own restrictions, which even we as individuals cannot recognise nor understand, but merely feel its lack when art is taken away. How art fills this hole is not something that can be explained or defined even though its existence is undeniable, thus making it exist somewhere outside the realm of science. As Montag says in a world where there is no literature, 'We have everything we need to be happy, but we aren't happy. Something's missing.'[105] Montag does not know precisely what it is he lacks, though he is painfully aware of its absence. It is ineffable, which makes it as frustrating as it makes it powerful. He knows there is something intangible held in books that he cannot grasp, but that

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[101] Bloch, p.142.
[102] Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*(London: Harper, 1954), p.137.
[103] Bloch, p.142.
[104] Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, d. By James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.75.
[105] Bradbury, p.107.

he needs, that the whole world needs if it is to live and live well. The necessity for arts and literature is what creates the biggest dilemma for the dystopian society. If people can potentially be inspired to rise up against authority due to the arts, the way to resolve this problem would appear to be to remove the arts altogether. However, when this happens, people are left unfulfilled, and this is equally counterproductive to dystopian society. In the best case, the mental health of people deteriorates and they are left with a sense of neurosis, even depression, possibly to the point of suicide, multiple cases of which are alluded to in *Fahrenheit 451*. In the worst case, the people rebel anyway, as Montag does. The fact appears to be that art, the biggest enemy of the dystopia, can neither exist nor be removed without having a detrimental effect on the very society that is trying to destroy it.

Bloch believes this to be a result of the fact that 'Telling stories is peculiar to the art work acting between persons and events in a way that is extremely alien to science'[106]. He speaks of an 'empty space between what has been concretely observed is filled with what has been invented'[107]. Fiction becomes a device of neither absolute truth nor utter lies, but a space that is not only between the two, but can constantly move either way along the spectrum. A single story may contain some truths, some lies, and varying degrees of partial truths all combined into one text, resulting in a story completely incomprehensible to a scientific world based purely on truths and untruths. It is not just the artists who are 'devoted to illusion'[108] but the consumers of art even more so, for the illusion provides them with completion. In fact, humanity relies on it for its very foundations, and thus humanity itself is partly comprised of falsities to make it what it is.

One particularly peculiar and interesting aspect of literature is its ability to 'consciously romanticize along with or beyond existing conditions'[109], another aspect which

[106] Bloch, p.145.
[107] Bloch, p.145.
[108] Bloch, p.142.
[109] Bloch, p.145.

provides fiction with an ineffability unattainable by science or logic, and yet also makes it impossible for art to remain realistic, for 'even the most realistic of artworks, especially... literary prose'[110] suffer from the absolute inability to represent the truth accurately. Prose constantly and inevitably romanticises even the most undesirable situation, such as the situations of the protagonists in dystopian fiction. Somehow, by some power granted by the strength of words and poetics alone, such things as torture, depression and even - if not especially - death become imbued with a heroism that makes these awful things almost *desirable* if only the reader can feel important by experiencing them. The events of fiction have a cathartic sense of purpose that everyday life lacks, no matter the suffering required to complete this purpose because, simply, 'the beautiful provides pleasure'[111]. Even more interestingly, this is not necessarily intended. When a writer expresses misery or hardship in their work, often they are by no means intending for it to sound beautiful, and yet it often does, for the written word is, as Bradbury writes, 'perfect without trying'[112] just by virtue of what it is. In art, while there is beauty in happiness and joy, there is even more in sadness and despair. Art and literature possess an intrinsic beauty that is inescapable, regardless of what is being portrayed. It is this beauty that science fears, for it does not have the capacity to be beautiful in the same way. However, more than anything, the biggest fear concerning art is its inability to be controlled, for it exceeds power. It is impossible to predict how any individual would react to any piece of artwork or literature. That being the case, *all* art must be removed, for there is no such thing as 'safe' art for a society which relies on being able to control its people. In doing so, it is not just art itself which is lost, but a necessity for real human satisfaction.

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[110] Bloch, p.145.
[111] Bloch, p.141.
[112] Bradbury, p.205.

What is it that makes literature different to other arts, such as the visual arts? Bloch explains the power of paintings in saying 'color has only a sensual certainty'[113], therefore the response to a painting will always be, to an extent, predictable at least in its emotional effect. The response is based purely on sensual pleasure. Literature, however, has an extra power in that its beauty is not sensual, but conceptual. In fact, it lacks sensual beauty in a way that only adds to its power, for in its descriptive powers, it may elicit an emotional response while never imposing upon its audience the sensual displeasure of the situation it is describing, for everything is 'sharpened, condensed, or made more decisive, and this is rarely shown by the reality that is experienced'[114]. The reader consumes only the positive aspects of fictional situations without ever experiencing the negatives which bring it back to reality. Freud calls this 'substitutive satisfactions... offered by art'[115], the satisfaction provided by experiencing an event as an observer and not an active participant. It is the 'beautiful illusion'[116] of literature which cements its own circular repetition in relation to its effect on society. Art makes suffering appear desirable, so people are willing to suffer for art, and in turn, the art created by their suffering will inspire others to suffer as well. This will to suffer for some intangible artistic reward is the opposition to dystopia. Those who are captivated by art to such an extent that they are willing to endure horrors in order to escape a dystopian society for the sake of aesthetic meaning will reproduce the same effect; the aesthetic produced by their actions will continue to encourage others to do the same, meaning that the hindrance to dystopia is unstoppable.

It is not just science which cannot understand art, but people as well, even those who consume it. Montag is drawn to literature despite not having the slightest comprehension of

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[113] Bloch, p.141.
[114] Bloch, p.146.
[115] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.75.
[116] Bloch, p.142.

it. All he is aware of is that something is missing, that he is 'heading for the cliff'[117] and he doesn't 'want to go over'[118]. The only thing he can say for certain is missing is physical books, and so it is to those he goes for answers, though he still struggles to understand what it is he's looking for. It is Faber who draws attention to what it is books contain that make them so important, 'Number one... quality of information. Number two: Leisure to digest it. And number three: the right to carry out actions based on what we learn from interactions between the first two'[119]. Here, Faber sums up what it is that the powers governing a given dystopian society fear about literature, and that is the freedom they give people to consider information in their own time and in their own way. Montag's, companion, Faber, says that books 'stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us'[120], a simple metaphor to show how literature can bring together pieces of information and connect them while also making clear that how it is viewed is still open to interpretation. Every individual will have their own experiences and know information that will be 'stitched together' in different ways when exposed to literature. Again, it is not a scientific case of an equation with measured variables and only one predictable result, but infinite variables producing infinite results, results which are open to change when exposed to any new information. In a totalitarian dystopian society, results that cannot be predicted are results which are too dangerous to allow. However, it is these very results which could result in progress, not the results which are repeatedly forced upon us but the anomalies.

When Montag escapes the city and meets Granger, he is told of the inescapable fate of man, that we 'know the damn silly thing we just did. We know all the damn silly things we've done for a thousand years'[121], the self-destruction perpetrated by the cyclical capitalist regime that leads to the very dystopia Montag has found himself in. However it is Granger's

[117] Bradbury, p.87.
[118] Bradbury, p.87.
[119] Bradbury, p.110.
[120] Bradbury, p.108.
[121] Bradbury, p.209.

theory that with the help of 'people that remember'[122] the value of art, those who may yet produce those unpredictable results, 'some day we'll stop making the goddam funeral pyres and jumping into the middle of them'[123]. This very idea is mimicked by Faber earlier in the book, who tells of humans' tendency of 'finding the highest cliff to jump off'[124], and that 'perhaps in a thousand years we might pick smaller cliffs to jump off'[125]. Both of these men highlight the human tendency towards self-destruction and the repetition of past mistakes, yet both are hopeful that as time goes on, humans will gradually learn from their mistakes. Both are also adamant that literature is the way to do this, that 'books are to remind us what asses and fools we are'[126] if only they can 'pick up a few more people...every generation'[127] that will join their cause. They have no illusion that there will be an instant revolution, but that eventually, with the presence of art, we will slowly learn to stop destroying ourselves. It is dystopia that is trying to destroy this will to progress to something better, for by keeping people trapped in the endless cycle, they are under complete control of society.

Another result of the world of literature is that it produces not answers but questions. Montag's world is supersaturated with media which gives only answers, media that 'rushes you on so quickly to its own conclusions your mind hasn't time to protest'[128]. When it comes to books, Faber suggests that it is we who 'play God to it'[129]. We can stop reading, shut the book, reread passages, leap back and forward in literary time, apply our own knowledge, draw from it what we will. In the society of *Fahrenheit 451* visual media forces certain answers and behaviour because it 'blasts it in'[130], not leaving space for people to react to or argue with the knowledge that is being thrust upon them. Especially where visual and audio

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[122] Bradbury, p.209.
[123] Bradbury, p.209.
[124] Bradbury, p.111.
[125] Bradbury, pp.111-112.
[126] Bradbury, p.112.
[127] Bradbury, p.209.
[128] Bradbury, p.109.
[129] Bradbury, p.109.
[130] Bradbury, p.109.

media are concerned, those which are most important in advertisement which fuels the capitalist ideals of dystopian society, it is almost impossible to shut them out or ignore them as one can discard a book.

Montag and Faber obviously share similar ideas about the importance of literature, though Montag does not understand them. It is this very lack of understanding which makes Montag an incredibly interesting character, because he has no reason to think books are important. In fact, he has every reason to believe the opposite, as it is all he has been told his entire life. Where the opinion of a character like Faber can be cast aside due to his academic background in the arts, Montag is just a normal man who feels as though something is missing from his life. He abandons everything, his wife, his job, his home, even his safety, to chase the abstract notion of meaning in life, which he hopes to find in literature. This quest for meaning once again can be traced back to the Freudian reality principle, and is akin to religious inclinations. Once again, dystopia is a depiction of emptiness, a world devoid of meaning, and those who resist it are striving for a world where their actions have purpose, for 'if it should turn out that life has *no* purpose, it would lose all value'[131]. In *Fahrenheit 451* there is no mention of religion, so projecting the desire for meaning into religion does not occur. Instead, literature is awarded the same sacred importance as the divine. Ultimately, it does not matter how this significance is given to us, for regardless they try to achieve the same thing. Both religion and art are an 'attempt to procure a certainty of happiness and a protection against suffering through a delusional remoulding of reality'[132].

In Freudian terms it appears that what we are dealing with when it comes to the importance of art and literature is actually the importance of phantasy, for art is the physical and textual embodiments of the artist's phantasy. Phantasy is a 'sublimation of the instincts' in such a way that desires are satisfied without being hindered by the demands of civilised

[131] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.75.
[132] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.81.

society.[133] However, Freud does not believe phantasy to be the answer to preventing suffering, though it may reduce it. Some of the flaws in the ideas of phantasy are that 'it presupposed the possession of special disposition and gifts which are far from being common... even to the few who do possess them, this method cannot give complete protection from suffering'[134]. Freud speaks of true phantasy as only being available to the artists who can project their phantasies into physical forms of artwork. However, while only the artist may have the ability to transform their phantasy into artworks, by doing so, their phantasy is 'made accessible even to those who are not themselves creative'[135], who then acquire a phantasy even if they have not made their own. With such things as novels and visual media, phantasy is widely available to everybody. What may be true is that the consumers gain a lesser degree of this phantasy for it is not truly their own, but one imposed upon them. While the artist still suffers, at least they have achieved some level of satisfaction by bringing their phantasies into the real world. Consumers, on the other hand, are still merely chasing phantasy that is visible to them but out of reach.

The idea of phantasy becomes even more interesting when applied to *Fahrenheit 451*. Novels are an example of an artist's phantasy brought into a physical, textual format, consumable by the general population. The fact that they are destroyed makes the novels themselves become a phantasy. Essentially, novels in Montag's world have a dual type of phantasy, both the one that has been produced by the author and the phantasy of what that work might mean when a person who has been denied access to it begins to imagine the possibilities of it. The denial of access to the phantasy that novels contain creates the even stronger phantasy that novels contain something more than they do. Without having access to novels one is left to create one's own idea of what they may contain, leading to an inflation of

[133] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.79.
[134] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.80.
[135] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.81.

their importance which, contradictory to the goal of *removing* fantastical ideas from the general population, *increases* them.

Phantasy is intrinsic to human psyche, not something found in novels, but something which already exists and can be fed by novels. However, it can as much be fed by the *lack* of novels and it will develop regardless. Freud explains this in saying humans have 'an intention of making oneself independent of the external world by seeking satisfaction in internal, psychical processes'[136], satisfaction which can be gained, to an extent, by allowing phantasy. Where society attempts to deny phantasy – for it is phantasy which leads to individualism and desire – phantasy none the less grows 'yet more strongly'[137]. The denial of access to phantasy has completely the opposite of the intended effect. Freud writes that 'the mild narcosis induced in us by art can do no more than bring about a transient withdrawal from the pressure of vital needs, and is not strong enough to make us forget real misery'[138]. The idea here is that art is *not* a saviour, but a fallible diversion, a mere distraction that will eventually fail. For this reason it would be in the interest of a dystopian society to allow art, to some degree, for it would provide enough phantasy for people to feel somewhat satisfied, but not enough to cause any kind of revolution for none would be powerful enough to be so inspiring. By removing art completely in *Fahrenheit 451*, society imbued literature with a power it would never have gained on its own, and that is *potential*. Potential is even more important than reality, for it is a powerful combination of phantasy and possibility of achieving this phantasy. The general population in *Fahrenheit 451* does not *know* what books contain, which leads people like Montag to *believe*, with no more than an idealistic notion, that they contain the answers to all of his troubles. For this, he is willing to throw his life away, to throw civilisation itself away, to chase a phantasy, the very thing society was trying its best to avoid.

[136] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.80.
[137] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.80.
[138] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.80.

Of course, there is not just total phantasy at work in books, but also a sense of culture and history. By burning the books in *Fahrenheit 451*, it is as though history itself is being erased. We already know that this is in effect, as the firemen do not even know that firemen once put out fires instead of lighting them. Montag has to ask 'Didn't firemen *prevent* fires rather than stoke them up and get them going?'[139], to which the response is denial and even mockery. A lack of even such basic knowledge shows that the society that wishes to remove history is succeeding. However, in the same way that novels can provide a phantasy of what could be, they also provide a phantasy of what was, not an accurate representation. Once again, while this initially may seem like a flaw in recording history in textual form, it is actually incredibly useful to the anti-dystopian cause. In this way they provide not only a goal to be reached, but portray it as something which is definitely attainable as it has been achieved before.

Another key thing offered by novels, and what makes them seem so important to the group Montag meets later in the story, is preservation. Literature is a way of recording events and passing them on through generations. Without literature, the stories would be twisted – even more than they are in their literary format – if they are remembered at all. Preservation is key because it is only with these records that humanity can learn from the past, and would otherwise be doomed to repeat the same mistakes endlessly. Granger has already recognised this pattern in humanity, that we 'went right on insulting the dead'[140] by repeating their mistakes, but believes that 'as long as we know that and always have it around where we can see it, some day we'll stop'[141]. He believes that when enough evidence arises and when enough people take notice, the repetition of past mistakes will end. He is also convinced that more people are learning, that they 'pick up a few more people that remember every

[139] Bradbury, p.47.
[140] Bradbury, p.209.
[141] Bradbury, p.209.

generation'[142], and that eventually, 'the load we're carrying with us may help someone'[143]. Granger does not believe in a sudden revolution in which the general populace gains enlightenment in one big event. Instead he believes in slow progress over hundreds of years. However, in their attempt to destroy history by destroying the books, the firemen are interfering with slow progress as well as revolution. Literature becomes reliant on memory which, though Faber believes it capable of retaining information perfectly, is in actuality even more given to phantasy than the books themselves; as Freud states, 'I distrust my memory – neurotics, as we know, do so to a remarkable extent, but normal people have every reason for doing so as well.'[144] This shows a distrust in memory which is entirely justified, for memory is flawed and given to bias. What would result is, once again, the complete opposite of what the firemen intend. By destroying history, they leave a hole for people to fill with their own phantasy of what history might have been, resulting in lessons which might be far more powerful than the lessons of actual history and more likely to stir people into action.

I also wish to examine the opposite drive to phantasy, which finds its roots in eros and the drive towards life, and that is the death drive. Dissatisfaction comes from being trapped in a perpetual middle ground, as it were, between emotional fulfilment and apathy. This dissatisfaction has the potential to drive individuals in either direction, towards total satisfaction - ie. phantasy - or annihilation, or the death drive, for to remain in between is to endure continuous torment. If we are to look at phantasy as the realisation of life to its fullest potential and to perceive the death drive as a drive towards quiescence, to linger between the two is to accept what Freud calls a 'conflict and compromise between these two trends'[145].

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[142] Bradbury, p.209.
[143] Bradbury, p.209.
[144] Sigmund Freud, 'A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX 1923-25*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.227.
[145] Sigmund Freud, 'The Two Classes of Instincts' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX 1923-25*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.41.

While they both exist simultaneously, they are constantly pulling one way or the other, and the stronger drive emerges victorious within the human psyche. To examine the death drive and its role in *Fahrenheit 451* I would like to focus not on Montag but instead on his wife, Mildred. Mildred is Montag's opposite in terms of how she deals with the society in which she lives. She too feels the same *lack* that Montag does, but rather than confront it, she ignores it. She immerses herself in the unsatisfactory society in the hope that persistence will win over her unhappiness. She acts as though she is ignorant of what she is missing, but she is not: at the start of the novel Montag finds his wife on the brink of death from an overdose. Mildred is clearly just as unhappy as Montag, even though she tries to ignore it.

When writing on the death instinct, it is important to acknowledge that many psychologists believe the concept to have 'no empirical basis'[146] and that, ultimately, it is a redundant and outdated theory. However, it is equally as important to recognise that 'many psychoanalytical writers are unhappy without it'[147] because it is impossible to reconcile feelings of aggression and despair with other ways of thinking. David Holbrook writes extensively on the death instinct and wrestles with the disagreement on whether or not the death instinct exists at all. Ultimately, he believes that the desire to find a way to debunk the death instinct theory is because it means accepting that we have an 'ineradicable animality'[148] which significantly shortens the perceived superiority humans have over animals. To accept the death drive is to admit that we are driven by primal instincts like aggression and libidinal desires, desires which we would be far more comfortable in believing we have surpassed. Holbrook believes this ignorance is down to fear: 'We are *afraid* of the instincts. We are *afraid* of the intuitions within us. We suppress the instincts, and we cut off our intuitional awareness from one another and the world.'[149] Holbrook seeks to explain why we cannot

[146] David Holbrook, *Human Hope and the Death Instinct* (Oxford: Pergamon Press,1971), p.61.
[147] Holbrook, p.61.
[148] Holbrook, p.61.
[149] Holbrook, p.291.

reconcile our wants with society, and our chosen beliefs become a question of security. Throughout history humans are taught to fear the consequences of stepping out of line. Even when there is no immediate threat, there is a looming fear of doing anything different to the accepted norm. Because of this, we fear our desires, we fear the possibilities, we fear what may go wrong. Ultimately, we fear anything that differs from what we know to be secure. Mildred's fear forces her to ignore her desires and suppress them, but this does not make them disappear. Instead, they manifest themselves in melancholy and neurosis. Mildred chooses to remain in the unsatisfactory but secure world she knows demanding to know 'Why should I read? What *for*?'[150], refusing to risk her security for an intangible concept. She fears the books for she too believes them to have the power to create change, but it is a change she is afraid of and her fear blinds her to the possibilities they could unearth. Montag risks his security in order to explore these same possibilities.

In a sense, Mildred's character is even more tragic than Montag's. She is trapped in the same society as he is but she does not believe there is any hope of escape, and so is resigned to it; resigned, ultimately, to suicide being her only way out. Mildred actively resists Montag's attempt to change their way of life. While she is unhappy with what she has, she fears losing it. For her, the escape she needs is in the parlour walls, in the 'relatives'[151] she has adopted from the screens which allow her to become anyone at any given time. She has filled her emptiness with 'the uncles, the aunts, the cousins, the nieces, the nephews that lived in those walls'[152] and they can disguise her dissatisfaction for her, because they 'said nothing, nothing, nothing and said it loud, loud, loud'[153]. She has fallen into the grips of escapism rather than idealism and wishes to leave reality rather than alter it. Where Montag is different, Mildred is just like everyone else: compliant, unassuming, going about her life as she is

[150] Bradbury, p.95.
[151] Bradbury, p.59.
[152] Bradbury, p.59.
[153] Bradbury, p.59.

expected to, but deeply unhappy in doing so. She is destined to become just another story like the ones she tells, of an unfortunate individual who perished by their own hand in an unremarkable situation. Where Montag seeks emotional fulfilment, what Mildred seeks is nothingness. Rather than feel the dull torment of her unsatisfactory existence, she is 'aiming to affect a return to an earlier state'[154], to feel nothing at all; ie. death. However, she is completely ignorant of her own suffering, so much is she immersed in her false world. When Montag tries to speak to her about her overdose, she simply says 'I wouldn't do that'[155] repeatedly, trying to convince Montag and herself that she is not so far gone as to take her own life. Here we can recognise what Freud remarked upon as a '*facade* that is hostile to the treatment'[156], that 'There is no doubt that there is something in these people that sets itself against their recovery, and its approach is dreaded as though it were a danger.'[157] With her denial she refuses help and refuses to acknowledge the need for change. Instead, she accepts a life of apathy and emptiness, because to strive for change would be to risk even more suffering than what she already experiences.

Ultimately, Mildred is filling herself with 'nothing, nothing, nothing'[158] as long as it is 'loud, loud, loud'[159] enough to silence the sound of her subconscious telling her that she is empty. Her programs and her 'relatives' are her only occupation in life. She has managed to get Montag to agree to purchase three walls on which she can view her program, 'doing without' other things so she can feel more immersed in this unreality. However, she is still unhappy: she is insisting on the purchase of a fourth wall. She wants to seal herself off from

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[154] Toby Gelfand, John Kerr, *Freud and the History of Psychoanalysis*, (New Jersey: The Analytic Press, 1992), p. 309.
[155] Bradbury, p.29
[156] Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. by James Strachey, ed by James Strachey (London: W.W Norton and Company, 1966), p.360.
[157] Freud, 'The Dependent Relationships of the Ego' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX 1923-25*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.49.
[158] Bradbury, p.59
[159] Bradbury, p.59

reality completely, truly 'aiming to affect a return to an earlier state'[160],akin to the Freudian belief of a desire to return to the womb, to pre-existence, to pre-suffering. Holbrook says:

> The death instinct is the urge to escape from the disturbance caused by 'stimulation', to a state of equilibrium, and eventually to death as ultimate 'detensioning'. The continuance of life is only a going on in which the organism moves on towards death by mere compulsive repetition of the normal life functions.[161]

If we are to see birth, ie the beginning of life, as the first stimulation which causes the beginning of the disturbances which cause suffering, then Mildred is trying to achieve 'detensioning' by hiding in a new womb-like cage within the four walls of her home. She is trying to combat stimulation by *over*-stimulation, which creates a return to nothingness through overwhelming the senses into a state of shutting down. She lives the same day again and again, no notable change taking place, much to the frustration of Montag, and this way she continues her journey towards death, where 'detensioning' can be achieved once and for all.

What makes Mildred different to Montag? Why would they react to the same set of circumstances, or near enough, so very differently? Freud believed that some people are simply predisposed to neurosis through their 'sexual constitution'[162] whereas others gain neurosis through experience. He separates these sufferers of neurosis by saying:

> At one end of the series are the extreme cases of which you could say with conviction: these people, in consequence of the singular development of their libido, would have fallen ill in any case, whatever they had experienced and however carefully their lives

[160] Gelfand, p.309.
[161] Holbrook, p.62.
[162] Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, p.360.

> had been sheltered. At the other end there are the cases, as to which, on the contrary, you would have had to judge that they would certainly have escaped falling ill if their lives had not brought them into this or that situation.[163]

Mildred has never had any sudden, explicit trauma that we are aware of, and yet this sadness is built into her, inescapable and incurable. It is her life itself that is an ongoing trauma in which she is constantly immersed. Montag, on the other hand, experienced the trauma of witnessing a woman be burnt alive, and his fixation on this event led to his unhappiness with the world. He believes Mildred cannot understand because, as he says, 'You weren't there. You didn't *see*... there must be something in these books, things we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house'[164], but Mildred can only focus on the idea that now she might suffer because 'She's got you going and next thing you know we'll be out, no house, no job, nothing'[165]. It was the extremity of the event that pushed Montag into action for it was a feeling he did not know and did not like, one which he wished to combat and found a reason to do so. For Mildred, her neurosis was not sudden, but a constant part of her everyday existence. Neurosis was a constant companion within her psyche, one without which she would not know how to function. She may be unhappy, but her constant exposure to unhappiness has made her able to live with it because at least she knows what lies ahead. Mildred is a product of her neurosis whereas Montag is weakened by it, and so they both respond to the threat of change in a vastly different manner because of this.

While I have highlighted definite differences between Montag and Mildred, it is necessary to state that their ultimate goal is very similar indeed despite their contrasting approaches. Both want to bring an end to their suffering, effectively achieving nothingness. Phantasy, while it may be a libidinal drive which pushes forward, still strives to achieve an

[163] Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, p.360.
[164] Bradbury, p.68.
[165] Bradbury, p.68.

end to suffering like the death drive, though the death drive pushes backwards. In fact, the two are intertwined. Though Montag dreams of something different, does he too not wish to return to an earlier state, a state before he realised what he lacked? Are Mildred's 'relatives' not an embodiment of phantasy? It is true that Montag might have a more obvious tendency towards phantasy and Mildred to the death drive, yet they are both undeniably present in both individuals.

Ultimately, *Fahrenheit 451* shows us the importance of art in two very different ways. First of all, it shows that to deny people access to art is to deny them an intrinsic part of humanity which will inevitably leave to mental decline. It also shows us that the value of art is not in the art itself, but in the illusion it provides, and the illusion of itself it creates when it is inaccessible. There is no way to prevent the formation of phantasy, for art is so powerful a part of humanity that it creates phantasy even in its absence. Phantasy is the ultimate enemy of dystopia, for it is phantasy that provides people with the inspiration to act against their oppressors. What makes art even stronger is that not only will art always, even unintentionally, provide this necessary illusion but it is impossible to remove it despite the best efforts of dystopian society. Even when art is destroyed, outlawed or otherwise removed, the desire for art still persists within the human psyche, and that desire either leads to phantasy or the manifestation of neurosis, driving factors in libidinal energies and the death drive.

III. God and Religion in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

'If modern man feels that he hangs suspended over a void, that his activities are meaningless in a world that is headed for destruction, if he seeks in vain for a principle of tragic significance in a universe that is but energy in motion, if he feels despair seize upon him as he profits from the discoveries of science and the advance of technology but realizes that they are of no help in lending order and purpose to human existence ... he suffers from the absence of God and from a persistent but essentially futile longing for God'[166]

-Charles I Glicksberg, *Modern Literature and the Death of God*

Religion, despite the 'undeniable weakening'[167] – noted by Freud - of its importance in the western world, is an integral part of society. In dystopian fiction religion is often removed in the traditional sense, yet a substitute is almost always put into due to what Freud identifies as a childlike 'need for help'[168] from a higher power. God is replaced by another symbol which, while it is not named as such, still performs as a divine being from which society gets its teachings and moral guidance. Margaret Atwood's 2003 novel, *Oryx and Crake*, possesses a dystopia uniquely intertwined with the concept of religion. Like in its predecessors *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, God has been replaced by another concept. However, rather than this concept being abstract, as in the case of Big Brother and Ford, Crake is a mortal man and a character we see the development of from his childhood right up until his death.

Mark Bosco analysed *Oryx and Crake* in his essay 'The Apocalyptic Imagination in *Oryx and Crake*', and in this essay he focuses largely on religion and its role in the novel. He explains that 'Historically, most apocalyptic texts prior to the eighteenth century either dealt directly with the literal interpretations of the Book of Revelations or offered reinterpretations

[166] Charles I Glicksberg, *Modern Literature and the Death of God* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff: 1996), p.69.
[167] Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* (London: The International Psychoanalytical Press, 1922), p.51.
[168] Sigmund Freud, *Two Short Accounts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962), p.77.

of the end time that attempted to internalize or spiritualize it for an audience'[169] and that later texts with similar themes take on a different perspective: 'No longer was the end of the human enterprise a religious vision of the future. Instead, it was a rational description of the present as the supernatural apocalypse of divine power shifted to secular progress through a transformation of the self by science'[170]. Bosco's understanding of the apocalyptic genre highlights the shift in the nature of the apocalyptic novel from religious to scientific, matching the more popular ideology of the times that they are written. Interestingly, Atwood combines both science and religion in her work. While science has permeated society and the characters in the novel prior to the 'apocalypse' are largely godless beings, there is undoubtedly a sense that there is a desire for something more. Even the Crakers, who thrive after the catastrophic event set into motion by Crake and have been designed to be without religion, end up with the same questions about their purpose in the world and are captivated by religious ideals. As Bosco states:

> The novel suggests that rather than the philosopher's definition of the human being as *animal rationale*, it is more accurate to say *animal symbolicum* – that is, symbol making being – to convey the centrality of the creation of symbols and metaphors to our humanity, which first find expression in questions about our origins and our end.[171]

It is this idea of symbolism and religion which I would like to explore further in regard to *Oryx and Crake*, in which the themes of symbolism and religion are integral to the plot, and Atwood's unique interpretation of dystopia.

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[169] Mark Bosco, S.J, 'The Apocalyptic Imagination in *Oryx and Crake*' in *Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake*, ed. by J. Brooks Bouson (London: Continuum, 2010), p.159.
[170] Bosco, p.160.
[171] Bosco, pp.163-164.

Crake is presented to us as an intelligent individual who thinks above and beyond his friends and associates. He is separated from the majority of the population not just because of his academic success, but because of his social difference. He achieved a mythical quality before he fully attained the status of a god figure, even when he was young: 'Crake had had a thing about him even then... He generated awe – not an overwhelming amount of it, but enough. He exuded potential, but potential for what? Nobody knew, and so people were wary of him.'[172] However, he *is* human, a human imbued with the qualities of a god. He becomes the living concept which 'illusions... derived from human wishes'[173] are thrust upon, and as faith in him grows, the more he sets himself apart, repeating an endless cycle. The concept of playing God is often touched upon in science fiction, in which humanity suffers for trying to attain power beyond our mortal selves. In *Oryx and Crake* we see the development of these humans who have gained god-like status, their descent into corruption, and their ultimate failures as individuals as well as the failures they force upon society.

Crake's fatal flaw is entirely ironic, and that is that he cannot accept flaws. He considers the human race imperfect, stupid, controlled by hormones and instincts which drive us to behave in an unacceptable manner, and claims that 'as a species we're pathetic'[174]. 'Crake had no very high opinion of human ingenuity, despite the large amount of it he himself possessed'[175], he thinks we are too proud, too stubborn, that we think too much of ourselves, that we can achieve too little, yet Crake himself exhibits all of these flaws to the extreme. He thinks himself capable of performing the role of God, and to an extent he succeeds: he creates a whole new race of people, the 'perfect humans' which he perceives to be no longer restricted by the vices humans suffer. However, this is not enough. He does not believe in God, so he becomes God himself. It is Michael Palmer, who has dedicated study to

[172] Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (London: Virago Press, 2004), p.86.
[173] Sigmund Freud, 'The Future of an Illusion' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.31.
[174] Atwood, p.195.
[175] Atwood, p.114.

psychologists Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung and wrote extensively on religion in *Freud and Jung on Religion,* who states 'when a lost archetype is a God-archetype the result can be still more dramatic, leading to the colossal pretention that one is something extraordinary, 'godlike' or 'superhuman''[176]. Crake is not content with creation, but can only be satisfied by utterly destroying that which came before his own work. In a mass extinction event akin to the events of the biblical story of Noah's Ark, Crake annihilates the human race, including himself. He leaves only Jimmy to guide his new creations, believing so much in his own design that he is willing to sacrifice himself, and everyone else, to allow these new humans to take their place.

Crake's death cannot be without meaning. In destroying himself for a greater cause, albeit his own, Crake has given himself a 'noble death'[177]. George Heyman explores this concept in *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict*, in which he discusses the power of the sacrificial death in ancient civilisations and how this can translate into our understanding of sacrifice in modern society. Usually, the death is at the hands of the oppressor, accepted by the individual in order to send a powerful message or represent an ideal. Though the means by which it is achieved are inverted, Crake becomes this sacrifice, giving his life to become a 'single willing death simultaneously destroying and creating empires'[178]. In the traditional sense of sacrifice and martyrdom, this is achieved by a single individual standing up against oppressive powers and giving their life to enact revolutionary change which causes the corrupt civilisation to collapse, making way for a new and freer one. The most famous sacrifice, the one which gifted those which followed it with such spiritual and literary significance, is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave his life to save the entire world from sin and, in a twisted way, Crake did the same thing. However, rather than doing

[176] Michael Palmer, *Freud and Jung on Religion* London: Routledge, 1997), p.162.
[177] George Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), p.163.
[178] Heyman, p.164.

so as a symbol for the oppressed, Crake was a treasured member of society when he gave his life. More importantly, he may, in a sense, have saved the world, but he saved it *from* humanity, not for it. Crake destroyed the empire of mankind, but opened up the world for the growth of a brand new empire, one he himself created, untainted by humanity.

According to Heyman, 'Within the text, the martyrs act as teachers, persuading even their executioners of the truth of Christ'[179]. If we again replace Christ with Crake, we see further intent in Crake's actions, though this intent can be interpreted in multiple ways. Firstly, if we see Jimmy as Crake's executioner, Crake's death is what forces Jimmy to take on his role as Crake's prophet. However, Jimmy would not have killed Crake were his hand not forced by Crake himself. Crake is, in reality, his own executioner. Is his sacrifice, then, for the sake of convincing himself as much as anyone else? By killing himself, he is becoming symbolic not only for the world which will follow, but in his own mind. He has such an idealised notion of the future to come that he is a symbol in his own mind even before he is a symbol in reality, and in killing himself, he secures this position for himself as well as confirming his belief of his own importance.

Jean Baudrillard understands the nature of such acts and explores them in his work *The Spirit of Terrorism*. He believes that any act, be it good or bad, is in itself meaningless. It is the *spectacle* of the act which has meaning, and so any act which appears to have a grand cause and occurs before a huge audience becomes infinitely more powerful than an act that occurs without general knowledge, even if that act is, in itself, greater. In reference to *Oryx and Crake* the quotation 'We would forgive them any massacre if it had a meaning'[180], is strikingly relevant. The fine line between necessary evil and terrorism is a blurred one, something which is very obvious in *Oryx and Crake*. Is Crake's genocide of humanity terrorism, or can we find a meaning which justifies it, turning an act of extreme violence into

[179] Heyman, p.170.
[180] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism' in *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (Berkshire: Open University Press, 1992; 2002), p.229.

a necessary sacrifice? In reality, the two are one and the same, the only minor difference being whether or not one morally agrees with the outcome. Oryx claims that 'Crake lives in a higher world, Jimmy... He lives in a world of ideas. He is doing important things'[181], showing that she, among most others, believes that Crake's work is simply above what most people could comprehend. This leads to a blind faith in him akin to religious faith, allowing him to have everyone act to his advantage while providing only the allusion to a meaning that only he can understand. However, simply the notion that there *is* a meaning is enough for people to believe that Crake is doing what is right. We can see that it is the spectacle which becomes important because it is Crake who is well known, Crake who is remembered, Crake who is worshipped as a god, even though what he did was unforgivable. Jimmy is destined to fade from memory not because what he did wasn't good – he was morally far superior to Crake, after all – but simply because there was no audience to see him do it.

When it comes to *Oryx and Crake*, it is not just Crake who takes on a religious role in a non-religious setting. Jimmy, or Snowman, also has an interesting connection to religion, and that is acting as what Bosco calls 'Crake's prophet'[182]. Prophets are people who pass on the teachings of God to their followers, being avid followers of their chosen religion themselves. Jimmy, however, inverts this. Jimmy despises Crake and what he has done, and yet he is the one who truly gives Crake the status of God. The Crakers' 'adulation of Crake enrages Snowman, though this adulation has been his own doing'[183]. Throughout their lives, Jimmy and Crake are both best friends and rivals academically, socially and in their love lives. Crake is seen to be Jimmy's superior in every way, and perhaps it is this that leads to Jimmy's complicated admiration tied together with loathing. Jimmy constantly strives to understand Crake, who appears to always know more than he lets on, speaking in riddles and abstracts. While this frustrates Jimmy, it nonetheless entraps him in Crake's world. When

[181] Atwood, p.368.
[182] Bosco, p.170.
[183] Atwood, p.119.

Crake gives him a job to work alongside him, like God passing a message to his most loyal follower, Jimmy's role as the prophet is cemented. Interestingly, Jimmy makes it clear that 'Crake was disgusted by the notion of God, or gods of any kind, and would surely be disgusted by the spectacle of his own deification'[184], which seemingly contradicts the entirety of any logical reasoning for Crake's actions. Though it is true that Crake despises God, he still has a subconscious desire for one. However, Crake was very careful in selecting Jimmy. They kept in contact throughout their lives and Jimmy was always somehow linked to Crake. By exposing him to his wants and whims for years on end, Crake conditioned Jimmy into a way of thinking that made Jimmy the only one who could perform this role for him. His ideology has been projected onto Jimmy for so long that while Jimmy believes everything Crake has told him and believes to be acting against him, he is actually performing to fulfil Crake's subconscious desires.

Jimmy is, for most of the novel, the only living human. He spends his days cut off from the only remaining society, the society of the Crakers, because he is not one of them. He is a remainder of the flawed species Crake strived to remove from the earth, and is seemingly destined to be the last of the human race. However, it is he who provides the Crakers with their culture and religious beliefs. He gives them a religion based around Crake and Oryx, the two most important people in Jimmy's own life, leading them to view them as gods rather than as the humans they were. The Crakers, who understand nothing of humans due to their lack of interaction with them before humanity was destroyed, simply take Jimmy's stories to be the truth. Freud blames religion for 'depressing the value of life and distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner'[185], believing religion to be an extreme and widespread deception with the power to forge societies and civilisations built on fallacy. This is exactly the function Jimmy utilises, altering reality to fit his own stories which he relays to

[184] Atwood, pp.119-120.
[185] Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, d. By James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.84.

the Crakers as truth. Thus Jimmy has provided the Crakers with the very thing that caused humanity's downfall in *Oryx and Crake*, which is religion. On an individual basis, Jimmy too has succumbed to the very religion he has created, despite not necessarily believing it, for as Freud states of the non-believer, 'all that is left to him as a last possible consolation and source of pleasure in his suffering is an unconditional submission'[186]. In order to find a purpose to keep living, he must support his own lies and strengthen the new religion of Oryx and Crake. In a way, despite knowing the falsity of the religion he is creating, it becomes his religion too in that it is his reason for being. Jimmy, in a way that is psychologically contradictory, creates a system of belief that he hates and yet absolutely needs in order to live.

Clair Sisco King appears to agree with Baudrillard's concept of forgiving massacres that have meaning, or of at least accepting them, so much so that we will strive to find meaning where there is none just to justify certain events. She remarks upon a 'perceived storylessness'[187] which caused dissatisfaction and trauma among veterans of the Vietnam war, and by extension, any violent action for which no meaning could be discerned. When a story is provided, this very same violence becomes heroic. Those who have experienced this violence are granted a 'unique moral authority'[188] which allows them to pass judgement upon others who lack the experiences they have endured. When Jimmy perceives Crake as 'sitting in judgement of the world'[189] and asks 'why had that been his right?'[190] it would seem that Jimmy has not found a meaning behind Crake's actions, nor has Crake had any experiences that grant him moral authority over Jimmy. However, Crake does gain this right in some respects through his sacrifice. By dying for his cause, he has posthumously endowed his own

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[186] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.85.
[187] Claire Sisco King, *Washed in Blood: Male Sacrifice, Trauma, and the Cinema* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p.46.
[188] King, p.46.
[189] Atwood, p.398.
[190] Atwood, p.398.

previous actions with enough meaning to justify them, at least in his own mind and to the mind of those who came after him: the Crakers. All of his actions have led to Jimmy being able to concoct a story, stories being the foundation upon which we base our lives and morals, because Crake has provided him with people who 'were like blank pages, he could write whatever he wanted on them'[191]. Crake being such an influential part of Jimmy's life, it is only logical that he would feature as the main protagonist of Jimmy's story, a story which would become a myth with the same weight as the bible.

Stories and literature feature hugely in dystopian fiction, often as symbolic for the arts, which are considered unnecessary in dystopian worlds. Where the arts are not neglected they are actively destroyed, such as in *Fahrenheit 451*, or exist only in highly modified and monitored forms, such as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Regardless, the desire to lay down one's own story or the story of an era in the form of words on a page still exists. Montag saves a book in the hope of reproducing it in the future. Winston begins to write a diary. Jimmy also recreates his experience by writing it down, as if he hopes for 'a future reader, someone who'll come along later and find his bones and his ledger, and learn his fate'[192]. We truly believe our stories and experiences to have enough meaning to be worth recording as though people can learn from our stories and use them to influence their own. It is stories that provide us with empathy, the ability to see the world through another's eyes, to open our minds – the very things dystopian societies want to do away with. They also provide those who write the stories with a sense of higher importance, granting them the meaning to their lives which they desire. However, stories do not accurately represent the truth. Jimmy's first writing to the world, beginning rather casually with '*To whom it may concern*'[193], begins to explain the series of events that took place to cause this worldwide catastrophe with a string of sugar-coated truths and white lies. Jimmy is already editing history to make it more

[191] Atwood, p.407.
[192] Atwood, p.45.
[193] Atwood, p.403.

palatable for whoever may read it next. He is aware of his own lies, saying 'He'd had to think of something. Get your story straight, keep it simple, don't falter: this used to be the expert advice given by lawyers to criminals in the dock'[194]. He knows he is lying, knows he is pandering to what the Crakers would want to hear rather than the truth, and yet he does it anyway. This is the only way he can give them their story, or the beginnings of it. To tell them the truth would be to fill them with doubt, risking a society based on chaos rather than order, so Jimmy explains that away by giving them Crake, who 'took the chaos, and he poured it away'[195]. Jimmy's stories are full of grandeur and heroism to give the Crakers something to aspire to. Like all religions, the truth is embellished, even outright ignored, in order to justify anything that needs to be justified to keep its followers happy.

The notion of God is often intertwined with art, as they are both based on feeling, desire and instinct. Crake says '*Watch out for art... As soon as they start doing art, we're in trouble*'[196]. Art, like religion, is dangerous in a world of science, for it is not restricted by the parameters of logic. However, it is feeling that gives us emotion, morality and conscience, essentially what makes us human. Where logic prevails, humanity, in essence, does not. Where humanity prevails, logic is often cast aside. But what drove Crake? Was it art or logic that resulted in the downfall of humanity? It would appear to be the strained combination of both, pushed to the point of breaking. Crake's work is entirely based in science, and yet it is his idealism and his religious impulse which make him act. He pictures a perfect world created by his own hand and pursues it regardless of the cost. It was a logical action in that he was replacing a flawed species with a 'perfect' one, so coldly and inhumanly logical that it did not consider the suffering of millions in the quest to achieve it, yet it was emotional in that it was entirely an act for Crake to redeem what he saw as the failures of humanity and himself, as well as to raise himself to the position of God.

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[194] Atwood, p.110.
[195] Atwood, p.119.
[196] Atwood, p.419.

Crake, however, ultimately defies both logic and emotion, though he is driven by both. In the words of Freud, 'nothing... can be learnt from being destroyed'[197], and yet Freud also highlights that destruction is always inevitable. With desires unsatisfied, frustration leads to aggression which leads to destruction, and nothing is learnt and so nothing can be changed. This is exactly what Crake shows in his death. He destroys himself. In an act that does away with the logical and emotional drive for survival, our most powerful instinct of all, Crake truly separates himself from humanity. In fact, there is so much logic, so much emotion to what Crake does, that rather than be destroyed by the lack of these concepts, he is destroyed by too much. He became unstable, unable to reign in the scientific desire for knowledge and the emotional need for meaning, and the combination of the two resulted in a mutually assured destruction that annihilated not only Crake, but the entire world. Is it this act that truly defines Crake as more godlike than human? In his total destruction of himself and everything like him, carving a new path for a 'better' species and putting into place all the things necessary for a new world, it barely matters that Crake was once human. Glenn the human is long forgotten. Crake the symbol, the leader, the god, is all that matters. This is what Atwood's novel warns us of; humans cannot be gods, though we endlessly strive to be. In the end, it is only the inhuman part of us that can transcend to such greatness, and doing so comes at an unthinkable cost.

Religion itself did not directly cause the failure of humanity, but rather the lack of religion, or a substitute of it. In Charles I Glickbergs work *Modern Literature and the Death of God*, Glicksberg highlights the fact that religion has been integral to civilised society for as long as humans have existed. Glicksburg exposes religion as being what humanity looks to for reason and explanation for that which we do not understand, providing us with a purpose, and the incentive of a reward in life after death. However, by the time of the events of *Oryx*

[197] Freud, *Two Short Accounts*, p.112

and Crake, religion has fallen out of favour, as it has in much of the western world today. Crake himself claims he does not believe in God, and in general there are no direct religious references. However, there are many implicit ones. Crake, a self-proclaimed and adamant non-believer, perpetuates the religious cycle more than anyone else, for as Glicksberg states, while 'God is dead... the "religious" impulse persists'[198]. In his quest for finding a meaning for his own existence in a world without God, Crake creates his own god: himself. He creates his own meaning by becoming that which he refuses to believe in, and ultimately destroys himself alongside everyone else with his efforts. As Glicksberg states of the non-believer, 'it is a curious thing how his mind is supersaturated with the religion in which he says he disbelieves'[199]; though Crake rejects the notion of God, the religious impulse still controls him. In the case of Crake, to become the creator is to become the destroyer. When one has created beings which are in many senses superior to oneself, one's own existence becomes pointless alongside them, which is why Crake's and every other human's existence is abruptly ceased. Instead the entirety of human history is lost and Oryx and Crake become the centre of legends. Their usefulness as living beings has ceased, but as symbols, their function remains invaluable.

Jimmy and Crake are not the only ones who play a significant part in this post-apocalyptic facade of religion. Oryx, the love interest of both Jimmy and Crake, becomes a tragic inversion of the martyr. She dies for a cause that was not truly her own, but the twisted ideal of Crake. Her death, though, is still important. It is her tragic end that pushes Jimmy to save the Crakers and to tell them grand stories of Oryx as the creator and protector of all things beautiful and pure in the world. Her forced martyrdom leads to her, like Crake, becoming a god to the Crakers, completing their new religion based on the stories and lies woven together by Jimmy. George Heyman notes that 'Human suffering was seen as

[198] Glicksberg, p.15.
[199] Glicksberg, pp.11-12.

contemptible when imposed against one's will. However, it became all the more glorious when it was embraced actively with the will'[200], and in Oryx's case, this is an interesting observation. Oryx did not choose to die, so in a sense, she is not a martyr but a victim. She was a strong supporter of Crake's work but was killed by Crake's hand, dying for *his* cause, not her own. It is the tragedy of the situation by which Oryx gains the position of a martyr even though she did not die by choice, but also because of her importance to Jimmy. Jimmy loved her, and so gave her character all of the importance that Crake has in his stories. Crake was the rival, the man who set the apocalypse in motion, and Oryx was Jimmy's lover. Both of them gain equal standing in the new world because both of them, in their own way, had a huge influence on Jimmy's story, and Jimmy's story, as the last human alive, is the only one that matters.

The names that the protagonists go by are in themselves significant. Crake's real name is Glenn, though Jimmy himself struggles to align that name to the man he became, 'so thoroughly has Crake's later persona blotted out his earlier one'[201]. Crake names himself after the red-necked crake, a species of bird 'never... very numerous'[202] and of a secretive nature. However, they are not endangered or particularly rare. It would be an easy mistake to assume a character like Crake would pick a rare animal to name himself after, or a particularly impressive one, yet he chooses a modest and unspectacular creature to take his name from. There is an implication that Crake himself is not as special as he may seem or act, that there are many potential Crakes out there who no one would think twice about, despite their potential to become far more than what they appear. Oryx is different for we never know her real name. In fact, 'she didn't have a name'[203]. Again, as a species, oryx aren't particularly rare. They are, overall, unremarkable. However, it is not Oryx's chosen name that is

[200] Heyman, pp.164-165.
[201] Atwood, p.81.
[202] Atwood, p.93.
[203] Atwood, p.103.

important, but her lack of a real one. Oryx's character is secretive, more so than Crake, and we know little about her background other than what she chooses to tell. Even then it must be pieced together and linked with speculation. She is half constructed as a myth even before her death. By having no name by which she can be labelled, other than the names assigned to her, she lacks part of herself that makes her real to the other characters, and to us as readers. While Crake ascends from human to god and Jimmy is precariously balancing somewhere in the middle, Oryx was never fully human to begin with.

It is interesting then, that Jimmy would name himself Snowman. 'The Abominable Snowman – existing and not existing, flickering at the edges of blizzards, apelike man or manlike ape, stealthy, elusive, known only through rumours and its backward pointing footprints'[204], ignoring Crake's rule that one's chosen name could not be something for which physical evidence of existence could not be provided. His earlier alias, Thickney, given to him by Crake, is all but forgotten. He is the only one of the three protagonists for which this is the case, becoming the only one to struggle against Crake's vision and the only one to be completely controlled by it. It is also interesting that he should choose a mythological creature despite being the only human left in existence. Through renaming himself, Jimmy has attempted to give himself the same mythic quality Oryx and Crake gained by dying. His success is limited, for the Crakers, while they respect him and know he is different to them, still treat him as a mortal being. He is a person of authority, but not of divinity. Even more interesting is the attention to the 'backward pointing footprints'[205] – Jimmy's very existence is the only thing that leads backwards, the only evidence of the world before the Crakers. In order to find the story of Jimmy's – or rather, Snowman's – origin, we must follow the trail backwards, for only there can he be found, as well as the world he came from. Jimmy himself is the one who leaves this trail in the stories he tells and the memories he divulges.

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[204] Atwood, p.8.
[205] Atwood, p.8.

The individual significance of the names is not the only important aspect of them. Jean Baudrillard explains that 'no one would grant the least consent, the least devotion to a *real* person'[206], and in removing their real names and replacing them with aliases, Jimmy, Crake and Oryx have all taken one step away from being 'real' people. Instead they become symbols, for 'it is to his double, he being always already *dead,* to which the allegiance is given. The myth does nothing but translate the persistence, and at the same time the deception, of the necessity of the king's sacrificial death.'[207] For Oryx and Crake, this sacrificial death is literal. They die to preserve themselves as symbols, as ideals to be worshipped. Jimmy's sacrificial death is sacrificing his old life to become The Abominable Snowman. Jimmy is lost, his persona takes over, presenting himself as something more than just human to the Crakers. This is the only way he, or anyone else, can be worshipped; by hiding ones humanity behind false names and fantastic stories. That is how religion forms, and forms even when there is no real religion at all.

Ultimately, Michael Palmer sums up the decline of religion and its replacement, stating:

> ...the death of God has, as its corollary, the birth of man as a god. All the libidinal energy which one suffused the belief of God is now redirected into a belief in human beings. God has become a mere 'sign' or 'name', divested of any numinous power, and accordingly men and women construct other belief systems, with themselves at their centre.[208]

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[206] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glacer (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), p.26.
[207] Baudrillard, p.26.
[208] Palmer, pp.162-163.

Humans simply *need* God, or some form of substitute for God, even if that substitute is themselves or a fellow human being who has been 'unrecognizably distorted'[209] by their own ideals. That outcome is preferable to facing the prospect of nothingness, especially in dystopian fiction in which science has failed us. When God fades away and science fails, we are left with only humanity itself to provide what these concepts have not. Humans therefore insert themselves into works of pseudo-religion, becoming that which is missing and creating purpose for themselves.

Interestingly, in his Crakers, Crake attempted to eliminate 'what he called the G-spot in the brain. *God is a cluster of neurons* ... It had been a difficult problem, though. Take out too much in that area and you get a zombie or a psychopath'[210], which again implies that belief in a bigger meaning is absolutely necessary for normal human function. As Bosco recognises, what Crake is attempting to breed out of the Crakers are 'the very features that define our humanity, the attributes that create culture and religion and, consequently, a meaningful history'[211]. However, Crake does not at all believe in god. Nor does he believe in nature, at least 'not with a capital N'[212]. Crake, more than anybody, lacks the '*cluster of neurons*'[213] which give people their humanity and is attempting to essentially lobotomise the brain to remove it entirely from his new species, with all of the risks that such an operation entails. Crake himself is most akin to a psychopath, the very thing that he has tried to avoid turning his Crakers into. Perhaps, then, Crake is at least subconsciously aware of his own flaws, his own separation from humanity. His difference is what defines him, what isolates him, but also what allows him to purge the world of what he sees as human flaws, including his own.

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[209] Freud, *Two Short Accounts*, p.114.
[210] Atwood, p.186.
[211] Bosco, p.165
[212] Atwood, p.242.
[213] Atwood, p.186.

Crake's attempt to remove God evidently failed. The Crakers are just as religious as humans, if not more so due to their naivety and willingness to listen to Jimmy's stories. Freud states that 'Religious ideas are teachings and assertions about facts and conditions of external (or internal) reality which tell one something one has not discovered for oneself'[214]. If this is so, then we can see why Crake's attempts to remove God were in vain. There will always be something for which an explanation is needed where gaining the necessary experience to find the answers for oneself is impossible. For the Crakers, this is their own creation and the laws of the world in which they have found themselves, similar to primitive human beings. God simply cannot be removed because too much is left unexplained without the concept of a higher power. The concept of God governing internal reality is all the more interesting when we return to Crake himself. Crake warped his own internal reality so much so that he forged his own reasons for being, forcing into place an external reality that affected everyone in order to make it match his own internal reality. Crake's internal reality is godless, so he created an external reality in which he himself took the role of God, and was so desperate for this to come to pass that he annihilated the human race and replaced it with a 'vast uncontrolled experiment'[215] in which the Crakers would, he hoped, live as he wished them to. Crake could not discover everything about humanity that he wanted to, so instead he created a new race which he understood completely, even though this meant removing himself from the equation. Essentially, Crake could not find his own god and could not live without one, so he created a race where there was a god, where there was a perceived meaning, in order to fill a hole that he himself suffered.

Religion, or at least the replacement of religion, is a key feature in dystopian fiction. There are the obvious likes of Big Brother, Ford and Mercerism, or the more subtle, such as the ideology fronted by V in *V for Vendetta*. It is religion and its likes which give rise to the

[214] Freud, 'The Future of an Illusion' in *Complete Works*, p.25.
[215] Atwood, p.267.

idea of a noble sacrifice. However, for Crake, what appeared to be a sacrifice was in fact an act of cowardice, a way for Crake to escape the consequences of his actions while ensuring his place as a god in a new world. Whether his actions were sacrificial or not, *Oryx and Crake* still poses two very important questions about the likes of figures like Crake: 'Had he been a lunatic or an intellectually honourable man who'd thought things through to their logical conclusion? And was there any difference?'[216]. It would seem that the answer to the last question is no. In fact, the more 'intellectually honourable' one seems, the more likely they are also erring on the side of lunacy. If it is intellect which separates man from God, and this very separation which causes one to lose one's humanity and become a 'lunatic' or 'psychopath', then the two are intrinsically and irreversibly linked. This returns to the prospect that our humanity and our intelligence are at war with each other while also being necessary for survival. If we expend one in favour of the other we cannot function, for civilised society depends on the existence of both. However, to attempt to balance both is an act that drives us to endless and even cyclical social, moral and logical dilemma. Our method of existing with both working in conjunction was to resort to God, an overarching meaning which gives reason for suffering and reason to continue to strive for improvement. When God is lost, that balance becomes very precarious indeed.

[216] Atwood, p.401.

IV: The Real and the Simulation in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

'Death could become optional and we could enjoy lives of constant bliss and excitement. If we get it wrong it could spell extinction.'

-Calum Chace, *Surviving AI*[217]

I have already discussed Freud's theory of phantasy and the death drive, but it is here I wish to approach the same concept of illusion from a different perspective, and that is the effect of the simulation of reality. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* life itself has been simulated in robotic pets and even humanoid androids, often referred to as andys. This simulation is so accurate that it is nearly impossible to tell the difference between real and artificial life forms without examination, especially for the androids for which extensive testing is required. However, regardless of how similar the simulations are to the real thing, there is still a sense of extreme difference. What I wish to explore is why this is the case.

Philip K Dick himself had many ideas of what it is to be human, and indeed android. In 'The Android and the Human' Dick states with certainty that 'The constructs do not mimic humans; they are, in many deep ways, *actually* human already'[218] and yet he also recognises that for humans, this is a terrifying concept. He speaks of the 'living quality that we, in ignorance, cast out onto the inert things surrounding us'[219], a relatively harmless and primitive human tendency to perceive life in inanimate objects. This tendency left unchecked, of course, can lead to paranoia even when those fears are entirely unjust. However, the world has changed. Suddenly, with advances in technology, we are beginning to simulate life in what once would only have been inanimate objects. Dick postulates:

[217] Calum Chace, *Surviving AI* (California: Three Cs Publishing, 2015), p.xviii.
[218] Philip K. Dick, 'The Android and the Human' in *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Lawrence Sutin (New York: Vintage, 1995), p.185.
[219] Dick, 'The Android and the Human', p.183.

> ...our environment, and I mean our man-made world of machines, artificial constructs, computers, electronic systems, interlinking homeostatic components – all of this in fact beginning more and more to possess what the earnest psychologists fear the primitive sees in his environment is becoming alive, or at least quasi-alive, and in ways specifically and fundamentally analogous to ourselves.[220]

In essence, we are facing an as yet unreached problem, and that is the problem of artificial life. With all its promises, it also brings fear and anxieties forward that question not only the capabilities of the technology itself, but the shortcomings of humanity. The philosophical struggle becomes a fight to discover what it means to be human, or, as Dick states, 'in this war we are fighting, to maintain, and augment, what is human about us, what is the core of ourselves and the source of our destiny.'[221] However, this war is not necessarily with androids themselves, but with the existential question of what it means to be alive, both naturally and synthetically.

Calum Chace, in his work *Surviving AI*, states that 'There is a danger that, confronted with the existential threat, individual people and possibly whole cultures may refuse to confront the problem head-on, surrendering instead to despair, or taking refuge in ill-considered rapture'[222]. He predicted that when it comes to the development of artificial intelligence and super intelligence, humans first reaction will be wariness and even existential dread. The creation of artificial intelligence will make certain questions about our own existence unavoidable, and understandings that are integral to our perception of ourselves will become insecure. The real and the simulated can never coexist comfortably within the same sphere, and it is exactly this that I wish to look into.

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[220] Dick, 'The Android and the Human', p.183.
[221] Dick, 'The Android and the Human', p.189.
[222] Chace, p.175.

The simulation is treated as less than that which it simulates, and is actively mistrusted and even hated. There are two identifiable reasons for this, one which links to the idea of phantasy directly and another which finds itself more connected to the ego and the idea of transcendence. Phantasy requires reality, whereas ultimately simulation is based entirely on an unsatisfactory illusion. When talking of simulation, it would be an unforgivable oversight not to speak of the theory of Jean Baudrillard, who claims that 'By shifting to a virtual world, we go beyond alienation, into a state of radical deprivation'[223], a world in which we cannot be satisfied with anything that exists around us for it exists on a virtual space, not a real one. To go a step further, Baudrillard states:

> It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have to be produced.[224]

The androids become symbolic of an irreversible change in which humanity is at risk of sinking beneath the simulation that it has created. So accurate is the simulation that the real is secondary to the simulation. The only superiority that remains is an intangible one, and that is a claim to empathy which is, as is expressed in Dick's novel, an entirely fallible notion.

Phantasy represents the ideal, or perfection. When this phantasy is 'realised' and becomes reality, it loses every aspect which made it so desirable to begin with. It is not possible for reality to live up to the ideal, even when the simulation is as close as can be attained. Phantasy is, by definition, impossible. The realisation of it simply highlights the

[223] Jean Baudrillard, *The Vital Illusion*, ed. by Julia Witwer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p.66.
[224] Jean Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations' in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998; 2001), p.170.

errors in the original desire. Just as the ideal of utopia, when realised, turns into a dystopia, any phantasy that is realised becomes a flawed facade of the phantasy it once was. Again in the words of Baudrillard, 'We move into a world where everything exists only as an idea, dream, fantasy, utopia will be immediately eradicated, because it will immediately be realized'[225], and the immediate realisation only leaves us wanting something more that cannot be defined. We want what cannot be, and when the closest possible simulation is handed to us we are simply reminded of the unreachable nature of our desires. Realising phantasy would also be the attainment of total satisfaction which is not possible. Even if we were to be provided with the perfect replication of our phantasy, our phantasy would simply change.

However, that is assuming that simulation can ever be accepted as equal in value to the real. Once again, I am pushed to speak of the intangible: the almost universal understanding that what is real is always, in some way, superior to the false regardless of any logical reasoning otherwise. When Deckard faces the androids he is also faced with the moral dilemma of whether or not the androids can be considered equal to humans. Logically, there is no reason why not. They live and breathe, they have emotions to an extent, they feel happiness and desire and loss and fear – otherwise they would not try to escape their deaths, or 'retiring'[226]. Most importantly, they are conscious, sentient beings. They move like humans, they speak like humans, they act like humans. They are so close to humans that even extensive testing of their psyche to determine whether or not they are an android may fail, and failure gets more and more likely with every new generation of androids, especially the newest Nexus-6. However, they are *not* human, and no one accepts them as such. It is not a crime to kill an android beyond the destruction of property; their emotions, though felt as though they are real, are considered fake. Where is the line drawn between false and real, and why?

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[225] Baudrillard, p.66.
[226] Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p.24.

Of course, the most natural route for this question to take is that of the philosophical definition of personhood. Usually, it is used in order to determine what constitutes a 'person' in legal and social terms, a question debated when considering such things as abortion or even sometimes animal rights. For these things, the ambiguous nature of the definition of 'personhood' can either be applicable or not, hence the multitude of legal debates concerning these beings in relation to personhood. However, in every sense, androids *do* fit every definition provided for personhood. They are sentient and have consciousness and are highly intelligent. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, though, they are definitely not considered people. Even the animals in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are subject to the same system of value. There is a certain empathic value associated with owning a real animal, as though by caring for another living being one can prove they are more human. Deckard's neighbour says 'You know how people are about not taking care of an animal; they consider it immoral and anti-empathic.'[227] To put oneself at what can only be seen as a disadvantage – in monetary expense, emotional vulnerability and the general inconvenience of looking after a creature in a harsh environment – for the sake of a lesser creature is to prove one's own worth as a human being and thus prove yourself to society. To do the exact same thing for a robot, however, gives a person no extra credit in society. In fact, it makes others actively look down on anyone who owns a robot rather than an authentic animal.

Another reason why we might like to remove humanity from the androids, and that is that to accept the androids as human is to relinquish the superiority of humanity over every other living being. Not only would humanity lose its superiority, it would be handing it over to the androids, for the androids are built to be better than humanity in almost every way. They are strong and fast, durable and intelligent. The only thing they lack is empathy, or at least empathy to the same degree as a human. Empathy is the value upon which much of

[227] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.9.

society is built, at least in its primitive stages – caring for others makes people work together to achieve goals rather than pursuing purely selfish desires. However, in modern society, especially in terms of capitalism, empathy has become a weakness.

Of course, this returns us to the endless debate of what should win, empathy or logic. Empathy without logic would result in chaos, logic without empathy would result in a lack of humanity. The two are constantly at odds in a seemingly irresolvable state. To examine this I would like to return to a statement made by Crake in *Oryx and Crake*, that '*Homo sapiens sapiens* was not hard-wired to individuate other people in numbers above two-hundred, the size of the primal tribe.'[228] Any higher number and humans cannot conceptualise it; it is not in our genetics, nor is it in our interests to care about any more people than those immediately around us. With a close-knit, small society, empathy is beneficial; it means people will work together to acquire more resources, allowing the tribe to thrive. However, due to the scientific and technological progress provided by logic, we now know everything about everyone – seven billion people, excessively more than we are theoretically capable of coping with in terms of our empathy. Here, logic and empathy hinder each other in parallel. Our empathy demands we care, our intelligence makes us care about everyone. Our technological progress has stretched our empathy beyond its limits; now, empathy is nothing but a weakness. There are not enough resources for everyone to strive, yet our empathy will not allow us to abandon anyone, so the resources are spread far too thin for anyone to progress. Logic dictates that we must sacrifice some for the needs of the many, empathy will not allow it. We are therefore stuck in an unsatisfactory stasis in which no one is happy, but no one can progress. I would divide the three approaches as follows: total logic, which would mean that regardless of emotion the numerically and scientifically best option would always be taken, total empathy, in which the emotional option would always be taken in terms of the entire population, and

[228] Atwood, Margaret, *Oryx and Crake* (London: Virago Press, 2004), p.400.

tribal empathy, which is a combination of the two applied to an individual's immediate social surroundings: the 'tribe' of family and friends will be considered in terms of emotion, but those outside of the 'tribe' will be treated in terms of logic.

We know the androids are not as empathic as humans. When the subject is first approached, it is claimed androids are 'equipped with an intelligence greater than that of many human beings, which had no regard for animals, which possessed no ability to feel empathic joy for another life form's success or grief at its defeat'[229], but they *do* possess empathy to some degree; otherwise, the group which Deckard must retire would not have worked together. In the androids, people have highlighted their lack of empathy as a flaw when in actuality human's uncontrolled empathy is a much larger flaw when it comes to progress. Humans hid their fault by directing attention instead towards the androids, who, given the chance, could become far more powerful beings than humans due to their ability to operate on logic. Logic is more important in a world so consumed by global capitalism and where, for most of the population, tribal empathy has given way to total empathy.

However, as I have mentioned already, total empathy is *not possible*. While society may insist upon it, humanity is simply incapable of it. Where empathy fails, the only thing that can replace it is logic; logic disguised as empathy. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Deckard is notably emotionless. Most people are; they have to use their empathy box in order to replicate the correct emotions. Their inability to empathise totally has led to an inability to empathise at all, and now it must be created synthetically. Destroying the androids, while on the surface it seems necessary to protect humans from danger and so can be seen as empathic towards other human beings, is actually a purely logical decision. The androids pose no obvious threat to humans; they seem to want no more than to integrate, and yet all escaped androids are retired where possible. The androids are destroyed because they

[229] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.25.

highlight the flaws of humanity, because humans fear that the androids are superior, because humans do not want to be a lesser creature. The destruction of the androids is not to protect humans as individuals, but to protect humanity as a whole from the revelation that humans are no longer the superior race.

Instead of looking into the hypothetical philosophical debate of the future, we can also find a darker interpretation by looking into the past. There are many uncomfortable similarities between androids and slaves, not least of which is the fact that they are advertised as servants rather than conscious beings. They are produced in order to serve, and, that being the case, it would not make sense for the androids to be produced as humanoid with consciousness for any reason other than to make them seem as human as possible. But why would we want our slaves to be humanoid? This comes down to a basic craving for power that seems to inherently exist in humans. We want to be in control, and to be in control over our equals, or even our superiors, is ideal. Throughout history humanity has had slaves; the first example which comes to mind is slaves of African descent, who suffered the most obvious exploitation in not too distant history. Similarly women, who have held the position of house servant for centuries, have been treated as slaves rather than as equal human beings. However, in the modern day, while some ripples of the same power structure are still in effect, humans are all supposedly considered equal, and explicit slavery is illegal and condemned. However, the desire for power over another being still exists. The logical solution was therefore to create another being, the same as a human in looks, intelligence and ability, to act as the slave we can no longer have organically.

The androids are a form of bare life, beings who are stripped of any political significance and whose retirement 'is classifiable neither as sacrifice nor as homicide'[230], essentially making all of the androids examples of the homo sacer. Philosopher Giorgio

[230] Agamben, p.82.

Agamben, who investigates such concepts as the state of exception and form of life in his works, defines the homo sacer as follows: 'It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide.'[231] It is not a crime to kill an android for they do not exist within the same laws as human beings. Even Deckard uses this to justify his work, for 'it made his job palatable. In retiring – i.e. killing – an andy he did not violate the rule of life laid down by Mercer'[232], a rule of life which is very similar to Agamben's rule of homo sacer and bare life. However, where it is usually a human who becomes homo sacer, here, the androids have been created with the intention of making them into homo sacer. It is this which forces them into the position of the slave, they have been *designed* with this concept in mind. Giorgio Agamben explores the politicisation of life in his work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* by highlighting the contradictory factors which allow the concept of homo sacer to come into being and, when speaking of politicising life, he states 'the new sovereign subject... can only be constituted as such through the repetition of the sovereign exception and the isolation of *corpus*, bare life'[233]. Here he explains that the very existence of political life, which is granted to the humans in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by default, is only possible if there is an 'other', an embodiment of 'bare life', a life which has been stripped of political significance, to hold in contrast to it. In the past, this bare life was embodied by those of other races, classes and genders. In the novel, where society has progressed beyond segregating humanity, a new bare life was created to allow the 'sacred life' of humans to continue.

The problem with this becomes evident in Deckard and Resch and how quickly it is possible to change from being politically acknowledged to 'bare life' when the situation becomes fitting. When Deckard and Resch are faced with the possibility that they may be

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[231] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.71.
[232] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.24.
[233] Agamben, p.73.

androids, there is no question on what is to be done next if they are; they must be retired. In the world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* we are exposed to the anxiety that anyone at any moment could become homo sacer by being revealed as an android, as that discovery alone would strip them of their life's political significance. The two bounty hunters are well aware of the precarious position they are in when their humanity is called into question. Resch speaks of his pet squirrel, saying he cannot possibly be an android if he can 'love the squirrel'[234], but even then he tells Deckard that if he is an android, Deckard can have the squirrel. Even though he knows he has human emotions, Resch still considers the possibility that he might be an android. This, more than anything, shows how similar humans and androids are in the novel if even an individual cannot tell for sure if they are or are not an android, even when empathy is a factor. Adding to this fear, Deckard points out that an android 'can't will anything'[235] to anyone else. An android is property, not a person, and so cannot own things. On the basis of a single result, a human could be denounced as android and lose everything that they once owned and loved.

The very existence of the other, or bare life, becomes a threat in this world, simply because it exists. The 'ambiguity of the sacred'[236] looms over the population, human and android alike, as a constant fear. Androids are designed to be increasingly human-like, with the aim of making them so human that even the most sophisticated of tests, like the Voight-Kampff test, would fail to recognise them as synthetic. The androids themselves are not the threat, rather the threat is the possibility of them blending in so well with the humans that, once again, humans are left without an 'other' upon which to exercise the idea of 'bare life'. Without an 'other' to brand as homo sacer, the label may fall to any other category or individual. Naturally, to maintain their political place, humans would want androids to remain inferior or run the risk of becoming the homo sacer they have been exploiting.

[234] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.102.
[235] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.109.
[236] Agamben, p.78.

There is another factor to our fear of the androids, and that is that their very existence calls into question the existence of a higher being, or god. Chace outlines that to followers of religion, 'The soul is what gives rise to consciousness, and it is also what marks us as different from animals. The soul is a divine creation and cannot be replicated by humans'[237], and it is the question of whether or not humans have created artificial intelligence with a 'soul' in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* which is an uncomfortable dilemma. To those who believe in a higher power, God is the only creator of life. If we accept androids as equal or superior to humans then humans, as their creators, have attained the status of God. Or, rather, they have destroyed God by becoming God. Baudrillard states that 'By ending natural selection, humankind contravenes symbolic law, and in so doing effectively risks its own disappearance... In their arrogant plan to bring evolution to an end, human beings set in motion the involution of their own kind.'[238] Humans have ended natural selection by preventing the evolution of their own kind, as there is no need for evolution in a world where intelligence prevails. The result is humans creating new synthetic life forms to fill the gaps we cannot fill by evolving to suit them ourselves, effectively becoming God to a new species and simultaneously highlighting the inferiority of humanity. By creating better beings, humans become aware of their own insignificance in the grand scheme of things, and come to fear their disappearance at the hands of their own creation. The androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are not the only example of this; the Crakers in *Oryx and Crake* display the exact same thing. Both the androids and the Crakers are a replication of humanity, but a better version of humanity, lacking some of the basic weaknesses and flaws humans have. The Crakers, however, show the truth to Baudrillards statement: in interfering with the natural law and creating new synthetic life, humanity brought about its own end. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, humanity has already suffered the losses caused by

[237] Chace, p.66.
[238] Baudrillard, p.18.

World War Terminus, and its survivors have moved elsewhere. The creation of the androids was supposed to serve as aid, but instead it became a threat to humanity itself.

What is interesting is that the androids in the novel are not a direct threat. At no point does any android attack a human unprovoked in the novel, and there are no reports of the androids being violent other than in their initial escape of their masters. The androids are simply trying to blend in, but humans are strongly against this happening. The only threat is the perceived threat that the androids will successfully infiltrate humanity, and bounty hunters are sent out to prevent this. As readers, we perceive Deckard as a heroic figure, when in actuality he is at best neutral, and at worst a cold killer. Even Iran labels Deckard a 'murderer hired by the cops'[239] at the very beginning of the novel. The androids are only trying to live, Deckard's one mission is to prevent this, and his motivation is not survival but monetary reward. Even in holding the title of 'bounty hunter', we know Deckard is little more than a killer for hire. The only thing that makes this acceptable is that he is killing androids, not humans. Even as readers, we too place a higher value upon human life than that of androids, choosing to side with a killer over the simulation of life.

Deckard himself lacks empathy, in fact we see very little of the cherished idea of humanity within him. His interactions with other humans are minimal and cold, even with his wife, Iran. Deckard shows no more humanity than any of the androids. In fact, Deckard is almost indistinguishable from some of the androids he interacts with. Roy Baty also has a wife – suggesting that he has enough empathy to value a romantic relationship, which is already against what we have been led to believe about androids – but he is calculating and speaks coolly and without emotion, like Deckard. Luba Luft has an appreciation for the arts – she requests Deckard buys her some artwork and she performs in operas, though her connection to the arts seems somewhat empty and out of duty. However, Deckard, who is

[239] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.1.

also interested in the idea of attending the opera, is easily drawn away from it in order to complete his job. The only time Deckard and an android have starkly different responses to the same thing are when Deckard and Rachael Rosen have an intimate relationship. When presented with the prospect of a sexual relationship, Deckard becomes confused, beginning to feel empathy towards the androids he is supposed to despise. Rachael, on the other hand, uses his confusion to her advantage in order to ruin Deckard's career and save the androids, knowing Deckard is 'not going to be able to hunt androids any longer'[240] because 'No bounty hunter ever has gone on'[241] after being with her. It is interesting that Deckard's empathy is only accessed through sexual desire. Freud suggests that sexual desire, a libidinal drive fuelled by the id, is responsible for aggression and desire, that sexual activity provides the 'strongest experiences of satisfaction'[242]. The fact that Deckard only feels empathy when this empathy is driven by his libido suggests that it is libidinal desires which make us more human, and that Rachel only uses sex as a means to control Deckard is what separates her from humans. She is aware that humans' feelings can be controlled, or at least confused, using their libidinal desires. She herself does not possess libidinal desire, but has the means to use her sexual appeal to influence the empathy of humans. It is clear she has no attachment to Deckard as she admits she has used the same method on other bounty hunters before, knowing they can all be defeated this way. The only exception to this rule is Resch, who we already know has such a severe lack of empathy that even he himself was convinced of the possibility he was an android.

Freud states that 'a person becomes neurotic because he cannot tolerate the amount of frustration which society imposes on him in the service of its cultural ideals'[243] and Deckard certainly seems to show this. At the beginning of the novel, he appears to have few problems

[240] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* p.156.
[241] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* p.156.
[242] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, d. By James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.101.
[243] Freud, p.87.

other than hints at financial troubles. However, as his morals come into conflict with societal demands, he begins to weaken and eventually crumbles into a state of neurosis. Resch foresees Deckard's collapse during his own test, saying 'If I test out android... you'll undergo renewed faith in the human race. But, since it's not going to work out that way, I suggest you begin framing an ideology which will account for-'[244], a sentence he does not get to finish. The ideology he is speaking of is one which allows not only for humanoid androids, but android-like humans. An ideology which allows humans to be the beings who lack empathy, and an ideology which allows androids to have value as sentient life forms. The pressure formed between his empathy for the androids and the orders to destroy them simply becomes too much. Iran, Deckard's wife, seems to be the only person capable of understanding this. It is her who shows Deckard kindness at the end of the novel, more kindness, in fact, than she had throughout the rest of the novel; perhaps because the two of them are finally able to understand each other. Iran suffers the same sidelining as many female characters in dystopian fiction of this time period, yet this does not decrease her value in this analysis. Iran shows far more empathy than Deckard, she refers to the androids as 'those poor andys'[245] despite having had no contact with them other than hearing stories from Deckard or on television. It is clear that she must perceive them as sentient beings with some intrinsic value, if not the same as humans then at least similar. However, contrastingly, she supports Deckard's job as a bounty hunter as it is their one source of income. She worries how they will survive if Deckard does not keep his job. Iran becomes the epitome of the bystander. She will lend criticism against making the androids suffer, and yet when it benefits her she is willing to let it happen. Deckard points this out himself, accusing her of showing no 'hesitation as to spending the bounty money... on whatever momentarily attracts your

[244] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.111.
[245] Dick, p.1.

attention'[246]. Iran suffers neurosis throughout the novel, though she herself does not recognise it as such. It pushes her to purposely create her own depression with the empathy box, which makes no logical sense, but this is simply because Iran is far more aware of the emptiness surrounding her than Deckard, or many of the other characters. When Deckard loses his ability to continue bounty hunting, he and Iran come to share the same neurosis, the same sense of endless pressures and frustrations at the hands of society.

Iran wants to reach a sort of transcendence, a realisation of her meaning, and this is why she is so attached to Mercerism. She is much like Millie in *Fahrenheit 451* in this manner; we may not see much by way of the female characters' inner thoughts, but we can still tell they share similarities. They want to feel secure. They are not happy in their situations yet they see no way out and so adhere strictly to the status quo, hoping to find some sort of meaning within the very thing which takes meaning away. In 'The Android and the Human', Dick claims that 'God is the reality man creates continually out of his own passions, his own determination'[247], and Wilbur Mercer and Mercerism are this reality for the people in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Mercer offers people guidance and support and encourages a community of sharing and cooperation, claiming he is there 'to show you... that you are not alone'[248]. Mercer comes in the place of religion, but a softer form of religion in which suffering is largely avoided and happiness and serenity are encouraged. The only suffering is the rocks, which strike people as they ascend the hill with Mercer. There are no assailants to target; the rocks are purely symbolic of a challenge to overcome in order to reach one's goal. Mercer fulfils the need for God in a world that has become godless by human advancement. Freud calls religion an institution which 'imposes equally on everyone its own path to the acquisition of happiness and protection from suffering'[249] and Mercerism

[246] Dick, pp.1-2.
[247] Dick, 'The Android and the Human', p.205.
[248] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.141.
[249] Freud, p.84.

takes this one step further, altering mentality of the masses by regulating their emotions. What is intriguing is that, while Mercer is the face of this religious substitute, it is actually the people who follow Mercerism who are essential for it to function. As I spoke of earlier, God has been removed because man has *become* God, and this is all the more prominent when we consider Mercerism in this way. Humans have not only found a way to replicate life, but also to control their emotions, to falsify transcendence so the religious impulse is satisfied. They are even playing God with themselves. Freud also calls religion a 'mass-delusion'[250], and again, this is even truer of Mercerism. It is so ingrained within the people that Isidore and even Deckard, who is not a devout follower of Mercerism, hallucinate seeing Mercer in person. Mercerism is exposed as a lie, and yet this appears to change nothing, so strong is its hold. Although perhaps 'hold' is the wrong word, for the people are not bound by Mercerism; they go to it freely. Their need for a sense of a higher purpose or divine being is so strong that they are willing to follow an exposed fallacy, even after Mercer himself tells Deckard '*there is no salvation*'[251].

Deckard, like the other protagonists of dystopian fiction, is searching for a meaning to his life and his work. His test comes in the form of the androids, who make him question every aspect of humanity. His understanding of the world and even his very ideology become unstable as he realises they are based on falsities and assumptions, making him realise that the belief system he has lived by is entirely fallible. Deckard is another tragic hero, a protagonist so absorbed into the society that has moulded him that escape is impossible. Instead, he sinks into an inevitable neurosis caused by the conflicting interests of society and his own beliefs and ideals. Deckard briefly tries to find a way out of the world he is trapped in, but sinks back into the very society which has misled him. He takes on a different role, but is nonetheless as much a part of it as he was at the beginning of the novel. In the next chapter,

[250] Freud, p.84.
[251] Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, p.141.

I will be looking at a character who is very much Deckard's opposite in his position in society, and that is V in Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*.

V. Ideology and Terrorism in Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*

Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta* is a dystopian text born of the tensions in Britain in the 1980s, but it borrows heavily from the gothic tradition as well, combining the two genres into a nightmarish vision of dystopian Britain. Markus Oppolzer highlights the Gothic aspects of *V for Vendetta* in his work 'Gothic Liminality in *V for Vendetta*', in which he explores the nature of V's mental instability, his suffering and rebirth, his obsession with revenge and, most interestingly, noting that the 'hero and villains are uncannily alike'[252]. I would like to remain with Jean Baudrillard for this final chapter, in which I wish to examine Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*. In this graphic novel, we are introduced to a dystopian Britain in which everything is monitored and controlled by a central government. The self-named V, who refuses to reveal his face, is a lone vigilante out to destroy the oppressive system, but he is by no means the standard dystopian hero.

Oppolzer identifies that V falls under the archetype of the gothic monster who 'feeling betrayed and abandoned by their 'fathers', ... seek redemption and reintegration but compromise their chances by succumbing to hate and revenge.'[253] V exists in a society which has not only abandoned him but made him suffer horrible traumas, traumas which corrupted V's ideals of a new society so that his drive towards a better world is tainted with plots of vengeance. Oppolzer explains:

> For the individual there is a basic need to be acknowledged as a legal subject, which serves as a fundamental prerequisite for official interactions within a particular culture. If the law is the only institution to which the individual can turn and appeal in

[252] Markus Oppolzer, 'Gothic Liminality in *V for Vendetta*' in *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition*', ed. by Matthew A.J. Green (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p.103.
[253] Oppolzer, p.104.

> a time of crisis, then the refusal of one's case to be heard and acted upon condemns the individual to remain in the luminal sphere.[254]

It becomes clear that V has no place within society. The law has abandoned him, even vilified him for nothing more than his existence. Society has cast him aside and there is nowhere else to turn to for acceptance. Instead, V became 'a complete anomaly: ... physically and legally outside the system, a ghostlike presence on the fringe of society into whose classificatory system he no longer fits.'[255] V is a product of the failures of the dystopian state and as such becomes its biggest enemy, yet he is not a part of that society at all. Like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or the endless other monsters and ghosts which haunt gothic literature, V haunts the dystopian state in *V for Vendetta*, a constant reminder of the traumas and atrocities committed and bent on revenge. However, V's obsessive desire to change society itself rather than return to it is what returns this novel to more dystopian roots. The result is a compromise which intertwines the romance and grandeur of the gothic with the realism and self-awareness of dystopia, resulting in a poignant comment on the dark side of Britain in the 1980s and an unsettling look into the potential future.

V is incredibly violent due to a mixture of psychological and political motivations. V says 'I am the devil, and I have come to do the devil's work'[256], a quote which is unsettling for two reasons. The first is that V refers to himself as the devil, and therefore evil, which goes directly against the idea that he is a force of good. However, this could be interpreted in different ways. The devil, or Lucifer, a fallen angel, was cast down for loving God too much. Perhaps V is claiming he too was cast away for his love of a greater cause, which caused him to become an outcast, obsessed with attaining his own vision. Alternatively, in referring to the 'devil's work' it could be seen that V has taken it upon himself to exact judgement upon

[254] Oppolzer, p.105.
[255] Oppolzer, p.108.
[256] Alan Moore, *V for Vendetta* (New York: DC Comics, 1988), p.55.

sinners who roam the earth, making them suffer as they would at the hands of the devil in hell. However, it is not the quote itself that is the most disturbing thing, but the quote's source. The quote is famously linked to Charles Manson, though it was actually spoken by one of his followers, Charles Watson, during the horrific murder of Sharon Tate and her friends at her home. Why would V, the hero of the story, link himself with a person who committed such a terrible crime? And yet, without knowing, he has the unquestioning support of the readers. As Baudrillard says in *The Spirit of Terrorism*, 'we would forgive any massacre if it had a meaning'[257], but in the case of V, there is certainly more to it than that. Baudrillard calls this 'mass fascination'[258] with the 'white light of the image and the black light of terrorism'[259], even going as far as to call terrorism in the media our 'theatre of cruelty'[260], a label which bears striking resemblance to *V for Vendetta*'s 'This Vicious Cabaret'[261]. Violence in itself is a thrilling spectacle to us, and if we can give this violence meaning then at least we can justify our enjoyment. V puts this to the test, pushing the morality of the reader to its limits. How much will we support? How far is too far? It would seem there is no boundary at all.

This returns us to the coexistence of the death drive and the libido. Freud refers to sadism, 'the instinct for mastery, or the will to power'[262] which is 'placed directly in the service of the sexual function'[263]. In his earlier works, Freud believed that 'the impulses of cruelty arise from sources which are in fact independent of sexuality, but may become united

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[257] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism' in *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (Berkshire: Open University Press, 1992; 2002), p.229.
[258] Baudrillard, p.229.
[259] Baudrillard, p.229.
[260] Baudrillard, p.229.
[261] Moore, p.87.
[262] Sigmund Freud, 'Economic Problem of Masochism' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX 1923-25*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.163.
[263] Freud, 'Economic Problem of Masochism', p.163.

with it'[264] and in his later works spoke of aggression as 'the death instinct's manifestations *outwards*'[265]. Ultimately, it seems that Freud's understanding of aggression was somewhat incomplete. However, it would appear to me that Freud's first assumption is closer to the truth. In a society which restricts sexuality, another way to relieve such tensions is through violence towards others. This alone, of course, is not enough justification for violence. When considered alongside Baudrillard's theory of requiring a meaning, though, the two ideas combined produce a solution. Humans desire two things: satisfaction of the instinctual desires of the id and satisfaction of the more complex desires of the ego. To witness a character like V, a terrorist on the side of good, a violent individual who provides moral reasoning for his gruesome acts, satisfies both desires simultaneously.

However, it appears that V's connection with evil in this sense does serve another purpose as well. It becomes clear that V is well aware that he is not fit to be a figure for good when he speaks of destroyers and creators. Destroyers break down the old regime in order to make way for a new one, yet they themselves are incompatible with this new world. According to V, 'Destroyers topple empires, make a canvas of clean rubble where creators can then build a better world'[266], but 'destroyers have no place within our better world'[267]. V, while he does not state it explicitly, is clearly a destroyer, 'the alienated and rejected man who is bent on revenge against a society which has mutilated him'[268] who, in Freudian terms, is very much an example of 'the inborn human inclination to... aggressiveness and destructiveness'[269]. Evey, on the other hand, is a creator. She refuses to kill, and thus refuses to destroy. She is less tainted by the evils which warped V, and though he put her through similar torment to that which he suffered, she did not become filled with the same desire for

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[264] [264] Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.61.
[265] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.62.
[266] Moore, p. 248.
[267] Moore, p. 248.
[268] Charles I Glicksberg, *Modern Literature and the Death of God* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff: 1996), p.19.
[269] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.120.

vengeance as V did. V sacrifices himself, allowing himself to be killed once his destructive work is completed. He hands the title of V to Evey, allowing her to become the figurehead of the creation which must follow V's work in order for the new world to be made. Perhaps at this point it would be appropriate to talk about Evey's gender. She is the only prominent female character in the books I have written about who is not defined by the sexual attraction the male protagonist feels towards her. Because of this, Evey is not defined through the male gaze and so is able to become an important character in her own right. The female is often a symbol of creation and nurturing, and perhaps Moore had this in mind when he chose a young female to take over the role of V.

What is interesting is that V is a completely non-sexual entity. Usually in dystopian fiction oppression is directly linked to sexuality, but V shows no sign of any sexual desire. At most he speaks of love in abstract terms when referring to the statue of justice. Even V's only reference to sexuality is referring to an idea. It is as though V, who could be said to be transcendent above regular humans due to his altered physical and mental state, is also on a higher level when it comes to sexuality. Again, Freud calls sexual desires the 'strongest experiences of satisfaction'[270], and yet V does not need these feelings. This separates V from humanity because sexuality is part of what makes people human. By having no sexuality, V is different, not restrained or controlled by libidinal instincts. By being inhuman, V is free of all the flaws which humanity carries. His desires are purely egoistic. Evey on the other hand is a sexual individual, which makes her seem more human in comparison to V. This is part of the reason she is a good replacement for V when V dies. Because Evey is more human, she is more relatable but can also understand the needs of other normal humans and can help to create a world in which they can thrive. Evey is gentle and generally kind, perhaps partly due to her youth. She begins the story rather naive, yet with the help from V, her naivety is

[270] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.101.

removed and she gains a wider understanding of the world, yet she does not lose that which makes her fit to help the new world thrive.

While V is free of the constraints of the libido, he is still subject to the desires of his id through his desire for destruction. Freud speaks of the human desire to use others 'sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him'[271] due to the natural, inborn drive towards libido and aggression. As already mentioned, V is exclusively non-sexual and none of his actions appear to offer any sexual gratification. However, he does appear to gain satisfaction from the humiliation and pain of his enemies. He chooses deaths for them which expose their hypocrisy or corruption and their deaths are often unpleasant and painful. In general, Freud believes civilisation aims to reduce this instinctual violence by restricting it within law and granting the right of violence only to those who are in a position to exert it over criminals. However, in a dystopian society akin to the one in *V for Vendetta*, the law has been corrupted. It still technically only allows violence against criminals, but the law enforcement may twist the law to make anyone a criminal and thus anyone may be exposed to violence at any point. Freud writes that because of the 'primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration'[272] because 'instinctual passions are stronger than reasonable interests'[273]. The society in *V for Vendetta* is at a tipping point at which violence may be exacted upon anyone and anyone may exact violence. The only person who stands outside this as a definite outsider, and even a definite criminal, is V. However, despite his position as criminal, or 'terrorist', V can still exploit the effectively lawless dystopia to his own ends, using violence against those he perceives as criminals as freely as law enforcement use violence against civilians they have unfairly labelled as criminal. Because of the ambiguity of the law and of right and wrong within *V for Vendetta*, all of the characters are permitted to exact their

[271] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.111.
[272] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.112.
[273] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.112.

aggressive instincts without repercussion. The only exception is V, who *does* face repercussion, but this simply gives his actions more meaning, making them more acceptable. While he is acting in the same way as his enemies, he is acting for a seemingly positive cause, and thus, returning again to Baudrillard, we can 'forgive... any massacre', for it has a meaning.

V, like Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or Ford in *Brave New World* or Crake in *Oryx and Crake*, is a symbol before he is a human. The difference is that V is not an oppressive force, but the face of a rebellion *against* the oppressive forces. However, he still functions exactly the same way. V is a terrorist, a hero, a villain, an idol, all at the same time, because V is not a human being at all. V is a combination of ideas and perceptions. The person underneath V's mask is irrelevant. It 'wouldn't be enough'[274] for V to be revealed to be an individual, because what could have been will always be greater than what is. V is what Charles I Glicksberg calls 'the alienated and rejected man who is bent on revenge against a society which has mutilated him'[275], which explains perfectly why V chose to become a symbol instead of a man. Glicksberg's essay speaks of humans replacing God with themselves, thereby losing the concept of God itself. However, 'God is dead but the "religious" impulse persists'[276]. In a dystopian, godless world, the only way to satisfy this impulse is to create a substitute for God and both the man beneath the Guy Fawkes Mask and Evey understand this; 'they have come to the realization that the world is at the end of its tether. If the race is to be saved from collective suicide, it is the heart of man that must be transformed, but how is that transformation to be effected?'[277] Both of these characters, who are desperate for purpose or meaning in a world which has tortured, betrayed and hurt them, find the only way to find this purpose is to *become* that purpose and provide the opportunity

[274] Moore, p.250.
[275] Glicksberg, p.19.
[276] Glicksberg, p.15.
[277] Glicksberg, p.11.

for change for everyone else. The alternative is to accept the world as it is and be reduced to a member of the downtrodden masses, destined for nothingness.

The allusion to God and religion in *V for Vendetta* is often overlooked, even though the Guy Fawkes mask for which V is known is directly linked to the discontent between the Catholic and Protestant churches in the seventeenth century. The mask is, on the surface, a representation of a man who played a significant part in a rebellion, but if we examine the religious undertones it becomes more sinister. While V is the novel's hero, he is still implementing his own beliefs with an attitude which does not allow for difference. V executes his enemies indiscriminately and without mercy, not unlike the totalitarian state which he claims to want to overthrow, destroying his opposition with elaborate displays meant to set an example. When we consider the Protestant state and the Catholic rebellion to be aligned with the novel's dictatorship and V respectively, it comes to light that the two are not so different. However, the Guy Fawkes mask has more significance than just its religious implications. Famously, Guy Fawkes' plot failed. It is as though V's mask is designed to foreshadow his own failure, and V himself is aware of the futility of his own efforts in choosing a symbol whose uprising was a failure. V expects to lose, even allowing his own death. It is his sacrifice which is important, not the individual themselves, for it is the sacrifice which is remembered. Any individual who lives their life to its proper end is destined to fade from the public eye, but to die a sudden and dramatic death is to secure one's place in history as a symbol. Guy Fawkes' failure immortalised him. V seeks the same reward. In dying, he was able to pass on his role to Evey, who then understood the importance of keeping not the man, but the *idea* of V alive. This bears echoes of the sacrificial or noble death, that 'single willing death simultaneously destroying and creating

empires'[278]. George Heyman highlights that 'a person truly possessed only that which they could freely give away. As such, the value of a human life increased as it was expended.'[279] Heyman writes of sacrifice as a means of gaining a kind of transcendence, for by controlling the conditions of one's death, one has achieved a freedom unreachable to those who wait for death to come to them. Embracing death for a cause grants the individual's life greater meaning, as to die voluntarily is to regain 'in one final moment the honor so integral to human life'[280]. There is a sense of awe awarded to an individual who chooses to 'live as long as he ought, not as long as he can'[281]. Sacrificial death is aligned with honour, bravery, respect, wisdom and heart, and it is these things, not what the individual did during their life, that are remembered. Essentially any individual, good or bad (within reason), can erase their actions if they embrace a sacrificial death. V does exactly this; all of his murders, his violence, his insanity, his cruelty, is forgotten because he died for a cause, and thus he becomes a symbol of greatness, not of his actual actions.

V is very much a conscious embodiment of the homo sacer, someone who can be killed without any repercussions upon those who kill him because he is labelled as a kind of 'other', an outsider to society. Giorgio Agamben speaks about the homo sacer in his work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. He highlights the ambiguity of the concept within the contradiction between the name and the meaning, pointing out that the homo sacer, or 'sacred man', is one who is condemned rather than treated as sacred, or 'while it confirms the sacredness of a person it authorizes... his killing'[282]. V is very aware of his position. V can be killed without repercussion; in fact, his death at the hands of the fingermen is actively encouraged. V is considered, at least by those in power, as a danger to be removed. However,

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[278] George Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), p.164.
[279] Heyman, p.165.
[280] Heyman, p 165.
[281] Heyman, p.165.
[282] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.47.

V is definitely sacred in another sense, that is in his position as a symbol to the oppressed. By being separate from society, V becomes both sacred and damned, destined to die as an outsider but also a martyr for his own cause. However, another interpretation of the term homo sacer is 'accursed'[283], or 'the person or the thing one cannot touch without dirtying oneself'[284], and this definition is highly applicable too. V is, in a sense, cursed. He is tormented by the torture he endured in his earlier life, driven to insanity. His skills, while he uses them for good, are implements of destruction before anything else, hence his inability to be a part of the new world for which he has paved the way and the necessity for his death once his mission is complete. V is the perfect example of the homo sacer in any of its definitions: he is a man cursed to live outside of accepted society, and his actions to create a new, better world will simultaneously bring about his demise.

That V is someone 'one cannot touch without dirtying oneself'[285] is also true if we consider those who come into contact with V throughout the story. The most obvious example is Evey. It is her contact with V which pulls her from the path she is on and throws her into a new destiny in which she becomes V's protégé, someone so affected by him that she is able to continue in his place. V exposes her to torture and pain and she is, in a sense, indoctrinated into his regime purely by encountering him by chance. While at first she does not understand, once V's work is complete, she sees 'the pieces are set out... perfectly aligned. Complete, one may at last grasp their design, their grand significance.'[286] Not only does Evey come to understand V himself, but the vital importance of his role as a symbol. She is taken in not only by his sacredness but also his curse. After his death, Evey becomes V, and in taking on the symbol, she takes on the role of homo sacer, sacred and cursed,

[283] Agamben, p.51.
[284] Agamben, p.51.
[285] Agamben, p.51.
[286] Moore, p.246.

destined to be an outsider from society and the law, but an outsider who stands for something which is more important than any individual.

However, it is not just Evey who is changed, or 'dirtied' by her connection with V. All of those who worked at Larkhill, conducting the experiments on the subjects such as V, are forced to face comeuppance for their work in ways which have a sense of poetic justice. Bishop Anthony Lilliman is forced to eat a poisoned wafer, which V asks 'the moment it enters your mouth it becomes the flesh of the saviour? ... And whatever it is made of now it will become the body of Christ?'[287]. V uses this twisted version of communion to highlight the corruption within the church, or at least the bishop's use of the church, and utilises it to bring about the bishop's death. Lewis Prothero, who works as the voice of Fate and numbs the minds of the population with his lies, is driven 'incurably insane'[288] after his encounter with V. The only person who appears to avoid such harsh revenge is Delia Smith, who is allowed to die peacefully due to her acceptance of her guilt and her willingness to, in a sense, repent, saying 'We deserve to be culled. We deserve it.'[289] The most interesting character to analyse in this sense, though, is Inspector Eric Finch. Finch goes to the Larkhill Resettlement Camp and takes LSD in order to try to understand V, saying 'I'm going to have to get right inside his head... to think the way *he* thinks... and that scares me.'[290] During this venture, Finch experiences horrific hallucinations which drive him to madness. However, V eventually allows Finch to kill him. Because Finch experienced a small amount of V's trauma, V has accepted Finch as someone who, at least to an extent, understands, and so he allows Finch to end his life. This not only allows V to become a martyr, to fulfil his role as both sacred and cursed man as well as pushing Evey to take his place, but frees Finch from the visions that haunt him.

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[287] Moore, p.61.
[288] Moore, p.84.
[289] Moore, p.73.
[290] Moore, p.210.

V understands he is not the one to set the example for the new world, and certainly understands the need for a symbol. The idea is stronger than the individual. Evey gains this understanding as well as she contemplates removing V's mask, saying 'If I take off that mask, something will go away forever, be diminished because whoever you are isn't as big as the *idea* of you'[291]. Jean Baudrillard states 'no one would grant the least consent, the least devotion to a *real* person. It is to his double, he being always already *dead,* to which the allegiance is given'[292], and this is true. People are weak, corruptible, fallible. An *idea*, however, is immortal. Ideas are infinitely more powerful than an individual, or than a group, even. Ideas are the only danger to any system that is in place, no matter how strong or how oppressive. It is ideas which dystopian states wish to remove, yet it is also ideas which they will never be able to prevent. Once an idea is created, it cannot be destroyed. V used the very media which has oppressed and controlled the population in order to transmit his message. Once again, V uses the very same tools as the society he despises in order to gain control, or at least to divert control away from the current ruling masters. In using television and radio, V can simultaneously transmit his message to thousands if not millions of people. In doing so even once, he is able to sow the seeds of his ideology into the minds of every viewer. V uses the same method as the oppressors, but instead of using their tools to numb and still the population, he uses them to stir and inspire them. Once the idea is planted, V needs to do little else; once it takes root, it cannot be removed. V's role is not to lead the population to revolution in such simple and direct terms. Instead, he uses his symbolic status to send a message which will be received by everyone, and those people in turn have the power to act upon it. As an individual, V has no real power, at least not enough to make a lasting change. His *idea*, however, has the ability to ripple throughout the population and stir others into

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[291] Moore, p.250

[292] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glacer (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), p.26.

action, opening their eyes not only to the desperate state of affairs they find themselves in but to their own power as the people.

With this revelation we may have stumbled upon the very thing that is central to my analysis of not only V for Vendetta, but of all the novels I have chosen. When speaking of the intangible, be it emotion or religion or transcendence or anything else, what we are discussing are *ideas*. Ideas have the power to inspire generations, to create art and progress, to move civilisations in a way which terrifies the oppressors of dystopian societies. Ideas are the enemy, but ideas are infallible once they are created. The only option for those in power is to prevent the formation of ideas, and they often use propaganda and mass media to do this. However, that very same mass media can be used to have the opposite effect, and V utilises this. The tools of brainwashing are instead used to inspire movement, and thus the idea takes hold. V may fall, but the idea has become unstoppable even though it has only just begun to take form. Where individuals fail others will step forward with the belief that eventually, enough will rise to effect a permanent change.

Conclusion

Throughout my research, the same themes have repeated themselves time and time again. Though they have manifested themselves in different forms, the same concepts have shown themselves throughout all of my chosen novels. Those concepts are neurosis, religion, transcendence, aggression and oppression. However, I would like to highlight the two which I believe to be integral to the others, and those are neurosis and transcendence, for the others can all be linked directly back to those two. All of the manifestations of the ego and the id are born of neurosis. Neurosis is a form of mild stress, depression or anxiety, caused by dissatisfaction with ones current situation. Libido and aggression, already closely related in terms of Freudian psychology, are methods of attempting to escape neurosis. They would provide the satisfaction needed in order to temporarily subdue neurosis, however, in civilised society, especially the oppressive societies of the dystopian novels I have studied, these instinctive desires are restrained, even forbidden. This leads to neurosis dominating the population. From this grows the idea of ultimate escape, or transcendence.

Transcendence comes in many forms, the most obvious of which is religion. However, it is not always religion itself which provides transcendence, but the fight to overcome it and be free of the oppressive regime it enforces. Big Brother and Ford are obvious representations of religion for the masses in their respective societies, but due to their oppressive nature, it is rebelling against them which gives the protagonists the sense of purpose they desire. Similarly, V in *V for Vendetta* finds his purpose in the struggle against oppressive powers, and in doing so, he becomes a symbol akin to Big Brother or Ford himself. In *Oryx and Crake*, again, Crake defies the laws of nature in creating new humanoids and instead of removing religion, which he claims to despise, he becomes the centre of a new one. What the protagonists are fighting for is the *future*. Not just their own,

but a future beyond themselves. Transcendence is more than just a desire to achieve a reward after death, but to mean something to the future which follows the end of their own lives.

However, while transcendence and neurosis are central themes to my study, they too are manifestations of something else. Throughout my research, I have spoken repeatedly about the intangible, and this is the root of both neurosis and the concept of transcendence, thus providing the core of my dissertation. The intangible idea of there being something more to the world than what is physically present is an abstract concept with no empirical basis, and yet it is absolutely integral to the dystopian texts which I have studied. To remove the concept of intangible one must remove that which makes the human, such as emotion and imagination. Dystopian societies seek to remove the ability for people to imagine anything outside the life which they lead to prevent them from wanting more. However, to do so, those people would lose what makes them human, reducing them to emotionless beings who are destined to be unhappy. We can see this effect in many of the female characters in the novels who have suffered this fate, such as Iran and Mildred. It is these characters who suffer neurosis, for while they are not actively unhappy at any given moment, it is clear that they lack a certain happiness granted to those who believe there is something worth striving for. These two women in particular have nothing to work towards and so spend their days in a state of static neurosis. This leads Mildred to almost take her own life and Iran schedules depressive episodes in order to feel something. The protagonists of the novels escape this neurosis due to their grasp of the intangible, which allows them to strive for transcendence and grants their life a meaning it previously lacked. All of the protagonists in the novels step outside of the norm, separating themselves from the rest of society with their individuality and ideas. It is their ability to imagine a radically other world which grants them the ability to strive for transcendence.

The novels I have studied show a distinct separation between those who follow logic and science and those who choose to put more faith in their emotions and art. But whom are we to pity more? The scientists, who strive to reach the goals through logic and reason, or the artists, who take a more spiritual approach through imagination and sensibility? The two appear to be irreconcilable to each other, a naturally occurring binary, a view which is supported by the novels I have studied. However, on this view, I wholeheartedly disagree. Every human being has an inborn desire to be something more, to escape the confines of the rules and regulations that make up what is real and what is accepted. Some pursue this path through science, but find themselves only faced with more limitations that cannot be broken. Others follow artistic paths to transcendence, becoming trapped in the realisation that what they desire cannot be any more than the very illusion that they project onto their chosen canvas. And all the while, while scientists scorn the artists and artists scorn the scientists, the two are simply alternate pursuits to the same unreachable end.

Dystopian fiction is born of a sense of restriction, a restriction which is blamed on the oppressive societal regime and the limits placed on desires. Dystopian fiction is based on an exaggeration of our current situation, as we exist in society now, where we perceive the same restrictions to a lesser extent. Novels, be they historical or modern, fantasy or realist, provide an illusion so powerful within the reading experience that it interferes with our very existence. For the time being, I wish to step away from dystopia in order to express my meaning. Think of J.R.R Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, in which an unassuming hobbit goes on a grand adventure in order to save the world. J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter*, where an average young boy becomes a world-renowned wizard and saves the wizarding world from the biggest evil there is. Obvious choices to demonstrate my point: all captivating stories where the average human being becomes extraordinary through their actions. Imagine now Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, the story of the French Revolution in which the common people rise

against their enemy, the state, to fight for their freedom and save their country. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which a scientist breaks all known laws of science then must go on a lifelong quest in order to right his wrongs. Of course, these stories still have an element of grandeur. However, if we consider something like J.D Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* or F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, two novels which are rooted more firmly in the present and in reality, not even focussing on any significant historical event. Still, the central characters are in some sense pivotal, different, extraordinary.

If all media, especially literature, that we are exposed to shows us that everybody can be somebody, then that is exactly what we expect from life. We look around and observe dozens of people every day who appear, to us, to be nobodies, forgetting for a moment that to them we ourselves are much the same. Every one of us, trapped inside our own mind, believes that we contain some intrinsic value which makes us *different*, like the protagonist we read about. This comes from both psychological roots, in which we recognise ourselves within the protagonists psyche and so believe ourselves to be like them, and ideological reasoning, where we wish to be more than what society tells us we are. However, in reality, how can seven billion people all be different? The answer is, we cannot. We are all essentially the same, even in our belief that we are not. Only our own psychological and ideological desires convinces us otherwise. Our neurosis stems from the belief that we can be somebody if only we had the chance, but such a chance never occurs in reality. As such individuals 'show an intention of making oneself independent of the external world by seeking satisfaction in internal, psychical processes.'[293] To do this, we turn to the likes of religion and literature and become hostile towards society, or reality. The society which provided us with systematic security becomes synonymous with dullness which, in turn, becomes oppression. We have reached as close to utopia as it is possible to get in the Western

[293] Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XXI 1927-31*, trans. by James Strachey, d. By James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p.80.

world through technological progress and social awareness, but utopia is not what we wanted it to be. Dissatisfaction was turned towards the very society which we believe to have lied to us. We perceive society as having promised safety, happiness and satisfaction of all of our needs. However, how can any society function if it must satisfy all of human desires; aggression, libido, the drive to power? It cannot. What made us believe that such satisfaction *was* possible? Literature. Society did not lie, literature did. However, so successful was this lie that it managed to turn us not against itself, but against the society which grew from necessity.

Literature, like religion, grows from the desire to realise wishes that are out of reach, and it is phantasy which allows this. Freud describes the imaginative part of human psychology as follows:

> The region from which these illusions arise is the life of the imagination; at the time when the development of the sense of reality took place, this region was expressly exempted from the demands of reality-testing and was set apart for the purpose of fulfilling wishes which were difficult to carry out.[294]

Literature is a product of the imagination of its authors, which, as Freud states, is not limited by the restrictions of reality. Here we find the self-perpetuating cycle in which dissatisfied authors, who are themselves consumers, provide more to be consumed and thus feed the dissatisfaction. Literature is a product of unsatisfied desires that become phantasy. This provides the inspiration for more desires which themselves cannot be satisfied, and yet literature is what falsely promises that the satisfaction we desire is reachable when it is not. Ultimately, it seems that society is only in part to blame. Our dissatisfaction comes not purely

[294] Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p.80.

from the restriction set in place by civilisation, but the literature which fuels our psychological desire for something more. It is a combination of the fallacy provided by literature and the conflicting reality of society which causes our immense dissatisfaction. However, instead of placing equal blame on both, we point the finger at society and run to literature as our saviour. Literature provides the same comforts; heroism, grandeur, a promise of transcendence, whereas society stands rooted in realism. Just like religion, people will fight for the lie rather than accept what is and what must be. Literature itself has become the replacement for the god which we show such a strong desire for. It is not figures like Big Brother or Ford who are deceptive, nor is it characters like V or Montag who we follow. It is literature itself, with its illusions and false promises, which provides us with the lie of transcendence which we so desire.

The protagonists of the novels I have studied all show a drive for transcendence which is fuelled by literature and art, even Crake, who shows a strong distaste for art and yet still ultimately succumbs to his desire for the intangible. Montag demonstrates this theory in a very interesting way, as he pursues literature and art restlessly in order to gain some higher meaning which he himself does not even understand. While he stands out from the masses in his departure from the norm, he is more akin to a true everyman. Even when he 'succeeds', he is told his digression from society will have no immediate effect on him or anyone else. At best it will be generations before any effect comes into place, at worst, it will not happen at all. Montag does nothing particularly heroic in the texts and nor is he even granted the noble death of most of the protagonists of the novels I have studied . John the Savage, V and even Crake die for their cause and so become martyrs for their beliefs, granting their lives exceptional importance. Winston and Deckard suffer failure to escape the societies that trap them in a way that is in itself tragically heroic. Montag, however, succeeds, but his success is limited and comparatively unimportant. As Charles I Glicksberg has said, 'He is nothing but

he knows he is nothing, and that makes the difference.'[295] Montag accepts his own unimportance in a way that is unique to him as a protagonist. He is the only person who abandons the idea of transcendence, and thus he survives, ultimately unchanged, neither victorious nor defeated.

However, it is perhaps V who captures the theory more strongly still. Markus Oppolzer tells us that 'V especially cherishes those fictional heroes and historical figures that provide him with a blueprint for the person he might be, instrumentalising and recontextualising these narratives to serve his own agenda.'[296] V's identity is built entirely on ideologies, fantasies and illusions. V has a collection of art and music banned by the state from which he has built himself, burying whoever he actually was beneath the smiling Guy Fawkes mask and becoming anything he wants, modelled on the art he has consumed. V's very existence is a performance, made clear not only by 'the fact that he dresses up in the costume, but also by his propensity for grand gestures and speeches made in blank verse.'[297] V also strives for poetic justice, making his enemies suffer in a way befitting their crimes. Everything V is and everything V does is based on literary and artistic ideologies. These ideologies have the power to make V do everything from saving lives to committing atrocities, even leading to his own grand sacrifice, and all of this for the sake of art, or at least for the sake of the intangible notion of transcendence that art provides.

Perhaps here it would be fitting to return the death drive, for it certainly appears that in these novels death and failure are vastly more important and meaningful than survival and success. The failures and deaths of the protagonists have a poeticism not granted to the only person who arguably succeeds. I have already examined the meaningfulness of a noble death and it is this which we admire, and even aspire to, especially those suffering from the

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[295] Charles I Glicksberg, *Modern Literature and the Death of God* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff: 1996), p.33.
[296] Markus Oppolzer, 'Gothic Liminality in *V for Vendetta*' in *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition*', ed. by Matthew A.J. Green (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p.109.
[297] Oppolzer, p.109.

human lives. However, it appears that literature itself is both cause and symptom of that anxiety. Dystopian fiction is a cynical response not only to society, but to the optimistic literature that promised us everything which could not, in reality, be delivered.

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