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# Guilt and Shame: An Analysis of Dystopian Novels

# Vina a stud: Analýza dystopických románů

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# Abstract

The aim of the diploma thesis is the analysis of the function of guilt and shame concerning the question of masochism in dystopian novels *Brave New World* by A. Huxley, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by G. Orwell, *The Handmaid's Tale* by M. Attwood and *The Children of Men* by P.D. James. The theoretical part of the thesis mentions the principal components of dystopian literature, including the notion of subservience, using critical secondary sources. The thesis subsequently deals with the individual authors, their professional and personal careers, and their established works' contexts. The thesis further explores the role of guilt and shame in dystopian fiction and explores manipulative mechanisms inducing guilt and its internalisation. The practical part consists of the comparative analysis of individual novels, where the subject of the study is subservience, collective guilt, and individual guilt. The conclusion then summarises the findings of the comparative analysis.



**Key words**: dystopia, speculative fiction, Orwell, Huxley, Attwood, James



# Anotace

Cílem této diplomové práce je analýza funkce viny a studu ve vztahu k otázce masochismu v dystopických románech *Brave New World* A. Huxleyho, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* G. Orwella, *The Handmaid's Tale* M. Attwoodové a *The Children of Men* P.D. Jamesové. Teoretická část práce zmiňuje základní prvky dystopické literatury, včetně motivu podřízenosti, s kritickým využitím sekundárních zdrojů. Dále se věnuje jednotlivým autorům, jejich profesní i osobní dráze a kontextům jejich děl. Práce se následně věnuje roli motivu viny a studu v dystopické fikci, prozkoumává manipulativní mechanismy vzbuzující vinu a její internalizaci. Praktickou část tvoří komparativní analýza jednotlivých románů, ve kterých je zkoumána podřízenost a kolektivní vina, stejně jako vina jednotlivců. Závěr shrnuje poznatky a zjištění plynoucí z komparativní analýzy.



**Klíčová slova**: dystopie, spekulativní fikce, Orwell, Huxley, Attwoodová, Jamesová

# Contents

# Introduction

Dystopian literature admittedly belongs among the more promising genres, given the plethora of influential and thought-provoking works covering the 20th Century alone. Rightly so, considering the notions such works bring forth and present to the reader in often bludgeoning ways. The term dystopia denotes a "bad place", according to a direct translation from Greek[1]. Many authors push further with their prose, creating hellish, almost unimaginable living standards beneath strenuous conditions.

In addition, the frequent theme of fear and submission commonly stands at the foundations of a dystopian setting. The power dynamics are displayed clearly, dictating further plot development and the protagonists' ultimate fate. Laden with propaganda, complemented with either censorship or renunciation of information and perhaps the most frightening concept, losing one's individuality. Whether Orwell's callous *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or Huxley's subtler yet more suggesting *Brave New World*, the outline is often similar enough.

One may sometimes wonder what lures readers to such bleak and, quite frankly, depressing scenarios devoid of hope or with but a sliver of amelioration. The maturity of the themes mentioned above might be among the pivotal arguments. Dystopian works often make for thrilling and engaging stories where suffering and unfortunate fates merely deepen the story's substance, adding another layer to an unfolding tragedy.

The other principal reason is substantially darker. Human beings have always felt attracted to the idea of power; it compels as much as impedes, beckons and entices in various ways. The benefits of power, especially power over others, are tempting for multitudes. Ethical values might erode in the face of obvious superiority if given time and space.

[1]The term derives from the expression "Utopia", first mentioned in the work of the same name by Sir Thomas More (Utopia, 1516), who drew from Plato and his titular work *Republic*. More noticed the etymological definition of "utopia" as "no place", and pointed to the similarity with the term "eutopia", which in Greek means "good place", leading to his conception of utopia as an unattainable, virtually impossible society. More's *Utopia* extends on Plato's ruminations about justice and a just society.

Moral baseline might shift, as many dystopian works suggest; benevolence is not monochromatic at its base, but to sway it towards hostility is not only not impossible, it is likely. Furthermore, the mechanism between the holder of power and the subject is psychologically complex.

The thesis mainly explores the complicated relationship between subservience and a masochistic sense of self-loathing in a selection of dystopian novels from acclaimed authors. The title "*Guilt and shame*" refers to the psychological disposition of characters, manipulated and trapped in a vicious cycle of mental torment.

# 1. Subservience as the propellant of dystopian setting

The authoritarian regimes in dystopian fiction operate through various oppressive structures, primarily based upon one-sided and clear power dynamics. These dynamics consist mainly of a well-considered system of social supervision, allowing for total domination over the masses.

This social control is realized mainly by implementing manipulative techniques of fearmongering, propaganda, constant surveillance, censorship, indoctrination and implacable social norms.

## 1.1 Relinquishment of liberty

The key component of most dystopian fiction is the abolishment of human rights and freedom. The following text provides a brief insight into the works of several prominent authors who deal with the notion of liberty; B.F. Skinner, Judith Shklar, Erich Fromm and Friedrich Nietzsche respectively.

When it comes to the notion of free will and liberty, B.F. Skinner, foremost behaviourist, comes to fore and provides valid remarkable if provoking arguments surpassing previous philosophical discourse.

Skinner in his seminal work *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* establishes his reasoning on his experience with behaviouristic psychology and proposes a rather controversial opinion; human beings are not autonomous and therefore should be supervised by special institutions that would govern their behaviour and replace any other institutions. The purpose is twofold; provision of a more suitable governance based on the scientific findings, and a way to preserve our culture in the course of time.[2]

Suffice it to say, Skinner overly simplified affairs as there is a plethora of possible issues, hiding in open sight even for a dilettante. Determinism certainly plays a substantial role in his rationale. Considering Skinner's denial of free will, one's behaviour should be conditioned and

[2] SCRIBNER, P. H., *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, (in) Ethics, Vol. 83, No. 1, The University of Chicago Press 1972, p. 13.

reinforced using technology and science. The concept of autonomy is to Skinner only a string of behavioural patterns.

Punishment might result in negative reinforcement, so a viable solution is either the application of drugs to mitigate violence, or an invasive surgery serving the same purpose. Skinner condemns punishment on one hand, on the other admits its benefits. To Skinner, it serves as an indirect control over one's behaviour, and works only when positive reinforcements as that really makes the difference.[3]

J. Shklar in her essay *Liberalism of Fear* argues that the term *liberalism* is often abused or misused and thus she proposes that liberalism has one paramount aim; securing the political conditions necessary for the exercise of personal freedom.[4] Shklar further argues that liberalism does not correspond with toleration nor is it tied to any religion, but links its development with science, despite the obvious differences between the two.[5]

*Cruelty* is another key concept Shklar depicts. Distinct from sadism, this particular cruelty is inbuilt in the system of coercion of practically every government. Systematic fear on the other hand is a condition in and of itself, one that denies freedom; yet the ruling body must use measures to avoid greater cruelties.[6]

Shklar thus accepts sort of a lesser evil in order to avoid more serious crimes or vices. "Liberalism of fear" is thus a mechanism of punishment, working upon fear of retribution. The positive is the reduction of crime rate, where the-would be perturbator worries about the consequences and avoids committing the deed in the first place.

There is a darker edge, of course, as even a slight perversion of liberalism of fear eliminates all dissent. What can be beneficial in a time of crisis could

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[3] SCRIBNER, P. H., *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, (in) Ethics, Vol. 83, No. 1, The University of Chicago Press 1972, p. 20.
[4] ROSENBLUM, N. (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 21.
[5] Ibid, p. 25.
[6] Ibid, p. 29-30.

easily turn into persecution of certain interest groups and state-approved violence against them.

E. Fromm postulates in his titular work *Escape From Freedom* that freedom does make humans independent, but invites a powerful isolation to such an extent that one yearns to ultimately escape it. Fromm's perception of the concept of twofold.

Freedom "from" resonates with liberation, but in Fromm's eyes its quite the opposite. External bindings are removed, totalitarian government overthrown, but an overwhelming degree of negative freedom can ultimately lead to a disaster as it leads into yet another subjugation. Balancing its counterpart is positive freedom "to" – an avenue to create, choose and express the full potential of one's personality.[7]

The question remains, how to utilize freedom? Fromm offers a way to reconnect without eliminating individuality, through two simple choices. Either choose to embrace freedom or escape from it; in other words, find a way to utilize positive freedom through prolific work, or retreat away and sacrifice individuality, accept the chains to avoid the pressure of thinking for oneself.[8]

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by F. Nietzsche introduces many influential concepts concerning philosophy. Among these is his perception of evolution, that is through espousing aspiration; the individual can evolve doing so, reaching for it.[9]

Freedom according to Nietzsche is closely tied to his concept of "will to power"; the supposed propellant behind all desires and acts. His conception allows to attain freedom by means of personal ability derived from aspiration. The individuals who outstrip disparate limitations and shortcomings can gain and shape their actual destiny as they overcome themselves, becoming "overman" (Übermensch).[10]

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[7] FROMM, E., *Escape from Freedom*, New York: Avon Books, 1965, p. 283-284.
[8] Ibid, p. 161.
[9] DEL CARO, A. – PIPPIN, R. B. (ed.) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra A Book for All and None*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2006, p. xxvii.
[10] Ibid, p. xxvi.

Exerting one's will also means asserting power, as Zarathustra explicitly states;

> *'Wherever I found the living, there I found the will to power; and even in the will of the serving I found the will to be master.*
>
> *The weaker is persuaded by its own will to serve the stronger, because it wants to be master over what is still weaker: this is the only pleasure it is incapable of renouncing.*
>
> *And as the smaller gives way to the greater, in order for it to have its pleasure and power over the smallest, so too the greatest gives way, and for the sake of power it risks – life itself.'*[11]

Nietzsche perceives freedom as a sort of transformation of individuals able to master both their strong points and weaknesses. Such beings then may forge their values notwithstanding principles of morality, as those Nietzsche openly challenges at every turn as flawed and overly restrictive.

[11] DEL CARO, A. – PIPPIN, R. B. (ed.) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra A Book for All and None*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2006, p. 89.

## 1.2 Unchanging state of affairs (Status Quo in aeternum)

It stands to reason that the status quo represents a wholly ideal state of affairs in a dystopian society. The unchanging course protects the power structure from all intrusions, as the populace essentially negates the possibility of dissent.

The notional self-propelled circle of obedience where subservience sustains the regime, as the wheels turn self-perpetuated by servility and a false sense of security. The notion of security originates from the belief in a sure safeguard from the consequences of those refusing to comply. The vicious cycle is then genuinely endless, as the masses both allow the consolidation of power and ensure the suppression of any future discord.

One way or another, the upper echelons of a governing body ensure and maintain existing conditions as a means to an end. The Inner Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* could ensure the well-being of all Outer Party members. But for what purpose exactly?

All sorts of shortages preserve docility, frustration directed towards supposed or real foes, where the distinction hardly even matters, and hate is merchandised by those in power with staggering abandon.

The staleness and constant state of affairs are the distinctive characteristics of dystopian fiction, as it is a perversion of sorts. That is to say, a utopian society is chasing perfection, as it, among other benefits, entails a minimal crime rate, reduced propensity for violence, and perhaps even longer lifespans and further nearly miraculous boons.

However, such an undertaking is extreme and inevitably invites disaster; "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall".[12] Desires call for regular fulfilment, but what might happen if one provided an ultimate solution, a constant fulfilment meeting every possible craving? Would it not turn the utopia upside down, making it a hellscape devoid of genuine sensation? Artificial and inescapable dullness, just like *Oceania* or *The World State*.

[12] King James Bible, *Proverbs 16:18*

Frankly, both settings clearly illustrate this idea, albeit each in its way. *Oceania* might have started as a utopian vision where the initial stability defined by Big Brother ultimately evolved into an unconditional love-hate relationship. *The World State* setting is slightly more complicated due to its satirical essence, yet all the more familiar. Its society is frightening, despite all the downplaying and preposterous nomenclature. Perhaps the most disturbing reflection is that our society is still getting closer to Huxley's invention.

## 1.3 Addiction and guilt

Works of dystopian literature often implement twisted value systems stemming from carefully applied psychological encroachment. The victims of these power structures, representing the majority population, are manipulated into a sense of dependency via subtle machinations or blunt and forceful intimidation. Although the means are various, the result is the same. The individuals are not only subjugated to the ruling power; they develop a potent and particularly destructive addiction mingled with paranoia.

Röhr observes this phenomenon and notes the conflict between autonomy and addition, a vastly complicated relationship from a psychological standpoint. "Michael Kohlhaas syndrome", as Röhr claims, illustrates an individual suffering from a self-destructive compulsion, presented by a character introduced by German author Heinrich von Kleist. Kleist published a novella titled *Michael Kohlhaas*, inspired by an authentic historical character bearing the same name.[13]

Historical Kohlhaas was a merchant in the 16th Century whose dispute with a Saxon noble led to a feud against the whole of Saxony. Kohlhaas pursued vengeance with fanatical fervour and committed severe crimes along the way. Forming a band of vigilantes, Kohlhaas sought to achieve vindication yet ironically became one of the most notorious felons of his time.[14]

Famously, Martin Luther, already a prominent figure at the time, became personally involved due to his attempts to reprimand Kohlhaas for his actions. The destruction caused by Kohlhaas came to an end with his inevitable capture and prosecution. Publicly broken on the wheel, the merchant's tale came to a grim conclusion in 1540. Kleist chose this figure as a medium to express dissatisfaction with Prussia's state of affairs in the early 19th Century.[15]

Kohlhaas and his story still captivate. He had it all, led a reasonably successful life and healthy children and then squandered it all for the sake of a relatively

[13] RÖHR, H. P., *Závislost: jak ji porozumět a jak ji překonat*, Praha: Portál 2015, p. 98.
[14] OXENFORD, J., *Tales from the German: Comprising Specimens from the Most Celebrated Authors*, London: Chapman and Hill, 1844, p. xi.
[15] Ibid, p. x.

trivial grievance. Indeed, he loses two horses, which is not a slight loss. On the other hand, is it genuinely worth the embarkment on a personal war?

Kleist pictures him as a tragic hero, albeit with an inflated sense of justice, ultimately proving his downfall. Antigone of Greek Mythology feels similar in many respects; both meet an ignominious fate due to their overreaching sense of justice. However, Antigone becomes a victim of machinations, and Kohlhaas becomes a monster, a much worse evildoer than the one who offended him in the first place.

Röhr relates the syndrome principally to a confrontation with authority, firstly, the parental authority. The individual might first face authoritarian behaviour, usually on the father's part. Ultimately his actions aim to gain affection and acceptance, which leads to a repetitive circle of conflicts without an apparent resolution. Power struggles then occur regularly, with destructive consequences.

Although Röhr offers many examples of destructive patterns, several seem particularly interesting; a tendency to feel inadequate and unfree, the need to partake in evidently harmful activities, the need to feel included in power struggles, and the tendency to doubt oneself along with active sabotage in self-destructive impulse.[16]

It is worth mentioning that Röhr views this condition as pathological and severe concerning addiction and essential to actual medicine. Nevertheless, it translates well into a dystopian setting, where the masses act abnormally, and self-destructive impulses underline the atmospherics of a given work and the message it tries to convey. The principal reason it functions is not necessarily in the sheer horror of the unimaginable scenario but in the realisation of the possibility of it.

Addictions present a severe matter in our society, with many resources spent annually to lessen the issue worldwide. Still, the matter ties innately to humanity and will not go away at a whim. It is all too possible for an educated

[16] RÖHR, H. P., *Závislost: jak ji porozumět a jak ji překonat*, Praha: Portál 2015, p. 99-100.

and decent individual to slip into addiction, with far-reaching consequences. Some do control their addiction for the time being, and some drag themselves out of its clutches, while others avoid it meticulously.

The relevance of addiction concerning dystopian settings lies not in the addiction itself but in accompanying factors, mainly the motif of guilt. The guilt that addiction includes is devastating. The shame associated with admitting the existing addiction is one thing, but the responsibility and consequences of the actions under the influence of addiction have a much more significant impact.

Röhr classifies "secret programmes" which govern how humans perceive themselves and their immediate reality. These programs are in opposition, creating disharmony and thus pivotally affecting the quality of life. Röhr likens them to an internal monologue that occurs daily. Every harmful programme relates to a hurtful memory and might trigger a particular dynamic.[17]

We tend to construct "antiprogramme", essentially a coping mechanism to impede the full emotional impact of the former. As Röhr details, this solution is inefficient as it does not solve the core issue; the original concern remains, and the individual merely accommodates the expectations and requirements of the environs.[18]

Self-worth naturally relates to the concept of one's body, as the appearance assessed as attractive garners more attention and assuredness. On the other hand, unattractive people may have firmer self-perception as they never felt the same pressure and futile chase for perfection.

Huxley immersed *Brave New World's* masses in adoration and cult of perfection, where the divergent face ridicule at the very least and ostracism at worst. The established ideal requires tremendous effort, despite the wondrous technology and all benefits of advanced science. People are directly addicted to a drug called "soma", but the true addiction stems from warped values, which they try desperately to uphold.

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[17] RÖHR, H. P., *Nedostatečný pocit vlastní hodnoty*, Praha: Portál 2015, p. 16.
[18] Ibid, p. 19.

Orwell reduced his populace into chattel purposefully bereft of a sense of self-perception, grounded through carefully distributed hate and violence, with constant and ever-present surveillance. Atwood crafted a bleak vision of a totalitarian society oppressing women, and James brings utter despair with a sixth extinction scenario.

However, all of these novels feature characters and elements that are, in one way or another, supporting the oppressive structure, heedless of their benefit and the mistreatment they experience. This chapter provided merely an introduction, as the particularities require explication, detailed in the practical part of the thesis.

# 2. Biographical background of the authors

The analysis should include a precursory treatise on the lives and specificities of selected authors, as it was primarily their respective affairs and encounters which helped form distinct techniques, explicit context and particular style, differentiating their crucial works and solidifying them as classical in the lenses of dystopian literature.

The following subchapters provide a brief discourse with an overview of the individual authors, their experiences, and works relevant to the thesis topic.

## 2.1 Aldous Huxley

Aldous Leonard Huxley belonged to an established and prestigious lineage whose scientific pedigree was only rivalled by their literary accomplishments. Several members of the Huxley family achieved great renown, and Aldous was sure to maintain the tradition.

However, Aldous focused on his literary career, unlike, for instance, his grandfather T. H. Huxley, who was known primarily as a world-class scientist and, to a lesser degree, a prolific writer and critic. Admittedly, T.H. Huxley also significantly influenced his grandson, despite the two never having a chance to meet on philosophical grounds, as the former died when Aldous was but one year old.[19]

Nevertheless, the way Aldous implemented scientific findings into his work was nearly unprecedented and significantly elevated the impact of his work. So did the satire and intellectual barbs often permeating his prose. Huxley likewise remembered the merits of his predecessors, praising his grandfather for the implementation of allusion and alliteration, calling his prose "quite stunning banality".[20]

[19] SION, R. T., *Aldous Huxley and the Search for Meaning: Study of the Eleven Novels*, London: McFarland, 2010, p. 14.
[20] PURTON, V. (ed), *Darwin, Tennyson and Their Readers: Exploration in Victorian Literature and Science*, London: Anthem Press 2013, p. 160.

Aside from the theoretical appliance of scientific elements, Huxley also fundamentally understood technology and its possibilities. Not only can technology curb the populace, but with proper application also influences and manipulates minds. Huxley's control mechanism, a drug called "soma", essentially causes complete intellectual lethargy in the guise of pleasure, where pleasure becomes the end in and of itself. The need for coercion reduces to a bare minimum thanks to complacency derived from pleasure and a faux sense of security.[21]

In the latter part of his life, Huxley took an interest in experimentation; mysticism, in particular, drew his attention. His comparative investigation resulted in the study *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), which offers a restrained but wholly relevant take on Western and Eastern mysticism. Huxley approximates the teachings of Taoists, Brahmin, and Mohamed in an easily digestible manner.

In the 1950s, Huxley's infatuation with mysticism grew more pronounced, and his wife, Maria Nys Huxley, followed suit. Both engaged in so-called "Tuesday Evenings", a series of breezy experiments across various fields, such as parapsychology, mesmerism, hypnotism and auto-hypnotism. One possible reason for Huxley's involvement is that his iritis worsened considerably at the time being. Corresponding to the grave condition was the nature of such assemblages, with attending mediums and, according to Dunaway, magicians.[22]

Huxley's experience with the drug mescaline directly influenced the work *The Doors of Perception* (1954); it recounts his psychedelic experience, which he additionally extended in his subsequent writings. Among the drugs Huxley willingly took was also LSD, all in the name of scientific research.

Curiously, while Huxley praised mescaline and its effects of supposed illumination, LSD seemingly disturbed him. Timothy Leary, a prominent advocate of psychedelic drugs, was the primary reason. The two clashed over

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[21] BARR, B., *Aldous Huxley's Brave New World – Still a Chilling Vision After All These Years*, Michigan Law Review: The Michigan Law Review Association 2010, Vol. 108, No. 6, p. 849.

[22] DUNAWAY, D. K., *Aldous Huxley Recollected: An Oral History*, New York: Rowman Altamira 1999, p. 90.

the implementation of LSD, with Huxley quietly distancing himself from Leary, who firmly believed the drug might see the efficacy in therapeutic use.

### 2.1.1 Satirical and terrifying

Huxley's prose proves his verbal mastery, admirable depth of knowledge, and extraordinary resourcefulness. He is considered by many as a forerunner of many classic science fiction elements, such as advanced eugenics and generic enhancement, flying or, more precisely, hovering machines and a plethora of other wondrous devices and technologies.

Unlike other prominent authors of the time, such as H.G. Wells, Huxley purposefully implemented technological features to show that overuse and dependency upon technology might ultimately suppress ingrained humaneness, rendering society barren of legitimate culture. The lifestyle of World State's residents is hollow and pretentious in the extreme. The high majority live like biological automatons, devoid of genuine affection and the ability to make and much less retain meaningful relationships.

Worse still, the system actively predestines people's lives and ensures that every individual's mental and physical development proceeds according to plan, even from the outset. No one candidly gets a choice in such a matter; the Controllers designate the role, and failing to uphold one's part practically means ostracization and complete exclusion from social life.

Utter refusal among social circles conveys a punishment worse than death. All things considered, *Brave New World* paints a bleak vision. There is, of course, another angle to the issue.

Huxley tends to ridicule his characters, not only in *Brave New World* but also well beyond. A sense of careful nuance permeates his work, yet satire is usually palpable upon circumspect observation. *Brave New World* certainly is not the case, as the appellation itself has the nuance of a wildly swung sledgehammer.

Consider the protagonists and their names; "Bernard Marx", the quaint intellectual, then "Lenina Crowne" as a quasi-damsel in distress, named after Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, "Fanny Crowne", a reference to an American actress and comedian Fanny Brown, "John the Savage" who, despite his moniker, belongs among the most civilized characters in the novel, and "Helmholtz Watson", a real-life German physicist, in the story a close associate of Bernard and probably the only even-tempered personality, with the exemption of fabled Controllers, de facto rulers of the World State.

Speaking of these rulers, the novel names only a single controller, "Mustapha Mond", one of ten holding the prestigious rank. The name is more complex than the others, as there could be more connections, intentional or not.

Sir Alfred Mond, an influential British financier and politician, is the most likely designated figure. Huxley visited his revolutionary Billingham Manufacturing Plant in person, which left a lasting impression.

"Mustapha" might also reference a real-life Turkish politician Mustapha Kemal Atatürk, who almost single-handedly reorganized Turkey post World War I, becoming, among other things, its first-ever president.

The other, perhaps controversial option might link to the cognomen of Prophet Muhammad, usually translated from Arabic as "praiseworthy". *Mustafa* is an often-used variant of the Prophet's name, meaning "chosen". "Monde" is a French expression meaning "world". Reference to a founder of Islam might seem somewhat heretical, yet it makes sense in terms of the sheer influence and power Controllers hold.

*Brave New World* offers a copious share of satire and allusion, but the same virtually seeps from other works penned by Huxley.

The main character of Huxley's first novel, *Crome Yellow* (1921), is named Hercules, whose moniker is usually associated with burly and brawny men. This Hercules is merely three feet four inches tall, essentially a dwarf.

Regular-sized dogs are, therefore, the constant source of angst. Unable to cope with harsh reality and stepping from one disaster to another, Hercules chooses

seclusion and a largely private life. His progeny is, however, a regular-sized child, much to his dismay. Ultimately, Hercules and his wife commit suicide, unable and unwilling to cope when escapism convincingly fails.[23]

The novel *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), perhaps the most evident satire from Huxley's pen, is inspired by William Woodsworth, who travelled across Italy, among other countries. Huxley likewise visited Italy and spent many years there.

Although the story takes place in Italy, it forgoes Italians entirely, aside from terminology and occasional Italian poetry, and focuses on pseudo-intellectuals. Huxley himself is present in the role of Francis Chelifer but slips in and out. Language is an essential component of the novel, as it highlights the pretentious nature of the characters. Indeed, they can and do speak immaculate French, for example, yet they do so merely to bask in the supposed superiority or at least create a mental image of it.

The motivations of the individual participants are relatively cynical, if not outright sinister. Despite the dubious ambitions, the characters act so eccentrically and excessively that it is hard to take at face value.

Huxley takes the portentous aspect of their behaviour ad absurdum. Their delivery comes out hollow; they chatter without unpretending substance, and the further the plot goes, the clearer it becomes, as they never add some insight or meaningfully expand upon their ideas or offer salutary contribution on their part. It is a pose, a mere pretence, reflecting Huxley's contemporaries. These boisterous scholars are the object of his critique, and the novel aims directly at them.

[23] MECKIER, J., *Satire and Structure*, Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, University of Wisconsin Press, Autumn 1966, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 285.

### 2.1.2 The influence of Shakespeare

Huxley's sheer literary scope already received a mention, yet it would only be complete by mentioning the crucial influences. Time and time again, Huxley tackles various authors, alludes to and satirises actual historical figures and places of importance in erudite English culture.

Doing so requires an extensively refined depth of knowledge, a proper understanding of the context, and a potent source of initial inspiration. Logically, the list would be particularly long if one meant to do him justice. There are, however, a few names of extraordinary prominence. William Shakespeare is but one of them.

Shakespeare's imprint marks the very title of Huxley's preeminent novel, *Brave New World*. The titular phrase originates from Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, where one of the leading characters, Miranda, exclaims in Act 5 the following;

*'O, wonder!*

*How many goodly creatures are there here!*

*How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,*

*That has such people in't.'*

Miranda, the only woman character in the play, an island-bound daughter of Prospero, later revealed as the Duke of Milan, says so in wonder upon seeing multiple individuals who shipwreck on her father's island. Miranda cannot possibly know these people, yet seeing more of humanity sparks genuine joy. Quite the same naivety that John the Savage initially expresses upon seeing World State.

Shakespeare's influence naturally exceeds *Brave New World*; it pervades most other Huxley works in one way or another.

To illustrate, the book *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944) recreates a scene from Henry IV, the novel *Ape and Essence* (1948) owes its title to Shakespeare's

play M*easure for Measure,* a collection of essays *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* (1956) references Macbeth's soliloquies.[24]

Huxley further wrote about Shakespeare in multiple essays and, according to his presumption, Shakespeare's works directly reflect different stages of his life, where every play differs fundamentally and expresses various facets of his religious outlook.

Huxley's literary career follows a similar convention he credited Shakespeare with. The four-fold pattern goes as follows; a workshop or apprentice stage, the triumph of the mature technician, a descent to the depths (period of tragedies), and the final period "time on the heights".[25]

Meckier further argues that Huxley's output followed this pattern, albeit with some liberties and minor divergence, with the third stage depicted as particularly problematic due to the darker tone of some works, such as *Those Barren Leaves*.[26]

In any case, Shakespeare left a lasting impression on Huxley, who frequently revisited his writing technique and perception of what he considered perennial philosophy.

[24] MECKIER, J., *Shakespeare Quarterly: Aldous Huxley and Shakespeare*, Oxford University Press, Spring 1971, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 129.
[25] Ibid, p. 129.
[26] Ibid, p. 130.

## 2.2 George Orwell

Eric Arthur Blair led an extraordinary and coloured life, as his varied and painful ventures largely shaped his work. Personal involvement in the Spanish Civil war hardened his spirits, instilling lasting defiance against totalitarianism.

Political verve of equal calibre garnered him many opponents and staunch disputants. A not-so-distant view of Orwell's work and life is somewhat polarized, with some, such as John Rodden (*The Politics of Literary Reputation*, 1999), practically venerating him and others placing much circumspection, like Scott Lucas (Orwell, 2003).[27]

Blair was undoubtedly peculiar, ostensibly striving for friction and never lastingly attaching himself to interest groups; be it British intellectual echelons or ranks of nationalists, to whom he undeniably belonged despite firm denial.[28]

Robert Colls carefully observed the contradictory mixture that created scholarly Old Etonian Orwell. Colls was but one among many who tried to decipher this curious individual. Certainly, Colls was not the first writer to do so, yet he provided a thorough study diverging from a conventional biography as he deftly analyses various points of Orwell's life and provides an indicative commentary concerning individual works.[29]

*The Road to Wigan Pier* is a condemnatory pronouncement of Orwell's outrage at the destitute conditions under which workers must function in heavily industrialized northern England.

As Colls points out, however, Orwell could not connect to the workers personally, despite his indignation. Colls further points out that Orwell stayed in Wigan only for a few weeks and focused solely on the statistical data, such as the unemployment rate, poverty level and arduous labour in the mines.[30]

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[27] DAVIDSON, P., *George Orwell: A Life in Letters*, New York: Liveright, 2013, p. 5.
[28] COLLS, R., *George Orwell, English Rebel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013 p. 9.
[29] RITSCHEL, D., *Reviewed Work(s): George Orwell: English Rebel by Robert Colls*, (in) Journal of British Studies, Cambridge University Press, October 2014, Volume 53, No. 4, p. 1079.
[30] Ibid, p. 1079-1080.

The analytical distance he applied meant that he completely neglected the working class's culture and its self-governing bodies. While providing a nearly precise diagnostic overview, singling out the essential human element from the equation made his effort relatively shallow.

Undoubtedly, *The Road to Wigan Pier* proved to be a very influential work as it does tackle the actual problems and merciless reality of the time, yet it could have been so much more. At the same time, the book in question underscores the point of Orwell being a complex and contradictory man.

The hardening of Orwell's spirits began in Burma. Despite his studies at the established Eton College, financial tribulations forced him to work for Indian Imperial Police in Burma in 1922.

The service lasted five and a half years and practically ended with Orwell getting infected with dengue fever. Recovery went well, and Blair ultimately decided against returning to Burma.

It was arguably the right decision, considering his past and severe pneumonia complications. Orwell might have died far sooner in the tropical and humid climate; even if he had not faced such an extremity, nascent respiratory difficulties might have become more tenacious and inadvertently hindered his quality of life.

Omnipresent mistreatment and misconduct of the local civilian population nurtured an apparent disdain for imperialism, which Orwell shows to an extent in *Burmese Days* (1933) and his later work *Shooting an Elephant* (1936). Aside from the oppression and humiliation of the locals, he also witnessed first-hand the pure disdain of the policed populace towards their supposed guardians turned overseers.

Following the lasting experience came another traumatic experience during the Spanish Civil War, illustrated in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). Troubled Blair would see yet another conflict, as, during World War II, he briefly served as a commentator for BBC, later as a journalist and editor for Tribute and later still connected to a British newspaper, *The Observer*.

Pneumonia ultimately claimed Blair's life, already tormenting him for several years and considerably worsening in January 1949. According to Newsinger, Orwell did not expect to die at that time but anticipated invalidity and understandably hoped for the best.

He even wrote a few complaints about "upper English class voices" and their "fatuous self-confidence".[31] Regardless of his stubbornness, on 21 January 1950, a massive haemorrhage of the lungs permanently concluded Orwell's story.

### 2.2.1 The use of language

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* comes out as an attack on the closing years of the first half of the 20th Century. The previous and almost equally famous novel, *Animal Farm*, already assaulted the Soviet Union, particularly Stalinism and its supporters. Orwell became alarmed upon seeing the amount of backing Stalin received in the closing days of World War II and later on.

Orwell was unable to countenance a possible aggravation of political relations between the Soviet Union and Britain; it was beyond his reach as the Cold War fully started only after his demise. Portents of a future crisis appeared with the tenure of Harry Truman, yet the global situation escalated later. Tensions arose primarily at the outset of the Berlin crisis, but then again, Orwell's condition worsened considerably by that time.

While *Animal Farm* pictured a percussive yet satirical strike at what Orwell saw as a perversion of socialism, the other novel represented an all-out assault without any palliate. Abound with a sombre tone, describing the harsh landscape, pervasive filth and grime complimenting the sensation of omnipresent desperation, which seeps from every facet of the novel.

Orwell created a particularly devious dystopian vista using carefully implemented language and verbiage; the fictional language called Newspeak is

[31] NEWSINGER, J., *Hope Lies in the Proles*, London: Pluto Press 2018, p. 135.

the primary reason for the state of affairs. Authority over written and spoken language gives the ruling Party the principal leverage.

Technology certainly poses a significant asset in securing the totalitarian regime, but ultimately it comes down to an ever-decreasing lexicon designated to dull people's perception of reality. Twisting then shifts into outright manipulation as verity is provided solely by the Party.

### 2.2.2 Newspeak

Newspeak is the official language in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and is the primary means of encroaching destruction of individuality within boundaries of Oceania, future Britain, as it intends to replace Oldspeak (the Standard English) by the year 2050.[32]

Aside from the communicative and descriptive function, Newspeak purposefully restricts independent forms of thought; every meaning has a designated expression and no other interpretation, excluding any alternate meaning. Individual words are stripped of unorthodox meaning, as Orwell demonstrates in the word "free";

> *The word free still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as "This dog is free from lice" or "This field is free from weeds". It could not be used in its old sense of "politically free" or "intellectually free", since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts, and were therefore of necessity nameless.*[33]

Newspeak exceeds the boundaries of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as given its nature, there is a particular propensity of implementation of similar language by political interest groups, but primarily by left-wing and right-wing narratives. Left-wing media typically connect Orwell's notion of surveillance to the digital age's infringements of privacy rights, while right-wing media associates Newspeak with a synonym for "political correctness".[34]

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[32] ORWELL, G., *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 312.
[33] Ibid, p. 313.
[34] OLIVESI, A., *„Just as Orwell said": The Emergence of a „Dystopian Framing" in French Conservative Media in 2010s*, SFRS Review, 2020, Vol. 50, No. 4., p.120.

## 2.3 Margaret Atwood

Margaret Eleanor Atwood fits perfectly into the notional list of most acclaimed authors of belles-Lettres. Her greatness, however, far exceeds fine writing in contemporary discourse, considering her many contributions in various fields across her storied and illustrious career. Aside from being recognised as a prolific author, she impacted environmental activism and cemented herself as a proponent of feminism.

Although born in Ottawa, Atwood spent much of her formative years in the isolated region of northern Quebec. Her father, Carl Edmund Atwood, was an acclaimed forest entomologist and zoology professor whose research demanded particular habitats and conditions. Therefore, young Atwood travelled back and forth and could not attend school regularly, as she spent days in the wild either with her father or awaiting his return.

Under normal circumstances a significant disadvantage, but in this case, quite the opposite, as it allowed Margaret to read insatiably and later discuss literature extensively. Additionally, her mother provided tutelage and Atwood herself willingly committed to her father's library, reading classical literature and historical titles, from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to a biography of Rommel or Churchill's ruminations on war.[35]

Atwood married twice; Jim Polk in 1968 and an accomplished Canadian author Graham Gibson in 1973. The second marriage lasted for over four decades until Gibson died in 2019 due to dementia. His worsening condition and eventual demise understandably left a potent sense of defeat, and Atwood long brooded on her loss. In an interview for *The Telegraph*, Atwood acknowledged Gibson's contribution and lasting dedication to her and her life-long work, stating the following;

> *'Every woman writer should be married to Graeme Gibson.'*[36]

[35] COOKE, N., *Margaret Atwood; A Biography*, Toronto: ECW Press, 1998, p. 25.
[36] HOBY, H. [pub. 2013 18-8]., The Telegraph: *Margaret Atwood: interview* [online]. [cit. 2023 18-6]. Available from: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10246937/Margaret-Atwood-interview.html

### 2.3.1 Works and literary merit

To no one's surprise, Atwood already decided to become a writer in her childhood and produced some of her earliest writing during her studies at high school, influenced by E. A. Poe, M. Shelley and D.H. Lawrence, among others.[37]

Firstly, Atwood firmly established Canadian identity through her works, detailed mainly in her essay *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Atwood notes that Canadian literature amid the 1970s lacks the presence and firm sense of belonging of British or American counterparts whose historical background is undeniably more affluent. Still, Atwood almost bids for the more remarkable temerity and argues that existing Canadian literature also defines its culture.

She deters from the academic approach, preferring to use her writing skills to underline her point, as many historical accounts already delved into the matter. Atwood admits the work was initially supposed to be a handbook for Canadian literature, but such an undertaking would feel hollow without asking why; why study "him" or "this" and "What is Canadian about Canadian literature, and why should we be bothered?"[38]

Survival refers to the cultural survival French Canada experienced with the British took over. Atwood then proposes the notion of victimisation dating back to the colonial age. Survival despite the external and internal obstacles; external represented physical difficulties in the open, while internal denotes difficulties regarding spiritual survival.[39]

Another key term is "nature", which Atwood likens to the sensation of distrust and suspicion, mainly among Canadian authors, and further explores relations between Nature and Death. English-speaking immigrants and their works get a mention, supported by a comparative insight into the concept of heroism;

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[37] COOKE, N., *Margaret Atwood; A Biography*, Toronto: ECW Press, 1998, p. 37.
[38] ATWOOD, *M., Survival; A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Toronto: House of Anansi, 1972, p. 11.
[39] Ibid, p. 32.

American outlaws as rebels against authority and English heroes clashing in ideals and power struggles, whereas Canadians die by accident.[40]

Atwood presented a compelling case for a most intricate affair, which might be outdated by the current discourse, but certainly deserves attention and careful examination. Atwood smartly chose nonchalant yet cultivated language, and the work is easy to read even by inexpert readers. Not only did she compose a respectable account, but she also made it accessible to a broader audience. Still, it is but one of her exploits.

When discussing Atwood, her fiction works come into prominence most often. The novel *The Handmaid's Tale* is often presented as a typical example of science fiction. Atwood manifested a pronounced distaste for labels, including literary genres, but ultimately conceded that the novel in question relates to science fiction. She further distinguished her work as an example of speculative fiction as she stated the following in an article *Aliens have taken the place of angels*;

> *'For me, the science fiction label belongs on books with things in them that we can't yet do, such as going through a wormhole in space to another universe; and speculative fiction means a work that employs the means already to hand, such as DNA identification and credit cards, and that takes place on Planet Earth.'* [41]

Atwood's reasoning is sound and quite discernible. As she later pointed out, the discrepancy is tricky and largely depends upon the reader's preferences and understanding. Science fiction is, for Atwood, too complex to discern into a mere category, which she denounces along with noted writer Bruce Sterling, de facto founder of the cyberpunk subgenre.[42]

One idea Atwood proposes is that imagined landscapes and characters date back to antiquity or different periods in human history. Even peculiar items,

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[40] ATWOOD, M., *Survival; A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Toronto: House of Anansi, 1972, p. 166.

[41] ATWOOD, M., The Guardian: *Aliens have taken the place of angels* [online]. [cit. 2023 17-6]. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/film/2005/jun/17/sciencefictionfantasyandhorror.margaretatwood

[42] ATWOOD, M., *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, New York: Nan A. Talese, 2011, p. 7.

such as a cloak of invisibility, a trope commonly used in fantasy, may, according to Atwood, originate from knightly orders, later turned into a magician's cloak and ultimately into a superhero costume that provides supplementary abilities to its wielder.[43]

### 2.3.2 Relation to Feminism

As established earlier, Atwood was not fond of labels. Labels followed her throughout her life, constrained her opportunities and created appreciable pressure. Society placed exacting expectations on women and precisely restricted their roles.

A woman in the times of Atwood's youth had two possible choices; focusing on either having a family and sacrificing any other personal desires or committing solely to one's career. Margaret opted to refuse this concept, doubtlessly inspired by her latitudinarian mother. An unusual personality wholly defied the stereotype of a Canadian housewife.[44]

Atwood expressed her discomfort with labels in the collection of her essays titled *Second Words* (1982). One essay in particular, *On Being A Woman Writer*, describes her sentiment tellingly, with Atwood scoffing at the notion of women being unable to get over the idea that they should stay home.[45]

Feminine notions firmly resonated in her work, famously notable within her well-established work, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). The novel came out amidst Second Wave feminism, and Atwood illustrated the gender-related deficiency women faced regularly taken to the extreme, as the female characters face a complete loss of identity. The political subtext is a cautionary tale of what might transpire, likely inspired by her political experience. Atwood continues to participate actively in politics, and the novel arguably reflects her observations.

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[43] ATWOOD, M., *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, New York: Nan A. Talese, 2011, p. 25.
[44] COOKE, N., *Margaret Atwood; A Biography*, Toronto: ECW Press 1998, p. 43.
[45] THOMAS, P. L., (ed.) *Reading, Learning, Teaching Margaret Atwood: Vol. 6*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007, p. 7.

Despite the apparent agreement with many of the feminist movement's intents, Atwood encountered a backlash in 2016 after a controversy surrounding the University of British Columbia.

The associate professor, Steven Galloway, faced allegations of sexual misconduct, resulting in public suspension without due process. Atwood was among the authors castigating the action in an open letter. In the ensuing investigation, the judge cleared Galloway of the charges, and the University of British Columbia paid compensation for privacy violations and damage to his reputation.[46]

Signatories faced major critique, resulting in many withdrawing and distancing themselves. Atwood, however, firmly upheld her initial position and wrote an essay in defence titled *Am I a Bad Feminist*?;

> *'My fundamental position is that women are human beings, with the full range of saintly and demonic behaviour this entails, including criminal ones.'*[47]

Atwood further continues by defining "Good" and "Bad" Feminists and "witch" language used against her, which also included denouncement of the MeToo movement, earning Atwood much ire. She concludes her essay with the following lines;

> *'A war among women, as opposed to a war on women, is always pleasing to those who do not wish women well. This is a very important moment. I hope it will not be squandered.'*[48]

Regardless of her somewhat controversial status in the present day, Atwood is certainly not an advocate of misogyny nor a "Bad Feminist". Her perception seems more intricate, and she openly leans to condemning absolutes such as one-sided, discriminatory discourse leading to pointless

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[46] FREEMAN, H. [pub. 2022 19-2]., *Playing with fire: Margaret Atwood on Feminism, Culture Wars and Speaking her Mind*, [online]. [cit. 2023 17-6]. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/books/ng-interactive/2022/feb/19/margaret-atwood-on-feminism-culture-wars

[47] ATWOOD, M., [pub. 2018 13-1; upd. 2020 9-7], *Am I a Bad Feminist?* [online]. [cit. 2023 17-6]. Available from: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/am-i-a-bad-feminist/article37591823/

[48] Ibid.

disputes. Although she extensively wrote about the notion of victimisation, albeit in a different context, the refusal to apply victim mentality regarding her stance on feminism is palpable.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Atwood came from an unconventional family, and she was a maverick of sorts. Healthy female role models, a respectful father, and the unique experience of her formative years moulded Atwood into a curious and thoughtful individual. Her female characters have varied personalities not confined to norms, as she regards fictional female characters lacking ambition and drive to make a meaningful impact.

## 2.4 Phyllis Dorothy James

The Right Honourable, The Baroness James of Holland Park, Phyllis Dorothy James, was an acclaimed English author and novelist best known for the series of fourteen detective novels featuring the fictional detective Adam Dalgliesh.

James was born in Oxford into an English middle-class family that struggled financially. The monetary situation severely limited the family's opportunities, so James could ill-afford studies besides high school teaching. Furthermore, her father, Sidney Victor James, never supported the idea of women attaining higher education. James had to start working in a regional tax office as early as sixteen to support the family, mainly her siblings Monica and Edward. Later on, James worked as an assistant stage manager at the Festival Theatre in Cambridge.[49]

James married a successful physician, Ernest Connor White, resulting in two daughters, Clare and Jane, born in 1942 and 1944, respectively. Idyll would not last, however, because Ernest served in England's armed forces during World War II. While he did return, he did so as a broken man, suffering from schizophrenia and ended up institutionalized.[50]

Thus, James experienced financial struggles again and applied to work for National Health Service out of pure necessity. She inevitably rose through the ranks and gained incredible wisdom and insight, significantly improving her prose in years to come. The familiarity with the medical terms and the whole structure of hospital administration, along with experience with particular procedures and laboratory techniques, widened her perspective considerably.

In the 1950s, James composed her first works, although the breakthrough came only in 1962 with her first novel "Cover Her Face". By then, James was thirty-nine, despite her early literary ambitions, similar to Margaret Atwood.

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[49] SIEBENHELLER, N., *P.D. James*, New York: Frederic Ungar Publishing, 1981, p.1.
[50] Ibid, p. 1.

Unlike Atwood, though, James had a different luxury of time and resources to produce literary works, and she also lacked meaningful support from her family, which Atwood certainly had. Not to say Atwood's life was a bed of roses, yet her experience is undoubtedly less gloomy when compared to James's. Both women dealt with distinctive difficulties and lost their partners tragically, in both cases forced to watch their husbands' mental decline.

Still, Atwood had the initial stability in her formative years in loving, albeit unconventional, parents. A solid maternal figure taught her to refuse societal norms, and her father supported her intellectual pursuits. On the other hand, James had to shape herself; the father certainly was not a wholly supportive figure, and her mother scolded her, later committed to a mental institution, leaving James to care for the rest of the family. In any case, James faced intense adversity and braved it proudly.

The crime novel *Cover Her Face* details a criminal investigation by a capable detective Adam Dalgliesh, later the mainstay of her crime fiction. The character's name originates from James' favourite English teacher, Miss Dalgliesh, whom she was unstinting with praise in her writings. When the two met later, the former teacher told James that her father was named Adam.[51]

Dalgliesh must have sparked new curiosity within James as she decided to leave the hospital board and became invested in the Criminal Division of the British Home Office. Passing the examination with flying colours, James held several positions during her tenure within Home Office.

Juvenile delinquency, in particular, appealed to her, and the understanding of the criminal environment, in general, enhanced her fiction even more with acute perception. She managed to write, work, and complement her series of crime novels, most of which feature Dalgliesh or her other prominent character, Cordelia Grey. Unlike Dalgliesh, a New Scotland Yard, she is a private detective operating in London. It stands to reason that the former garnered more substantial success than a private investigator, a woman to boot.

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[51] JAMES, P.D., *Time to Be In Earnest: A Fragment of Autobiography*, New York and Toronto: Ballantine Books, 2000, p. 48.

Given the crime fiction genre, a male detective seems more plausible to a broader audience, but the room is open for discussion. Not to mention characters such as Agatha Christie's *Miss Marple* or Elly Griffiths' *Harbinder Kaur* captured the audience with depth and ability.

### 2.4.1 Reality and mystery

Just like Atwood, James also disliked the notion of labels. Perhaps not as vehemently, yet she did refuse oversimplification.

It is also worth mentioning that James wrote under the pseudonym "P.D. James", which is concurrently the most often used designation, used more frequently than her actual name.

James admitted that the frequent question was whether she did so to conceal her sex due to the putative advantage it entails. Addressing this query, James stated the following;

> *'This certainly never entered my mind and I am grateful to have been born a woman, perhaps more from an innate positiveness rather than from any weighing-up of the relative advantages and disadvantages.'*[52]

The pretension would be pointless, as only a few readers would reject an author on such a risible principle. Would gender matter that greatly if they liked the author's writing in the first place? Probably not, as James indeed realised. She further stated the reason why she chose initials to begin with;

> *'My memory is that when the manuscript was ready to be sent off to an agent or publisher, I wrote down Phyllis James, Phyllis D. James, P.D. James, and decided that the last and shortest was enigmatic and would look best on the book spine.'*[53]

As a significant literate, James is often compared and judged against Agatha Christie. The basis is threefold; both are women, English authors, and their work concentrates on crime fiction and mystery.[54]

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[52] JAMES, P.D., *Time to Be In Earnest: A Fragment of Autobiography*, New York and Toronto: Ballantine Books, 2000, p. 11.
[53] Ibid, p. 11.
[54] SIEBENHELLER, N., *P.D. James*, New York: Frederic Ungar Publishing, 1981, p. 4.

Both implemented a somewhat lighter tone following English mystery tradition; murder is genuinely frightening, yet authors set this aspect aside, and the narrative's focus stems from puzzle-solving and a series of twists and reversals.

Miss Marple is a formidable force and a seemingly addled lady simultaneously. Such a character's improbability borders satirical or even comical, and the same applies to Marple's more famous male counterpart, Hercule Poirot.

Dalgliesh seems, in comparison, much more rooted in reality. While fictional, his characterisation makes him reasonably familiar, and James's wealth of experience plays a major contributing factor. As discussed, James had a first-hand experience with criminal surroundings and aptly implemented realistic elements, authentic methods and techniques.

This approach exceeds Dalgliesh and James's crime fiction series; it permeates her works. The dystopian novel *The Children of Men* habitually maintains the label of science fiction. However, realistic elements are present and detailed, thanks to the long-standing experience James gained throughout her career in National Health Service.

### 2.4.2 Literary style and influence

James is best known for her concern with reality and created scenarios with varied and complex characters acting upon relatable motivations, with a degree of countenance and politeness, which is also the main strength of her prose; a sort of measured and careful restraint, without overt displays of excessive rough-and-tumble action.[55]

James found the inspiration and influence, among others, in Jane Austen, who likewise preferred the sense of order and calmness with restrained civility, with implementation of psychologically complex characters, and particularised vivid descriptions.[56]

[55] SIEBENHELLER, N., *P.D. James*, New York: Frederic Ungar Publishing, 1981, p. 5.
[56] Ibid, p. 5.

# 3. *Guilt and Shame*: catalyst for masochistic tendencies

The previous chapters addressed firstly the fundamental principles of dystopian fiction and then the individual authors and the particularities of their lives. It was necessary to provide an outline to make a further detailed analysis plausible.

"Guilt and Shame", in this particular instance, refers to the behaviour of characters in dystopian settings who get trapped in a cycle of self-loathing and blame due to either inaction stemming from subservience or their unavailing actions.

The findings support the previously mentioned claims that while varied due to the broad scope of science fiction, dystopian settings usually work on several fundamental principles; subservience, abolishment of human rights, invariable state of affairs and addiction coupled with a sense of guilt.

The thesis emphasises that these notions are of equal importance and work in concert to ensure the effectiveness of a totalitarian or otherwise oppressive regime. Without subservience, there would be no relinquishment of liberty. Likewise, without the status quo in effect, addiction would not materialise and the other way around.

This complexity might be the ultimate key to understanding the dark fascination with dystopian fiction, which leads to its continuing support and favour. Dystopian novels permit taking liberties and offer much creative space, provided one can make the setting work. Given the continuing scientific scepticism and the recent elevation of totalitarian regimes worldwide, the genre is more relevant than before.

Still, what draws the public's attention to dystopian works has much in common with the innate human curiosity originating from our complex minds. The same reason that makes people enjoy detective fiction also attracts them to somewhat darker scenarios. While these are hideous and appalling in execution, albeit in a good way, they entice the reader and provide a thrilling read.

Not because the average reader is a misanthrope or a sadist but because the atmosphere and plot offer a horrific yet more or less feasible vision of the near or distant future.

We always wonder and argue about what lies ahead and what direction society shall take. A darker take might convey a cautionary message (Huxley) or a political expression (Atwood), or outright dissent (Zamyatin and Solzhenitsyn). In any case, it will captivate many learners as it did up to now.

The other reason for the steady popularity of the dystopian fiction genre might relate to the concept of Schadenfreude in a somewhat reduced gravity. Although it may seem contradictory to the previous paragraph, humans are undeniably inclined towards destructive attitudes, as history shows repeatedly.

Schadenfreude is, without surprise, distinctly depicted in negative connotations, but some of its basis resides within one's disposition as a natural quality. That same quality enables the fundamental principles detailed above that make the oppressive regime function in the first place.

Paradoxically, the readers are often frightened by dystopian landscapes, but it attracts them simultaneously and some small part of their being wonders what it would feel like to have the power of the Inner Party member or that of a Controller.

By the same token, one may wonder how one would fare among the multitudes of the oppressed. The power mechanics were always deeply fascinating, without surprise, given the circumstances of the painful progress of human civilisation.

## 3.1 The role of guilt and shame in dystopian societies

Science fiction, in general, often plays with the idea of transforming human templates into something different. To become more than human, attaining transhumanism and overcoming inherent limitations sounds tempting, despite the alienness of the notion.[57] However, nowhere does it state that it must necessarily be a positive change.

Dystopia is admittedly a darker branch of science fiction, so naturally, the notion of transhuman direction turns sour, and the original idea gets twisted. No longer a vista of betterment but a device of subjugation, as the limitations are enhanced and reinforced.

In a debased way, an individual becomes more than human, able to overcome unimaginable odds and withstand inhumane treatment. The loss is apparent, however, as one loses much more than actually gains, and even worse, turns into a mere apparition of a human.

From the perspective of an oppressor, this is an ideal state of being; the individual gets broken and transformed into a servile subject. The realisation of this procedure requires a potent tool to enforce the required societal norms and directives successfully.

The majority of proverbial dystopian fiction inclines towards the weaponization of emotions. The cultivation and careful application of powerful negative emotions contribute to mass manipulation, effectively allowing for unexacting domination. The most apparent sensation would be hate, which sells quickly and effortlessly while providing a notional union against the common enemy.

One advantage of hate is the possible concentration in the desired direction.; Orwell shows it perfectly in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where his "Two Minutes Hate" functions as a catalyst for the release of frustration.

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[57] CLAYTON, J., *The Ridicule of Time: Science Fiction, Bioethics, and the Posthuman*, American Literary History, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2013, p. 319.

While the Outer Party members do not get to choose due to forcible participation, they can still voice their anger and rage, albeit at the established foe in a "*hideous ecstasy of fear and vindicativeness*"[58]. The rationale is, of course, much more complicated, yet "Two Minutes Hate" aptly highlights the point.

The other prominent and equally detrimental emotions are guilt and shame, which can pass as powerful psychological instruments. Despite the different workings of these sensations, both may become just as devastating as hate. Inducing guilt makes individuals feel responsible and accountable for their deeds or mere thoughts.

Strict principles and regulations laid out by the ruling authorities instil a general sense of guilt for any actual or presumed deviation. Such a deviation is subsequently interpreted not only as a personal failing but as a betrayal of the whole community, with the collective pressure only accentuating the blame.

Shame as a sensation operates differently. Throughout history, shame served as a stigmatising tool meant as a manner of quelling dissent. Individuals who would not submit to the authority were publicly denounced and shamed or faced literal public shaming as a form of punishment, alternatively receiving a badge of shame.

The rationale behind such actions was to discredit works or thoughts and suppress deviations from the norm. As a result, one would feel a significant loss of support and, by contrast, deepening isolation.

Aside from isolation, a bodily menace presents another angle; dissenters faced subjugation to physical punishment or outright torture. The existential threat ensured that authorities directly discouraged the majority population from standing up to the ruling class. Individuals would remain subdued, fearing the consequences of departure from the established state of affairs.

[58] ORWELL, G., *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 16.

Dystopian societies further this culture of shame by implementing sophisticated and invasive technology, allowing for near-constant surveillance. Guilt becomes omnipresent, considering every interaction and display could constitute convincing material, leading to constrained behaviour and demeanour. One is always on edge due to a possible and provable display of unsolicited conduct.

Since the authorities firmly control the narrative and mould public opinion, an unwanted display threatens the collective well-being. Using rigorous manipulation techniques, authorities manipulate individuals into accepting their guilt and shame as justified for threatening the common goal.

The result is an utter suppression of individuality and independent thinking through self-monitoring resulting from desperation and denial, which merely strengthens the ruling regime, which is unchallenged, as no one dares to resist or proves willing to change.

## 3.2 Societal mechanisms for inducing guilt and shame

The previous subchapter detailed the psychological impact of the culture of shame as an instrument of affording total dominance. The ruling elite tries to trigger guilt and shame by utilising various manipulative mechanisms.

Public humiliation of the individuals is one such technique, an avenue to convey a forewarning to other potential objectors who begin to fear the same punishment.

Public exposure can lead to ridicule, as private information may leak, with possible dire consequences.

Considering the almost non-existent meaningful relationships within most dystopian settings, one knows better than to trust others. Even relatives might turn on one another, deepening the abyss of guilt.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, indoctrinated children gladly report their parents without hesitation, perhaps thinking it a game, albeit the signs of fanatism are unmistakable. The offspring of Oceania do not feel guilty, but their parents paint a different picture.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, when Winston, the protagonist, meets the Parsons family, he witnesses the following scene;

> *'You're a traitor!' Yelled the boy. 'You're a thought criminal! You're a Eurasian spy! I'll shoot you, I'll vaporize you, I'll send you to the salt mines!'*[59]

The mother nervously observes the spectacle and tries to alleviate the situation, saying;

> *'They do get so noisy' she said. 'They're disappointed because they couldn't go to see the hanging, that's what it is.'*[60]

Later on, the mother becomes a victim of her children, who are completely under the spell of Inner Party's indoctrination. The father, a staunch supporter

[59] ORWELL, G., *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 25.
[60] Ibid, p. 25.

of the regime is likewise sentenced by his daughter, although he accepts his fate;

> *'Who denounced you?' Said Winston.*
> *'It was my little daughter,' said Parsons with a sort of doleful pride.*
> *(...) 'I don't bear her any grudge for it. In fact I'm proud of her. It shows I brought her up in the right spirit, anyway.'*[61]

Moreover, the blame goes beyond the parents and individuals. Collective guilt creates a narrative of a declining civilisation caused by the faulty masses. Thus, all are guilty and must repent through complete obedience and hard work for a higher purpose. Even the most dedicated adherent is, at heart, weak and prone to failing.

Surveillance works in concert with the previous, as it manages to achieve isolation and cultivates a paranoia-infused state of uncertainty. Guilt is present even without the evident transgression, for just the distant possibility of being caught engaging in forbidden acts induces the feeling of guilt of committing to the unspeakable. Merely the possibility might warrant punishment in the same vein as thinking about sin constituting a sin in itself.

Forcible confessions, another focal technique, use overwhelming pressure and psychological coercion, of which the point is a dissolution of one's personality resulting in complete acceptance of distorted reality.

With the implementation of a sophisticated analogy to the carrot and stick method, an individual sooner or later accepts his or her guilt and full responsibility for receiving treatment.

The tormentor, representing the ruling power, then becomes a saviour who ends the misery and offers a chance at redemption. The offender is, of course, the divergent who acted in conflict with the established moral framework. As such, guilt is a driving force behind the complete defeat of the initial argument.

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[61] ORWELL, G., *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 245.

## 3.3 Internalisation of guilt and shame

The mechanisms mentioned previously serve as a means to an end. At their core, they mean to induce guilt and manipulate an individual to internalise the supposed offence. The standards are incredibly high, and upholding them requires immense effort. On the other hand, not living up to the standard is condemnable.

There is virtually no alternative other than failing; it is only a question of when it comes to pass. That realisation alone is an exacting burden, and one becomes insecure, doubting almost every course of action, double checking thoughts in case some dissonance occurs. Eventually, it will occur, much to one's dismay, and the inherent sense of individuality clashes with the dogma. The result is a maddening dissolution of personality and utter despair.

One possible recourse is to give in to the mechanisms of escape. Fromm discusses them at length, explicitly detailing one method of escape from an unbearable situation that would make life nearly impossible;

> *This course escape, therefore, is characterised by its compulsive character, like every escape from threatening panic; it is also characterised by the more or less complete surrender of individuality and the integrity of the self.* [62]

Fromm emphasises the compulsive character of such an attempt as an escape from panic and further adds;

> *'Thus it is not a solution which leads to happiness and positive freedom (...) it does not solve the underlying problem and is paid for by a kind of life that often consists only of automatic or compulsive activities.'* [63]

It makes sense; one submits in an attempt to forgo personal responsibility in exchange for the willing compliance of an established dictate. However, it is a carefully constructed lie as the manipulative course continues; it has to continue to ensure an unchallenged position of the ruling elites.

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[62] FROMM, E., *Escape from Freedom*, New York: Avon Books, 1965, p. 162.
[63] Ibid, p. 162.

Thus, such an escape from responsibility is merely proverbial and matches the description of inefficient anti-programmes as mentioned by Röhr. He postulates that an individual might return to an old self-abasement pattern when forming a new programme.[64]

In *Brave New World*, John also resorts to self-abasement when he tries to escape his guilt for a perceived failure or deficiency. Unwilling or unable to properly deal with the situation, he repeatedly chooses flagellantism as an escape mechanism.

These occurrences mostly tie to his romantic pursuit, Lenina. When the two first meet, John finds her rather astonishing and almost considers undressing her, immediately followed by self-chastity;

> *He shut his eyes, he shook his head with the gesture of a dog shaking its ears as it emerges from the water. Detestable thought! He was ashamed of himself.* [65]

On his second intimate encounter with Lenina, they attend "feelies", and the mesmerised woman makes her attempt to seduce John;

> *He looked down at her for a while, pale, pained, desiring, and ashamed of his desire. He was not worthy (...) Hastily he looked away, disengaged his imprisoned arm.* [66]

Although both scenes give the idea of an inexperienced young man being nervous about pursuing a love interest, his behaviour has a darker edge. John whips himself in periodical purification rituals.

These have become more violent ever since the introduction of Lenina, and John ultimately whips her as well. The resulting shame of all his lapses and defeats is too much to bear, and John ends his life.

Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* summarises her mental state, influenced by abuse, noting the following;

> *I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will . . .*

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[64] RÖHR, H. P., *Nedostatečný pocit vlastní hodnoty*, Praha: Portál 2015, p. 85.
[65] HUXLEY, *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 145.
[66] Ibid, p. 169.

*Now the flesh arranges itself differently. I'm a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is hard and more real than I am and glows red within its translucent wrapping.* [67]

[67] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986, p. 73-74.

## 4. Subservience in *Brave New World*

*Brave New World* presents a futuristic and technologically advanced society of the united nations called "World State," which, on the surface, seems nearly utopian. Almost as if someone capitalised on the vision of a long line of scholars, dating from Plato, Locke or Hobbes to John Stuart Mill, whom all sought an ideal society of general abundance, devoid of social issues such as crime or political instability.

The World State propounds a successful implementation of such ambitions in practice, resulting in a science-obsessed society valuing efficiency and performance. However, attaining peace and stability comes with a cost, and the ultimate price of this endeavour is utterly frightening to contemplate.

As established earlier, rulers of this supposed paradise, Controllers, maintain the ultimate authority, given their scientific merits. Like Orwell's Inner Party members, these elite echelons, too, require brilliant and gifted individuals. Distinct from Inner Party, though, these are even fewer in number; only ten Controllers oversee the whole World State. Lower-placed Directors who oversee human "Hatcheries" support them. Greater reliance on technology and different approaches to manipulation allow the Controllers to maintain and perpetuate their rule, despite their otherwise negligible numbers.

Society divides into classes, which are predetermined and strictly followed without deviation. Procreation is considered a grave offence of the World State's principles; scientists create new individuals with predestination in mind. The class designated as "Alpha", the most prestigious caste, consists of the brightest and most physically gifted, intentionally perfected in the embryo stage to shape them into future leaders.

"Beta" is a class one degree lower, but Betas can still maintain ties with Alphas. Further down the hierarchy, "Gamma", "Delta", and "Epsilon" are all worker classes designed and purposed for menial labour. Their creation includes varying amounts of chemicals and alcohol; Epsilons, for example, can get along with borderline mental disability as they perform the simplest tasks.

Subservience in World State is total, albeit stifled from the realisation of the masses, no matter the class. One reason is the conditioning everyone undergoes without exception.

The other reason for the regime's continuation is that the officials administer a sanctioned and potent stupefier to help keep the populace in check, so ideological deflection is difficult. Furthermore, a would-be dissenter faces ostracism and complete isolation.

## 4.1 Guilt and shame of non-conformity

The World State is an environment where Controllers and their many labourers manage to shape both public opinion and the public directly; not only is one raised into indoctrination but also steered towards the preordained path before birth.

The Inner Party would gasp at the means Controllers have at their disposal. Therefore, it is challenging to form organised dissent, given the class system resulting from direct genetical tinkering and brainwashing methods. Furthermore, the dictum of the World State requires absolute obedience and a strict code of conduct.

Individuals who break societal norms in one way or another meet with pronounced exclusion and resentment from their superficial peers, as conformity means abiding by the only valid logical principles out there. Residents of the World State receive their share of dogma from the earliest age, and all they know in actuality ties only to approved axioms.

The gregarious pressure is demanding, as it is difficult always to make an impression and live up to expectations in a shallow and unforgiving society. Partly to avoid a psychological collapse, the Controllers introduced the so-called soma, an escape mechanism, which is, at the same time, an instrument of control.

Even with the careful administration of soma, the individual characters still experience fears and feelings of guilt, which are unwelcome in society at large. These feelings mostly revolve around the failure to meet expectations or a severe transgression that violates the core principles.

The infringements include maintaining intimate emotions and meaningful relationships, committing to pregnancy, and the idea of family in general. According to Controller Mustapha Mond, family represents an outdated concept of suffering and tribulations;

> *'Mother, monogamy, romance. High spurts the fountain; fierce and foamy the wild jet. The urge has but a single outlet. My love, my baby.*

*No wonder these poor pre-moderns were mad and wicked and miserable.'*[68]

Mond further elaborates his take on the condemnable past when lecturing students, indirectly explaining why the World State surpasses the old values;

*'Their world didn't allow them to take things easily, didn't allow them to be sane, virtuous, happy. What with mothers and lovers, what with the prohibitions they were not conditioned to obey, what with the temptations and the lonely remorses, what with all the diseases and endless isolating pain, what with the uncertainties and the poverty - they were forced to feel strongly.'*[69]

To Mond and other Controllers, stability on purely rational grounds is a constant that overweighs innate human instincts, which they consider more of a hindrance in the long run. To void the staggering effect of emotions, Mond proposes soma and highlights its effects;

*'All the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects. Take a holiday from reality whenever you like, and come back with without so much as headache or a mythology. Stability was practically assured.'*[70]

Considering the rationale of Mond and his like, subservience is a virtue, as it allows society to function as one interlocked mechanism whose wheels will not stop turning. The individuals who dare to depart from the template endanger the workings of the World State's society and must be dealt with accordingly.

No overbearing surveillance is needed as the populace sees to self-correction of transgressions. Soma is an omnipresent and immediate solution if one exhibits unsanctioned behaviour or, failing that there is collective societal pressure that still ensures obedience. The World State lays the inviolable framework, which is strictly scientifically precise, not allowing for deviations. Not upholding one's designated role means failing as a person, which subsequently singles one out of social circles. The novel vividly shows social exclusion as the vital trigger of guilt and feeling of shame.

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[68] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 41.
[69] Ibid, p. 41.
[70] Ibid, p. 54.

### 4.1.1 Bernard Marx: shame of inadequacy

Bernard Marx is an oddity, almost a singular being within the confines of the World State. He is an Alpha Plus, supposedly the cream of the crop. Except he is not, reportedly due to an error regarding the amount of alcohol in his surrogate. That would situate him to a lower caste, one reason for his ridicule. The other reason relates to his physical disposition, albeit it corresponds to the first point. The Alphas are the perfection of the human physique, towering and muscular specimens. Bernard is neither of those things and realises with agonising clarity that his social standing is significantly compromised;

> *For whatever the cause Bernard's physique was hardly better than that of the average Gamma. (...) 'I am I, and I wish I wasn't'; his self-consciousness was acute and distressing. Each time he found himself looking on the level, instead of downward, into a Delta's face, he felt humiliated.*[71]

Therefore, Bernard displays abnormal behaviour, further setting him aside and forcing him to confide in but a few colleagues, such as Helmholtz Watson. Watson shares the aspect of difference because he, too, got altered in some way; unlike Bernard, changes wrought upon him do not limit his perspectives but still present a hindrance. Both men realise their individuality separates them from the majority population, solidifying their bond but instilling a powerful sense of blame and guilt for being different.

Bernard struggles to fit into the society that mocks him on every occasion. Bernard, in turn, turns into a bitter and even spiteful individual, perpetually affected by an inferiority complex.

Paradoxically, that makes Bernard more human than most other characters, with all the benefits and downsides it entails. Unfortunately, Bernard is a product of his environment and cannot exploit his difference. Quite understandably, Bernard craves status and privilege, something so far denied due to a mindset wholly irreconcilable with the World State's dictate.

[71] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 64.

Insecurity and constant doubt follow Bernard across the breadth of the World State. Even the lower castes regard him with an appreciably lower degree of respect;

> *Slackly, it seemed to him, and with reluctance, the twin attendants wheeled his plane out on the roof.*
> *'Hurry up!' said Bernard irritably. One of them glanced at him. Was that a kind of bestial derision that he detected in those blank grey eyes? 'Hurry up!' he shouted more loudly, and there was an ugly rasp in his voice.*[72]

Curiously from the perspective of other Alphas and Betas, Bernard searches for a meaningful relationship, even having a particular romantic interest in Lenina. His pursuit is not solely sexual, much to Lenina's chagrin. Bernard feels guilty about breaching the norms and losing Lenina, not necessarily out of genuine attachment but out of sheer angst of being rejected again. Bernard firstly professes sympathy towards Lenina, yet her sameness and superficiality invoke his detest;

> *She looked up with certain anxiety. 'But you don't think I'm too plump, do you?'*
> *He shook his head. Like so much meat.*
> *'You think I'm all right.'Another nod. 'In every way?'*
> *'Perfect,' he said out loud. And inwardly. 'She thinks of herself that way. She doesn't mind being meat.'*[73]

The debacle surrounding Lenina is a significant source of guilt, as is another miscalculation in introducing an outsider to the World State.

John "the Savage", formerly a reservation resident, becomes Bernard's triumph and a device to ascend to the upper echelons of society.

Bernard later understands his grave error and feels genuine remorse over his exploitation of John. When John has had enough and refuses to perform on Bernard's behalf, Bernard experiences public humiliation, which causes a great deal of distress. Despite the selfish perception, Bernard overcomes himself and apologises to John, releasing the suppressed guilt.

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[72] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 65.
[73] Ibid, p. 93.

### 4.1.2 Helmholtz Watson: guilt of intellectual aspiration

Helmholtz Watson is Bernard's associate and perhaps only friend. The two bonded due to their otherness, differentiating them from the majority population. Both are intellectuals, but Bernard limits his perception with self-pity, partly deserved but mostly inflated. On the other hand, Helmholtz gives the impression of a self-assured and supremely able individual. Indeed, his superiors held him in great regard, albeit with tentative concern;

> *'Able,' was the verdict of his superiors. 'Perhaps,' (and they would shake their heads, would significantly lower their voices) 'a little too able'.*[74]

Helmholtz realises his ability separates him from others. In a way, he faces a more complex situation as Bernard gets used to a particular treatment, but he also looks the part. The ostracization of Bernard bases on his diminutive appearance, which is undeniable and perceptible. Helmholtz shares the image of Alphas and achieved substantial success according to the World State's values. Girls adore him fervently, and Watson gains athletic credentials and substantial social credit.

Despite his excellence, Watson feels isolated and turns down opportunities otherwise essential for Alphas. Helmholtz yearns to use his innate talents at something productive and valuable, as his guilt mainly ties to dissatisfaction with his own life and inability to attain or even create something substantial and lasting.

It is worth noticing, though, that some elements of the dogma seep even from Helmholtz on a fundamental level; when discussing Shakespeare, Watson cannot comprehend the plot of Romeo and Juliet and reacts akin to many of his peers;

> *'The mother and father (grotesque obscenity) forcing the daughter to have someone she didn't want! And the idiotic girl not saying that she was having some one else whom (for the moment, at any rate) she preferred!'*[75]

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[74] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 67.
[75] Ibid, p. 185.

Despite his apparent cultural limitation due to conditioning, Helmholtz depressingly regards the World State as abound with annoyance and shallowness; Bernard sees his approach as missed opportunity and profoundly envies Helmholtz as he recognises Watson's character as a strength he lacks. For his part, Helmholtz often feels ashamed and disappointed in Bernard for his frequent outbursts and bouts of vexation.

The contrast between the two could not have been more prominent, yet ultimately, they need one another, as only they can maintain meaningful conversations. With the introduction of John, the dynamic between Bernard and Helmholtz weakens, mainly owing to Bernard's jealousy and fear of being left out.

Discontent at the state of affairs, chiefly the omnipresent superficiality and ignorance of the masses to whom he honestly cannot relate, Helmholtz begins to compose poetry. To Helmholtz, poetry is both a delight and an expression of dissent. As he reveals to Bernard during one of his lectures on "On the Use of Rhymes in Moral Propaganda and Advertisement", Helmholtz implements his peculiar technical example;

> *'Pure madness, of course; but I couldn't resist it.'*[76]

Helmholtz then comments on the indignation that followed. Bernard notes his enthusiasm as Helmholtz laughs during the recollection, yet his internal struggle is perceptible as the matter reaches his superiors. At the same time, his dissent only seems awakened by the experience;

> *'I feel,' he said, after a silence, 'as though I were just beginning to have something to write about.'*[77]

Helmholtz represents the longing for intellectual pursuits in a repressive society. To provide a brief parallel with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the defiant manner of his poetry is a reminiscence of Winston's diary, a significant expression of dissent. Unlike Winston, Helmholtz is not punished by the authorities, merely shipped away to meet and collaborate with like-minded individuals.

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[76] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 180.
[77] Ibid. 182.

### 4.1.3 Lenina Crowne: guilt of desire

Lenina Crowne represents a typical Beta female, just slightly more appealing. Lenina's most significant concern is maintaining an attractive outlook and inviting manner; her satisfaction ties in with the need for validation, which she desperately seeks. Lenina is also notable for committing to unusually long affairs, as noted by her friend Fanny;

> *'I really do think you ought to be careful. It's such horribly bad form to go on and on with one man. At forty, or thirty-five, it wouldn't be so bad. But at your age, Lenina! No, it really won't do. And you know how strongly the D.H.C. objects to anything intense or long-drawn.'*[78]

Lenina admits the veracity of the assessment but points out her recent reluctance to engage in promiscuity, to which Fanny has an answer;

> *Fanny nodded her sympathy and understanding. 'But one's got to make the effort, she said, sententiously, 'one's got to play the game. After all, every one belongs to ever'y one else.'*[79]

The universal truth closes the discussion, and Lenina puts the concern out of her mind. When she opens another topic, an interest in Bernard Marx, she once again finds herself rebutted by Fanny's objections.

Lenina stands her ground and pays for it with cold rejection, which she seemingly ignores. It appears, however, as a coping mechanism rather than certainty. Lenina struggles throughout the novel with the internal conflict between individual desire and societal expectations.

What Lenina cannot ignore is the evaluation of her partners; even a slight imperfection causes her to panic. Bernard captivates her because of his difference, yet their meeting quickly turns sour due to Lenina, influenced by hypnopaedia and years of fervent conditioning, misunderstanding Bernard's intention. His desire to spend the evening romantically meets with the most profound disappointment.

Bernard reacts in his usual fashion, throwing a fit and disconcerting Lenina, although he ultimately submits to soma and Lenina's intents. The next day,

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[78] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 41.
[79] Ibid, p. 43.

the pair meets again and discusses the previous night, with Lenina gravely disquieted upon hearing of Bernard's dissatisfaction. Afterwards, she blames herself but, at the same time, still longs for Bernard, notwithstanding his blasphemies;

> *'All the same,' Lenina insisted. 'I do like him. He has such awfully nice hands. And the way he moves his shoulders - that's very attractive.' She sighed. 'But I wish he weren't so odd.'*[80]

The World State encourages pleasure-seeking as one method of achieving happiness. Promiscuity is officially encouraged, but attachment or even lasting romance is considered an offence. However, Lenina cannot help herself, and when confronted by Bernard's moral grounds, with her values challenged, she scarcely finds an answer. Instead, she copes using higher doses of soma and endless repetition of axioms.

The breaking point occurs when Lenina meets with John, an outsider from the Reservation. John's difference is more pronounced than anything Lenina has experienced so far. Impressively, Lenina manages to overcome her conditioning and develop genuine feelings for John. After her first rejection, Lenina goes through, for her, unusual introspection and malady;

> *Lenina alone said nothing. Pale, her blue eyes clouded with an unwonted melancholy, she sat in a corner, cut off from those who surrounded her by an emotion which they did not share.*[81]

Eventually, Lenina overcomes her depression and tries to mend things with John, slightly invigorated with soma. Much to her surprise, John reacts propitiously;

> *There was a moment of silence; then, in a very low voice, 'I love you more than anything in the world?' he said.*
> *'Then why on earth didn't you say so?' she cried, and so intense was her exasperation that she drove her sharp nails into the skin of his wrist.*
> *(...)*
>
> *'Why didn't you say so?' she whispered, drawing back her face to look at him. Her eyes were tenderly reproachful.*[82]

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[80] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 94.
[81] Ibid, p. 173.
[82] Ibid, p. 192.

She subsequently tries to seduce him because that is the only way she ever approaches relationships, with catastrophic consequences.

Unfortunately for her, despite honest attempts to win his favour, John perceives her as a physical embodiment of corruption or moral decay that befell the World State. By this point, John experienced all the supposed luxuries and amenities, disgusted by society's functions.

John shames Lenina and induces a pronounced sense of guilt; as she questions his behaviour, she realises, to an extent, how superficial her life had been up to that point, invoking guilt and deep inner conflict between expectations and societal norms.

### 4.1.4 Linda and Tomakin: shame of rejection

Linda is a relatively minor character, albeit of great importance, due to her committing the worst possible offence, giving birth to a child, who happens to be John, who fundamentally impacts the whole narrative.

Linda used to be a dutiful Beta, just like Lenina. During a regular trip to the Reservation, Linda separated from the Director of Hatcheries, named Tomakin, and ended up stranded. Outside of the World State, out of reach of soma, she was forced to rely on herself and the local tribe. The unthinkable happened, as without the "Malthusian belt", Linda bore a child, a heresy in her original society;

> *'Just think of it: me, a Beta - having a baby: put yourself in my place.'*
> *(The mere suggestion made Lenina shudder.)*[83]

Aside from having a baby, Linda, conditioned by the World State, also practised casual intimate relationships, which caused severe culture shock and many conflicts;

> *'They're so hateful, the women here. Mad, mad and cruel'*[84]

Linda's relationship with her son was strained and uneasy, understandably, given her lack of proper tuition and experience handling a child. Still, Linda partly overcame her conditioning but needed help to fulfil the mother's role effectively. She largely left John to his own devices, and he got answers from learned men in Pueblo.

Linda experienced severe tribulations on the Reservation due to matters she could not possibly influence due to her cultural background. She was shamed by local women for infidelity, guilty of mistreating young John and having no soma around. Ultimately, she had to submit to local laws and customs, as did John, albeit willingly on his part. Linda changes dramatically and loses much of her charm and attractiveness, becoming a shadow of her former self without sophisticated technology.

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[83] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 120.
[84] Ibid, p. 122.

The cruellest moments come when Bernard uses Linda as leverage on the Director and brings her back from the Reservation. Reunion with Tomakin turns into a public humiliation for both involved;

> *She stood looking at him, her head on one side, still smiling, but with a smile that became progressively, in the face of the Director's expression of petrified disgust, less and less self-confident, that wavered and finally gave out.*
> *'Don't you remember, Tomakin?' she repeated in a voice that trembled. Her eyes were anxious, agonized. The blotched and sagging face twisted grotesquely into the grimace of extreme grief.*[85]

As the scene unfolds, onlookers watch in amused disbelief. While Linda means well, she practically commits social suicide and takes the Director down with her;

> *Desperately she clung. 'But I'm Linda, I'm Linda.' The laughter drowned her voice. 'You made me have a baby,' she screamed above the uproar. (...)*
> *'Yes, a baby - and I was its mother.' She flung the obscenity like a challenge into the outraged silence; then, suddenly breaking away from him, ashamed, covered her face with her hands, sobbing.*[86]

The dramatic reunion is crucial in the novel, as it introduces John to the World State. It also highlights the sheer cruelty of Huxley's vision. Everyone covets John, "the Savage", as a new sensation entertaining the privileged class. Linda is ridiculed and mocked for her appearance, as the World State's society does not tolerate deviance from uniformity. Returned Linda is described rather harshly;

> *Fat; having lost her youth; with bad teeth; and a blotched complexion, and that figure (Ford!) - you simply couldn't look at her without feeling sick, yes, positively sick. So the best people were quite determined not to see Linda.*[87]

With the doctor's approval, Linda drowns the traumatic experience in ever larger doses of soma. Tomakin leaves his post in absolute humiliation and shame.

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[85] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 150.
[86] Ibid, p. 151.
[87] Ibid, p. 153.

## 4.2 Soma as a means of escape from guilt and shame

Soma, an enigmatic and persistent drug in the World State, is the main instrument in maintaining order and the principles set out by Controllers. Only through absolute subservience can happiness last, according to Mustapha Mond.

In a sense, Huxley's World State perceives collective unity and effectiveness like Orwell's Oceania. Although the ruling elite differs in the application, the core idea is similar. The World State indeed has numerous advantages, yet the price ought to pay is just as staggering as Oceania's hateful eradication of the human spirit.

*Brave New World* is a carefully wrought allegory with numerous humorous components. Nevertheless, the frightening part becomes palpable when one digs into the narrative. The World State is a fever dream of lunacy and abhorrence with profound implications, while paradoxically more credible than, say, Orwell's vision. One might consider the World State a different shade of evil, no lesser than the former. Soma plays a significant part in the equation.

Soma is the ultimate solution to all distress, and the potent chemical can suppress any undesired sensation. The effects go well beyond, as soma effectively fundamentally rewires brain functions. Regardless of the caste, it can influence anyone roughly in a similar way. Controllers and, to a lesser extent, Directors comprehend its effect precisely and consider soma a necessary component, forming the backbone of repressive means, just as the foundation of society. The two intermingle, as this society would not function without complete and strict uniformity, which grants stability; such uniformity requires absolute subservience to societal norms.

Mond explains in detail that violence is not suitable for securing obedience. Suppression of emotions combined with promoting a culture of instant gratification yields optimal results. When Lenina and Henry return from one social event, they consume soma to shield themselves from the night.

> *Lenina and Henry were yet dancing in another world - the warm, richly coloured, the infinitely friendly world of soma-holiday.*
> *(...)*
> *Swallowing half an hour before closing time, that second dose of soma had raised a quite impenetrable wall between the actual universe and their minds.*[88]

Furthermore, soma is consistently close at hand and compatible with various types of nourishment, most often consumed as ice cream or sundae, aside from traditional capsule form;

> *The service had begun. The dedicated soma tablets were placed in the centre of the table. The loving cup of strawberry ice-cream soma was passed from hand to hand and, with the formula, 'I drink to my annihilation,' twelve times quaffed.*[89]

The conditioning imprinted the reliance on soma; the characters in distress invariably call for an emergency dosage because that is how one deals with difficulties in the World State.

Such an overreliance can hardly surprise, as soma repeatedly demonstrates a pervading ability to compromise anyone, including staunch dissenters, as John and Helmholtz showed when they sabotaged the soma dispensing site at the Park Lane Hospital, resulting in a quarrel with multiple Deltas, which the police deals with promptly;

> *Two minutes later, the Voice and the soma vapour had produced their effect. In tears, the Deltas were kissing and hugging one another - half a dozen twins at a time in a comprehensive embrace. Even Helmholtz and the Savage were almost crying.*[90]

The police spray soma vapour and play the so-called "The Voice of Reason", concretely "Synthetic Anti-Riot Speech Number Two". All the commotion ceases without the need for the application of brute force.

Bernard, more of an onlooker during the whole scene, subsequently abases himself before the Director. The Director later addresses many of John's points,

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[88] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 77.
[89] Ibid, p. 80-81.
[90] Ibid, p. 215.

admitting his logic and countering with the higher purpose behind the shallow emptiness;

> *'Actual happiness always looks pretty squalid in comparison with the overcompensations for misery. And, of course, stability isn't nearly so spectacular as instability.'*[91]

Mond continues with a further exposition of the World State and the reasons behind its functioning. He believes happiness is dangerous and ineffectual, and overcompensation lends superior results.

Excessive leisure produces discontent, as does excessive well-being stemming from advanced technology. Similarly to Oceania, there are compelling means to improve human civilization progressively, but the general populace is purposefully manipulated and kept in the dark.

[91] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 221.

## 4.3 The Savage's self-inflicted punishment and the rejection of society

John is arguably the most complex character in the novel. As mentioned, John unwittingly sets the narrative since his arrival at the World State. Born naturally, a curious deviation in itself, and being a culturally wholly different person, John attracted much inquisitiveness. It is thus no wonder that his perception of his mother's native land sours rather quickly.

John's childhood trauma concerning Linda's promiscuity influences his judgement. Even after all those years, John cannot cope with the mental image of seeing his mother sell her body with abandon. John found solace in classical literature, became an avid reader and laid the foundation of his future obsession with Shakespeare.

Desperately trying to fit into the Reservation society, he faced constant obstacles and ridicule, analogous to Bernard, albeit for different reasons. Neither a part of Malpais nor his mother's society, John is a solitary individual.

The contrast between John and Bernard appears very pronounced. The former fantasises about dissenting yet always backs down when the opportunity to do something meaningful occurs. The latter declaims quotes and acts overly dramatical yet simultaneously acts out his ideals, which does not necessarily serve him well. Bernard often shows his lack of character, covering himself in fear and betraying his fellows when cornered. John does neither of those and even willingly risks his life confronting a soma-deprived mob of Deltas. However, naive romantic heroism leads to his ultimate fate and the suffering of his only love interest, Lenina.

John deals with severe traumatic experiences from which he never fully recovered. Aside from his romantic fantasies, he also implements cleansing self-flogging. First, as an escape from the guilt of his origin, coupled with intense shame due to his mother's behaviour and perhaps even more due to the dismissive approach of her many partners, chiefly Popé;

*He hated Popé. He hated them all - all the men who came to see Linda.*[92]

Ironically, while John despises the notion of conditioning, he does not realise he, too, was conditioned, not of Linda's accord, although she tried her best to provide impromptu conditioning.

John's actual conditioning comes from Malpais, where he learned to associate intimate relationships with discomfort and degradation, owing to mistreatment at, among others, Popé's hands. Lenina's attempt to initiate intimate contact fails spectacularly, as John's limited perception cannot allow any other explication. To John, love is purely romantic; anything physical invokes his ingrained trauma, leading to profound guilt and associated shame.

John's conditioning imprints self-flogging as a release mechanism, a catharsis allowing him to cleanse of all depravities and indecent thoughts. The inspiration comes from the locals in Malpais, who often practice ritual self-punishment, and also from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, whose titular character also contemplated purgatorial punishment and failed to meet his excessive demands.

John's potent and largely suppressed emotions lack feasible release, so he needs a regular outlet. Unfortunately, John ultimately succumbs to his violent impulses and physically hurts Lenina in a shameful display, altogether forgoing his manners;

*The Savage pushed her away with such force that she staggered and fell. "Go," he shouted, standing over her menacingly, 'get out of my sight or I'll kill you.' He clenched his fists.*[93]

John cannot come to terms with Lenina not fitting into his romantic delusion, utterly disappointed and genuinely weary of all that transpired. The ignominious death of Linda is the final blow, and John gets to the breaking point and abandons all attempts to fit in the World State. All his transgressions magnified and came back to haunt him;

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[92] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 125.
[93] Ibid, p. 194.

> *He had sworn to remember, he had sworn unceasingly to make amends.*[94]

Later on, several Deltas see John's self-flogging, which immediately becomes a profound fascination and the reason why John lost his secluded privacy;

> *Three Delta-Minus land-workers from one of the Puttenham Bokanovsky Groups happened to be driving to Elstead and, at the top of the hill, were astonished to see a young man standing outside the abandoned lighthouse stripped to the waist and hitting himself with a whip of knotted cords. His back was horizontally streaked with crimson, and from weal to weal ran thin trickles of blood.*[95]

The sensation dies off, and John successfully deters future priers with the threat of violence, although society never leaves him alone for too long, just like his guilt;

> *At the edge of the heath stood a clump of hoary juniper bushes. He flung himself against them, he embraced, not the smooth body of his desires, but an armful of green spikes. (...) He tried to think of poor Linda, breathless and dumb, with her clutching hands and the unutterable terror in her eyes. Poor Linda whom he had sworn to remember. But it was still the presence of Lenina that haunted him. Lenina whom he had promised to forget. Even through the stab and sting of the juniper needles, his wincing flesh was aware of her, unescapably real.*[96]

Inevitably, another serious incident occurs when the footage of his self-harm reaches the public. John spots a young, insolent girl resembling Lenina, whom he tries to displace. Ultimately, after another bout of intense violence, during which John fiercely whips the girl, the guilt becomes too much to bear, and John ends his troubled life.

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[94] HUXLEY, A., *Brave New World*, New York: Perrenial Classics, 1998, p. 247.
[95] Ibid, p. 248.
[96] Ibid, p. 252.

## 5. Subservience in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* pictures the not-so-distant future England, a bloc called Oceania. The implication is that there are other such blocs, considering the in-universe discussions and the rough perception of the characters. For all the reader knows, it may very well be a lie, given contemporary history's constant alterations, that become a reliable weapon in the arsenal of the Inner Party.

The Inner Party presents the de-facto ruling class, low in number but with ultimate authority. Groomed and carefully selected from the earliest age, the Inner Party members give the impression of fanatical yet undeniably gifted individuals. They are the true face of Big Brother, and their efforts support Oceania in a dystopian nightmare. These leaders have better prospects and living standards than the other two subordinate social classes.

The Outer Party represents a minority of workers and clerks employed by the Inner Party. Their living conditions are, by our standards, awful, at the least. Substandard nourishment, destitution and pervasive grime are common elements of their lives. The Inner Party considers them a conceivable existential threat, so persistent surveillance is a constant. Terror, hate and guilt all hold them in line as they labour to keep the wheels of oppression turning.

Proles represent the lowest class and, incidentally, also the most numerable. Their conditions are the poorest by far, yet they are beneath the notice of the Inner Party. While their circumstances are dire, it is also a blessing in disguise; the oppressors leave them out of the equation.

Furthermore, Proles do not feel the need to rebel, as their blessed ignorance leaves no room for doubt. As long as the Party meets their instant desires, Proles are harmless to the mechanism of oppression. The Proles could overthrow the regime, yet such an idea is beyond their comprehension.

The need for subservience applies to all three groups; all must conform to the rules set out by the Party. Admittedly, Proles receive more leeway; the Party essentially leaves them to their own devices due to underestimation of their ability to form a united front. The Proles might rage occasionally but ultimately back down in the face of institutionalized force.

## 5.1 The Inner Party's exploitation of guilt and shame

Winston Smith, the novel's protagonist and seemingly unexceptional Outer Party member, is, in actuality, an unusual character. Despite the pervasive effort on the Inner Party's behalf to curtail knowledge and literacy, with Winston playing his small part in the effort, he comes across as instead learned and civilized and even has a mind of his own.

That fact alone is punishable from the perspective of Ingsoc principles. State propaganda seeks to supersede independent thoughts with the desired Newspeak phrases, with the Outer Party either oblivious or cornered and obliging for pure self-preservation. At first glance, Winston is no different, yet he keeps a diary where he expresses dissatisfaction, often spontaneously, surprised at the outcome;

> *His pen has slid voluptuously over the smooth paper, printing in large neat capitals -*
>
> *DOWN WITH THE BIG BROTHER*
>
> *DOWN WITH THE BIG BROTHER*
>
> *DOWN WITH THE BIG BROTHER*
>
> *(...)*
>
> *He could not help feeling a twinge of panic.* [97]

After a brief evaluation of his predicament, Winston's inner monologue reveals the following;

> *Whether he wrote DOWN WITH THE BIG BROTHER, or whether he refrained from writing it, made no difference. The Thought Police would get him just the same.* [98]

Winston then cultivates the idea that he presumably lives on borrowed time, already a "dead man". He is not wrong, as the Inner Party already knows about his subversion. Individuals like Winston show considerable promise, and their fate might be twofold; either admission into the Inner Party or complete obliteration.

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[97] ORWELL, G., *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p 20.
[98] Ibid, p. 21.

The second prospect is prevalent firstly due to the Party preferring relatively young candidates and secondly because an outstanding candidate might endanger the power structure. Too bright an individual might attempt systemic changes. This is the case of Syme, a superbly gifted linguist and editor of the new edition of Newspeak dictionary, who paradoxically devotedly serves the tenets of Ingsoc and Big Brother. Syme is a willing and enthusiastic follower, unlike increasingly concerned Winston.

The latter firmly believes Syme will cause his downfall, which later turns out as the correct assessment. When taken at length, Syme is the perfect worshipper, happily obeys the Party's dictate and even advocates its necessity. His submission to the regime is a willing one. Likewise, the destruction he helps to cause seems to give him a sort of sadistic pleasure;

> *'Of course we use those forms already, but in the final version of Newspeak there'll be nothing else. In the end, the whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words - in reality, only one word. Don't you see the beauty of that, Winston?'*[99]

The other possible explanation could be a sense of power and authority. Syme has the opportunity to be of importance, a modicum of control he might realise personally through Newspeak.

His lack of discretion betrays him and gives away his considerable intellect, inevitably leading to his vaporisation. When O'Brien talks to Winston during a meeting, he alludes to having interrogated Syme;

> *'I was talking recently to a friend of yours who is certainly an expert. His name has slipped my memory for the moment.'*[100]

In his despair for hope, Winston takes it for a code phrase and a reason for trusting O'Brien in the first place, which turns out to be a grand error. While Winston is the focal character, and his dramatic transformation underscores the horror of Orwell's dystopia, secondary characters too subtly contribute to the whole narrative.

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[99] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 61.
[100] Ibid, p. 164.

### 5.1.1 Parsons and his folly

As established earlier, Parsons is a minor character, albeit an important one. His character contrasts with that of intellectual Winston or Syme. Parsons is a typical fanatical adherent of the Ingsoc, absolutely conscious and, at the same time, too clueless to doubt the Party's mandate.

He made a name for himself, and Winston remains convinced that Parsons "would never be vaporised" because, at the core, he is very much like the "eyeless creatures" and "beetle-like men" Winston so despises. These monikers refer to the conformists and convinced proponents of the regime. Winston is also likely to be jealous of Parsons's favourable perspective.

In any case, Parsons lives on borrowed time, mirroring the other characters. His children report him, which makes him proud in a bizarre manner but understandable given his utter conviction. The reunion of Winston and Parsons takes place shortly before the interrogation cycle. For the first time in the novel, Parsons abandons his positive attitude, replaced entirely by misery and essentially breaks down;

> *'Are you guilty?' said Winston.*
> *'Of course I'm guilty!' cried Persons with a servile glance at the telescreen. 'You don't think the Party would arrest an innocent man, do you?' (...)*
> *'Do you know what I'm going to say to them when I go before the tribunal? Thank you I'm going to say thank you for saving me before it was too late.'*[101]

Parsons abases himself, attempting to demonstrate the full realisation of his blame and even considers his supposed transgression pathological. To a staunch follower of the Party's dogma, the phrase "Down with the Big Brother" was awful enough, but thankfully, the Party will step in to save the day. The resulting punishment is well deserved. At the same time, Parsons noticeably panics at the idea of being shot for his transgression and seeks reassurance from Winston. Parsons bases his two-faced argument upon his exemplary record, but much to his dismay, the Party does not care.

[101] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 245.

### 5.1.2 Mrs Parsons and Winston's mother

Unlike her husband, Mrs Parsons is a decrepit woman on the verge of collapse, always on edge and objectively terrified of her zealous children. When they happen to assail Winston, branding him as a "thought-criminal", she visibly tenses and starts to excuse their behaviour compulsively. Despite her presence and attempts to mediate the situation, her son attacks Winston physically with a projectile, but it is the woman that captives Winston;

> *What most struck Winston was the look of helpless fright on the woman's greyish face.*[102]

Mrs Parsons is both fundamentally frightened and ashamed of her offspring, with Winston noting her impending demise at their hands.

The children are easily susceptible to propaganda; Oceania's children resemble ferocious and violent aberrations. The Party cultivates fanaticism at the earliest age to gain a firmer hold over the populace. Out of all possible confidantes, children are the worst. Mrs Parsons thus leads a shade of life, constantly self-policing her every expression and idea to a much greater extent than, say, Winston.

She is also a mother of two, yet unable to fully express her love and affection, as that would entail thought crime doubtlessly registered by her progeny. Mrs Parsons presumably realises her demise is just a question of time, making the matter all the more taxing.

While Winston does not dwell on Mrs Parsons, he later confesses to his love interest, Julia, that he feels a pronounced sense of guilt regarding his mother's fate. He feels partly responsible for the death of his mother and younger sister, with his sister starving directly due to his rapacity, albeit one born of pure necessity. His similarity to Parsons's offspring is also somewhat striking, with the notable departure in the lack of state-issued propagandist violence stimulations.

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[102] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 26.

When Winston reminiscences about his mother, it almost always ties to a deep-rooted guilt of letting her down and later shame of how it came to pass, as back then he was too selfish and too young to comprehend his actions entirely;

> *He could not remember what had happened, but he knew in his dream that in some way the lives of his mother and his sister had been sacrificed to his own.*[103]

Later on, Winston elaborates on his traumatic experience of his failing, which, under different circumstances, would seem like a regular day affair of a mother dealing with her children. In this instance, however, little Winston and his younger sister starve for many days. The following scene describes the precise moment he saw his mother for the last time;

> *In the end his mother broke off three-quarters of the chocolate and gave it to Winston, giving the other quarter to his sister. (...) Winston stood watching her for a moment.*
>
> *Then with a sudden swift spring he had snatched the piece of chocolate out of his sister's hand and was fleeing for the door. 'Winston, Winston!' his mother called after him. 'Come back! Give your sister back her chocolate!'*
>
> *(...) His mother's anxious eyes were fixed on his face. His sister, conscious of having been robbed of something, had set up a feeble wail. His mother drew her arm round the child and pressed its face against her breast. Something in the gesture told him that his sister was dying.*[104]

[103] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 32.
[104] Ibid, p. 170.

### 5.1.3 Julia's transformation

Julia is a crucial character, Winston's stable anchor and prospect for a more natural way of life, as she catalyses his rebellion. Julia is no saintly woman and does not pretend to be one, which only furthers Winston's sympathies for her and the idea she represents. Julia is the most significant representation of defiance; her opposition is less overt than Winston's but ultimately more appreciable, as Julia firmly retains her sexuality;

> *'Have you done this before?'*
> *'Of course. Hundreds of times - well, scores of times anyway.'*
> *'With Party members?'*
> *'Yes, always with the Party members.'*
> *'With members of the Inner Party?'*
> *'Not with those swine, no. But there's plenty that would if they got half a chance.'*[105]

She resists the Party with her ability to find joy and fleeting moments of liberty, maintaining a sort of individualism despite the constant surveillance. A disposition that is all the more astonishing considering her work pressure and activism, albeit in reality, a mere cover. Julia is a born survivor, able to conceal her intents and pose as the Party's fanatical supporter, accomplished with pragmatic and calculated consideration;

> *She never heard of the Brotherhood, and refused to believe in its existence. Any kind of organised effort against the Party, which was bound to be a failure, struck her as stupid. The clever thing was to break the rules and stay alive all the same.*[106]

On the other hand, Winston seeks to understand the tyranny due to his intellectual pursuits, which Julia lacks. Together, they appreciate differences in approach and face the Party united in thrilling rebellion, and both finally feel alive, complementing one another;

> *'Listen. The more men you've had, the more I love you. Do you understand that?'*
> *'Yes. Perfectly.' (...)*
> *'You like doing this? I don't mean simply me: I mean the thing in itself?'*
> *'I adore it.'*[107]

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[105] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 131.
[106] Ibid, p. 138.
[107] Ibid, p. 132.

The relationship is not built solely on sexuality, although it represents its significant aspect, as in any usual intimate relationship.

Ultimately, the bond the couple forms is a desperate pursuit for a shred of humanity in an otherwise inhumane oppressive environment. Winston becomes emboldened and revitalised by Julia's affection and is hopeful that the regime will inevitably falter.

Upon their capture, Winston soon realises the futility of their resistance and thinks of Julia and her fate. The novel focuses on Winston's perspective, while Julia's ordeal is up to interpretation, but one may safely assume she underwent a similar treatment yet put up more resistance. O'Brien later reveals she shattered astonishingly fast, but he may have lied to compromise Winston even quicker. Ultimately, both break under O'Brien's watchful eyes, betray one another and their principles and submit to the Party's will.

When the two meet afterwards, Winston tries to initiate a dialogue, dismayed to find Julia so altered. The change is physical as well as psychological;

> *Her face was sallower, and there was a long scar, partly hidden by the hair, across her forehead and temple; but that was not the change. It was that her waist had grown thicker and, in a surprising way, had stiffened.*[108]

Almost immediately, Winston notices that her demeanour also changed quite considerably;

> *As they walked back across the grass she looked directly at him for the first time. It was only a momentary glance, full of contempt and dislike.*[109]

Shortly afterwards, the duo sits for a talk, and Julia, utterly defeated by guilt, flatly confesses her betrayal;

> *'I betrayed you,' she said baldly.*
> *'I betrayed you,' he said.*
> *She gave him another quick look of dislike.*[110]

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[108] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 304.
[109] Ibid, p. 305.
[110] Ibid, p. 305

Julia elaborates on her decision, confirming she experienced the same suffering as Winston and betrayed him when the anguish was no longer bearable;

> *'You think there's no other way of saving yourself, and you're quite ready 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.'*[111]

Winston and Julia are technically still alive but bereft of any vigour, utterly defeated after being apprehended by O'Brien. Julia leaves a stronger impression because she becomes the antithesis of her former self. Despite their resignation, the lasting imprint of guilt is apparent. Neither desires to renew their relationship due to the trauma and reciprocal blame for betrayal.

Furthermore, nothingness materialises where there once were mutual feelings and common grounds. O'Brien succeeded in redirecting any feelings towards the idea of Big Brother and the principles of Ingsoc. Winston, always profoundly fascinated by the Party's continuance and supreme authority, finally succumbs to the Party's indoctrination. Not that it would do him any good; the best-case scenario is a re-education process or forced labour, while summary execution is still the more probable course of action.

The worst part about the mutual transformation is that any sympathy erodes, and the past gets neglected. Winston is more excited to go to the Chestnut Tree Café than mending affairs with Julia. Julia shows disgust and dislike in her mannerisms towards Winston, yet the reader is not privy to any particularities, yet her guilt is unmistakable. Later on, Winston sits at Chestnut Tree Café and weeps upon hearing a nursery rhyme;

> *Under the spreading chestnut tree*
> *I sold you and you sold me ---*[112]

The lines directly refer to their relationship and how they betrayed one another, virtually offering their love to save themselves from the Party's inhumane treatment.

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[111] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 305.
[112] Ibid, p. 307.

## 5.2 Winston Smith's ordeal

Winston doubts his direction from the outset. Fears and displays of guilt are prevalent occurrences, especially when he spends time with Julia or partakes in seditious ambitions or nurtures dangerous thoughts. Guilt regarding his mother is also prominent and haunting memory.

Winston is an altogether subservient, scared man, differing from other members of the Outer Party by his intellect and capacity to reason. This difference and other traces of individuality diminish after detention in the Ministry of Love and subsequent torture, leaving Winston a docile shell of his former self. Fears and guilt remain, and the will to resist is altogether gone.

When detained, Winston sees a foreshadowing of what is to come. Two other prisoners, a "chinless man" and a "skull-faced man", cause a scene. The latter dies of starvation, hence the moniker, so the former offers him a piece of bread, resulting in immediate repression;

> *There was a furious, deafening roar from the telescreen. The chinless man jumped in his tracks.*
>
> *The skull-faced man had quickly thrust his hands behind his back, as though demonstrating to all the world that he refused the gift.*[113]

When sent to Room 101, the Skull-faced man breaks down, frantically pleading and offering anything, regardless of the absurdity;

> *'I've got a wife and three children. The biggest of them isn't six years old. You can take the whole lot of them and cut their throats in front of my eyes, and I'll stand by and watch it. But not room 101!'*[114]

Winston soon understands this unimaginable display as the Party's henchmen subject him to a vile series of torture, varying in essence. Physical abuse, consisting of regular and brutish beatings, reduces him to a timorous, barely conscious wretch.

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[113] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 247.
[114] Ibid, p. 249.

Psychological humiliation, in turn, eradicated his ability to reason and argue and proved much more debilitating;

> *Their real weapon was the merciless questioning that went on and on, hour after hour, tripping him up, laying traps for him, twisting everything that he said, convicting him at every step of lies and self-contradiction, until he began weeping as much from shame as from nervous fatigue."*
>
> *(...)*
>
> *In the end the nagging voices broke him down more completely than the boots of and fists of the guards.*[115]

Winston confesses to practically every allegation against him, even though his interrogators know the charges are nonsensical; it was a foregone conclusion. Winston then internally admits his guilt;

> *Besides, in a sense it was true. It was true that he had been the enemy of the Party, and in the eyes of the Party there was no distinction between the thought and the deed.*[116]

The most prominent figure of torment is O'Brien. Winston understands he keeps him from dying, administrating almost unbearable punishment yet also giving him time to recover; his "inquisitor" and "friend" at the same time, a sentiment which O'Brien encourages;

> *'Don't worry, Winston; you are in my keeping. For seven years I have watched over you. Now the turning point has come. I shall save you, I shall make you perfect.'*[117]

O'Brien's idiosyncrasy borders on religious; considering his demeanour towards Winston, he comes across as a fanatical priest determined to convince a heretic of his wrongdoing and that Winston deserves the punishment.

In his warped mind, O'Brien truly offers a chance to repent and achieve absolution through agony, and he also offers a permanent remedy;

> *'I am taking trouble with you, Winston,' he said, 'because you are worth the trouble. You know perfectly well what is the matter with you. You*

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[115] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 254.
[116] Ibid, p. 255.
[117] Ibid, p. 256.

*have known it for years, though you have fought against the knowledge. You are mentally deranged. (...) Fortunately it is curable.'*[118]

O'Brien administers treatment through the torment that tests Winston's limits, so he agrees with anything to stop the pain and feels grateful for even a slight decrease in pain. This cultivation of a saviour's image helps to break Winston thoroughly, as O'Brien states;

*'We are not content with negative obedience, nor even with the most abject submission. When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your free will.'*[119]

O'Brien further addresses the Party's conception of reshaping dissenters and illustrates the fate of the three dissenters of note, Jones, Aaronson and Rutherford;

*'I saw them gradually worn down, whimpering, grovelling, weeping - and in the end it was not with pain of fear, only with penitence. There was nothing left in them except sorrow for what they had done, and love of Big Brother. (...) They begged to be shot quickly, so that they could die while their minds were still clean.'*[120]

O'Brien later elaborates on the Party's philosophy, which revolves around maintaining absolute control and power with a collective character, as individual power hardly matters. O'Brien, otherwise imposing character, considers himself merely a cell of an organism that is the Party;

*'Alone-free-the human being is always defeated. It must be so, because every human being is doomed to die, which is the greatest of all failures. But if he can make complete, utter submission, if he can escape from his identity, if he can merge himself in the Party so that he is the Party, then he is all-powerful and immortal. '*[121]

The impending vision O'Brien presents is much darker than the reality Winston painfully comprehends; the Party would attain an even firmer grip on all aspects of life, with the abolishment of motherhood, friendship, intimate relationships and even of distinction between beauty and ugliness.

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[118] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 258.
[119] Ibid, p. 267.
[120] Ibid, p. 268.
[121] Ibid, p. 277.

## 5.3 Winston's capitulation and acceptance of guilt

Despite the brutal mistreatment, Winston rallies for a final display of protest as he first tries to argue with O'Brien. After meeting with failure, he animatedly denies O'Brien's reasoning and the Party's supposed continuance, claiming that, somehow, the Party will falter one way or another. Winston also voices his superiority, to which O'Brien responds by revealing to Winston his poor condition;

> *'Look at the condition you are in! he said. "Look at this fifthly grime all over your body. Look at the dirt between your toes. Look at that disgusting running sore on your leg. Do you know that you stink like a goat? Probably you have ceased to notice it. Look at your emaciation. Do you see? I can make my thumb and forefinger meet around your bicep. I could snap your neck like a carrot.'*[122]

O'Brien then proceeds to humiliate Winston further, tearing his hair, wrenching a tooth, and further verbally abusing his sorry state;

> *'You are rotting away,' he said; 'you are falling to pieces. What are you? A bag of filth. Now turn around and look into that mirror again. Do you see that thing facing you? That is the last man. If you are human, that is humanity.'*[123]

Winston collapses, unable to reconcile with his wretched state, and can provide no further resistance to O'Brien. O'Brien then takes advantage of the situation and blames Winston for all that has transpired. He ensures Winston gets nursed back to health to ensure the success of his manipulative ways. By switching from one extreme to another, O'Brien makes Winston doubt his existing resistance. Upon recovering enough to allow for a gathering of thoughts, Winston contemplates the circumstances;

> *Yes, even...He could not fight against the Party any longer. Besides, the Party was in the right. It must be so: how could the immortal, collective brain be mistaken? By what external standard could you check its judgements?*[124]

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[122] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 285.
[123] Ibid, p. 285.
[124] Ibid, p. 289-290.

At the same time, the thoughts of Julia are still present, and Winston nonetheless hates the Party and hopes to be shot before giving them the satisfaction of claiming his mind. Only when taken to *Room 101*, where everyone suffers their greatest fear, does Winston finally break, denouncing Julia and later replacing love for her with love for Big Brother;

> *'Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones.'*[125]

Afterwards, Winston is merely a gin-infused husk, caring for nothing else than Big Brother, very much like the "beetle-like" men he despised months ago. All that Winston craves at this stage is to be shot and forgiven by the Party.

[125] ORWELL, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 300.

# 6. Subservience in *The Handmaid's Tale*

*The Handmaid's Tale* presents a near future vision of the United States, overtaken by a Christian fundamentalist group called "Sons of Jacob". This new arrangement bears the name *Republic of Gilead*, a totalitarian and theocratical dominion that draws inspiration heavily from the Bible.

It is worth reminding that Atwood considers her novel an example of speculative fiction, not science fiction, because her vision is reasonably presumable and draws strictly upon the historical experience of Puritanism and radical offsets of Christianity.

Furthermore, there is a noticeable trace of psychological realism as Atwood tries to convey a realistic world, not so distant and wholly identifiable, minus the absurd treatment of women and the successful uprising of a Christian-based fundamentalist group. Still, the characters are relatable and show an unusual depth; the main character feels and presents her inner life, which Atwood deftly shows through the juxtaposition of past and present throughout the narrative.

While the Gilead regime restricts every one of its subjects, it is primarily a patriarchal society, with men holding the key roles and women mostly depreciated and divided into several classes, much like Huxley's class system of Alphas and Betas. Nevertheless, in this instance, the focus of the hierarchy is predominantly on subjugating women, denying them opportunities, education and self-esteem.

Gilead maintains a rigid class division to perpetuate its mandate and ensure general obedience. The system is well thought-out and practical, heavily emphasising obscurantism. The ruling class is associating specific monikers with shameful branding alongside appointing colours associated with different societal roles.

Red, generally associated with danger or fertility, is the designated colour of Handmaids. Contrasting solid colours, such as black and white, are reserved for Commanders, the prestigious elite, and their daughters, respectively. Blue garments denote wives, called "Wives", of Commanders. Striped colours

mark out the lower caste of women, "Econowives", almost at the bottom of the hierarchy.

At the bottom of the social ladder are "Unwomen" wearing grey; these are either infertile or refuse to conform to the norms. As a punishment, "Unwomen" are sent to the Colonies, where they handle radioactive waste in appalling conditions.

Law enforcement falls to brown-clad "Aunts", the highest-ranking women and quasi-teachers of Handmaids, ensuring obedience and morality, and "Guardians", young and inexperienced males who perform the role of the police.

As established, Gilead draws heavily from historical Christianity, given that the fundamentalists essentially establish its values on Biblical tales and parables, chiefly the Old Testament.

The critical location, for example, the Rachel and Leah Center, draws upon Biblical sisters Rachel and Leah, two wives of Jacob. The Old Testament and historical Christian experience inspire various punishments, such as public executions to condemn mortal sins, mainly homosexuality, termed contemptuously "Gender Treachery".

Worse still, the Gileadean law reduces women to mere objects across all the castes; although Aunts and Wives have more privileges than other women, established men still outrank them, and Commanders hold the reins. Gilead treats its women like cattle, working mules or outright breeding incubators, forcing them into subservience through fanatical indoctrination, brutal punishments, and violence, often conjoined with sexual abuse.

## 6.1 Republic of Gilead and its abusing ways

Gilead favours the conservative outlook mixed with Puritanism taken to the extreme. Their main argument is, as early as Medieval Europe, the notion of women being wholly subordinate to men and essentially vessels of sin due to Eve committing original sin. Eve established humankind's tainted nature as she failed and squandered Paradise.

The required subservience of women thus leans on the Medieval interpretation of the Bible. Aunts do their best to manipulate Handmaids into believing in their inferiority and accepting their supposed role in God's plan. This acceptance calls for utter submission to the whims of Commanders, who are, in fact, no saintly characters and seem to enjoy their exercise of power. Commanders knowingly contradict and exploit their established rules and image of devout and moral authorities, content in believing themselves safe from retribution.

Commanders are also directly responsible for the creation of Handmaids, allegedly to only procreate and preserve the population, with the notion of the family still the centrepiece of society. In reality, Commanders abuse their authority and deliberately seek to maintain relations with Handmaids well outside the scope of reproduction. Several key characters in the novel realise the transgression of Commanders yet do nothing to thwart them.

Direct control over sexuality is another central theme of the novel and the reason for Gilead's success in the narrative. The oppressive regime has gradually reduced women to property and established strict rules and limitations. Marthas are considered infertile and essentially household-bound, Handmaids are the designated breeders, Guardians are not allowed to touch women, Wives must officially suffer infidelity from husbands, and their Daughters have no choice in future partners.

Despite a sophisticated caste system, all castes face severe limitations, with only Commanders enjoying a higher degree of autonomy, with Angels as their soldiers and enforcers. At the same time, even the Commanders must follow

the rules, but they break them purposefully, with a greater chance of getting away with it.

Limitations regarding the caste are often subtle and seemingly trivial things, relatively ritualistic and trivial to a casual observer;

> *The sitting room would have one been called a drawing room, perhaps; then a living room. (…) But now it's officially a sitting room, because that's what is done in it, by some. For others there's standing room only.*[126]

Aside from general limitations, there exists a significant animosity among the castes. Wives can and frequently beat or otherwise humiliate Handmaids, as the rules allow that. Handmaids also face contempt from Econowives, who place almost the lowest in the social hierarchy and combine roles of Handmaids, Wives and Marthas.

While the novel does not explore the particular reasons for their relations, it is clear that at least some of the Econowives despise Handmaids, as demonstrated during the funeral procession, where Handmaids pay their respects;

> *We pause, out of respect, while they go by. I wonder if Ofglen feels what I do, pain like a stab, in the belly. We put our hands over our hearts to show these stranger women that we feel with them in loss. Beneath her veil the first one scowls at us. One of the others turn aside, spits on the sidewalk. The Econowives do not like us.*[127]

Besides the moral denigration and deliberate denial of the right to education, women in Gilead face an existential threat, too, provided they fail to integrate into society or bear children or when they organise or partake in dissent and subversive actions. These renegades are called "Unwomen" and lose the rest of their rights. They can be executed at whim or forced to work in hazardous environments, commonly in so-called Colonies, areas of the United States covered with radioactive waste.

The not-so-distinct possibility of re-classification is the primary lever for assuring collaboration and conformity with the regime.

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[126] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 79.
[127] Ibid, p. 44.

### 6.1.1 Offred and her inner dilemma

Offred, June by her birtname, is the name of the main female lead and narrator, a Handmaid and a very complex character. Offred still vividly remembers the state of affairs before the Sons of Jacob established the whole of Gilead and thus provides a broader perspective.

She also despises the regime passionately and serves as a symbol of defiance while simultaneously being affected by doctrine and her long subservience in Gilead society.

Offred highlights the life of Handmaids, which is harsh due to their societal role and even stricter rules surrounding their code of conduct. Handmaids have to lie with assigned Commanders during "Ceremony", ritual impregnation, where Commander's wife is also present;

> *My arms are raised; she holds my hands, each of mine in each of hers. This is supposed to signify that she is in control, of the process and thus of the product. If any. The rings of her left hand cut into my fingers. It may or may not be revenge.*[128]

Offred's mental state deteriorates with further abuse to the point where she falls into a contradictory condition. On the one hand, she demonstrates a subservient attitude with an ingrained sense of inferiority, enhanced by the preaching of Aunts.

On the other hand, Offred repeatedly drifts towards resisting the regime, partly thanks to her venturing into the past and finding solace in her former husband and best friend, Moira.

As for her resistance, it usually concerns little things, slight transgressions such as a tendency to steal Commander's pen;

> *I would like to steal something from this room. (...) It would make me feel that I have power.*[129]

Even before that, Offred offers her rationale behind the propensity to steal;

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[128] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 94.
[129] Ibid, p. 186.

*I want to be valued, in ways that I am not; I want to be more than valuable. I repeat my former name, remind myself of what I could once do, how others saw me.*
*I want to steal something.*[130]

Similarly, Offred and the other Handmaids steal butter as an improvised face lotion, which is not a petty offence, as Handmaids are supposed to be pure in body and deed, abstaining from vanities. Wives have decreed so, and Handmaids must obey. Offred thus resists, albeit in a minor way;

*There's no longer any hand lotion or face cream, not for us. Such things are considered vanities. We are containers, it's only the insides of our bodies that are important. The outside can become hard and wrinkled, for all they care, like the shell of a nut.*[131]

The desperation over Gilead's societal rules and brief recollections of a life well before establishing the theocratic dystopia induces a profound depression. Offred feels pressured and develops a negative attitude towards her body, which then Aunts zealously fuel to the brim. As a result, she partly accepts preached moral values and projects them in her introspection;

*My nakedness is strange to me already. My body seems outdated. Did I really wear bathing suits, at the beach? I did, without thought, among men, without caring that my legs, my arms, my thigs and my back on were on display, could be seen. Shameful, immodest.*[132]

Offred's negative perception of her body might also stem from the fact that she grows older still and, by definition of her role, must bear a child lest she wants to become Unwoman. Although her liberties are severely limited, she still commands a degree of respect as a Handmaid. Furthermore, Offred would avoid miserable life within The Colonies by successfully delivering a child.

Offred's guilt mainly ties to her current state and her inner struggle; she realises her present position as a coveted, dehumanised article and desperately tries to seek a way to regain control over her life;

*In reduced circumstances the desire to live attaches itself to strange objects. I would like a pet: a bird, say, or a cat. A familiar. Anything at*

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[130] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 97.
[131] Ibid, p. 96.
[132] Ibid, p. 63.

*all familiar. A rat would do, in a pinch, but there's no chance of that. This house is too clean.*[133]

With her husband, Luke, out of the picture, Offred begins a relationship with Commander and his Guardian, Nick. While the affair with Commander is forbidden, it is not entirely sexual. The same could not apply to her association with Nick. Offred feels guilty for actively betraying her husband with adultery but cannot help herself. She also cannot ascertain his fate, which troubles her further and induces survivor's guilt.

Finally, she demonstrates ambivalence in her desire to break the rules and oppose the regime, but ultimately, she does not commit and becomes complacent. Although she goes through a noticeable transformation, she is unlike Orwell's Winston or Huxley's John in that her rebellion never manifests in excess. Both try their best to thwart the regime, but Offred does not. Her way of resistance is subtle but marred with constant inner discord.

[133] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 111.

### 6.1.2 Commander Fred as a face of the abuse

Fred Waterford is one of the privileged Commanders, possibly its co-founder. His personality is multi-faceted, similar to Offred's. Being a part of the elite ruling caste, Waterford is complicit in the abuse of authority and helps to maintain Gilead's functionality. He is a hypocrite, just like other Commanders, but hides his disposition well.

During the Ceremony, Fred seems just as disgraced as his wife and Offred. What transpired in a certain way humiliated all three, and Fred approached the whole procedure without apparent interest. However, after that, he takes an interest in Offred, and it soon becomes evident that he emotionally and psychologically abuses his wife and intends to do so to Offred as well.

Fred places everyone in his household in a subservient position, his wife included. While he obeys the general dictum of Gileadean law, he is not above twisting the law for his purposes. His manners and seeming affection for Offred allows her transformation into a less broken person, yet his motives are suspicious. Although he demonstrates submissive behaviour towards Offred, going as far as kneeling before her, he still retains his domineering persona and total control over Offred.

Offred, on her part, seems to realise this yet does not disagree or oppose him fractionally. In many ways, the Commander breaks the rules on behalf of Offred, which in turn clears the way for her changeover; she gains a fraction of human treatment, which she desperately sought, and Fred can deepen his position of power;

> *'Is that a word?' says the Commander.*
> *'We could look it up,' I say. 'It's archaic.'*
> *'I'll give it to you,' he says. He smiles. The Commander likes it when I distinguish myself, show precocity, like an attentive pet, prick-eared and eager to perform. His approbation laps me like a warm bath. I sense in him none of the animosity I used to sense in men, even in Luke sometimes. He's not saying bitch in his head. In fact he is positively daddyish. He likes to think I am being entertained; and I am, I am.*[134]

[134] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 183-184.

Offred mistakes his approach as a genuine attempt to maintain human connection, which she believes they share. His mannerism during one session of the Ceremony and his general unfavourable relationship with his wife makes Offred believe Fred is just like her, constrained by his social role and forced to act the way he does out of necessity.

Moreover, while this sentiment holds some merit, Fred manipulates Offred and realises his apparent fantasy, as the whole affair with Offred is like a forbidden fruit. He takes a significant risk, as Offred could quickly turn him in, guaranteeing his demise. Fred could counter with his move and, using his influence, turn the tables on Offred. The two have reached a deadlock, but neither desires to legitimately destroy the other, as they need one another.

There is also the distinct possibility of Fred's attitude being affected by guilt over the general state of affairs within Gilead, as he does show a substantial degree of reluctance at times. Also, Fred's repeatedly partaking in clandestine meetings with Offred might hint at his desire to break from the system. Not only does Fred provide contraband items, but he also actively discusses the past, which is highly unorthodox considering his position. It is not inconceivable to consider his underlying guilt stemming from the regime he helped to realise.

During one particular exchange with Offred, Fred asked about her opinion on Gilead's arrangement and got remarkably candid about the state of affairs;

> *You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, is what he says. We thought we could do better.*
> *Better? I say, in a small voice. How can he think this is better?*
> *Better never means better for everyone, he says. It always means worse, for some.*[135]

[135] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 211.

### 6.1.3 Moira, the false martyr

Moira occupies a significant role within the narrative due to her role as a voice of dissent. Even before the Sons of Jacob took over, Moira spoke against the oppression of women as an activist and foresaw the hostile takeover as inevitable. When the first repressions came, Moira seemed gleeful, feeling a sense of justification.

Like Offred, she too transforms, albeit in an inverse sense; where Offred slowly dares to ever greater acts of non-conformity, Moira ends up a broken shell of her former self. In many aspects, Moira resembles Offred's mother, a complex albeit vexatious character.

Moira's personality often gives Offred the courage to resume Gileadean existence without losing her mind, as happened to Janine. Their relationship is complex, as Offred denounced her well before the establishment of Gilead due to her sexual orientation, then made peace with her. Despite their contrasting personalities and conflicts, the two united beneath Gilead's oppressive ways. Moira acts as Offred's stable anchor, making Gilead slightly more bearable and providing courage and resilience to keep going. Offred panics at the slightest notion of Moira leaving, getting possessive;

> *'I couldn't stand the thought of her not being here, with me. For me.'*[136]

To the surprise of the other Handmaids, Moira repeatedly refuses to submit to expected norms, despite the beatings and constant shaming from Aunts. She even managed to outwit one of the Aunts, Aunt Elizabeth, when trying to escape Red Center;

> *Moira got hold of her cattle prod and her whistle, ordering Aunt Elizabeth to unclip them from her belt. (...) Moira took off her own clothes and put on those of Aunt Elizabeth, which did not fit her exactly but well enough. She was not overly cruel to Aunt Elizabeth, she allowed her to put on her own red dress.*[137]

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[136] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 89.
[137] Ibid, p. 131.

The brazen attempt strengthens dissent among the Handmaids, as Moira becomes a legend, a symbol of defiance, a reminder that the only recourse from oppression is dogged resistance;

> *In the light of Moira, the Aunts were less fearsome and more absurd. Their power had a flaw to it. They could be shanghaied in toilets. The audacity was what we liked.*[138]

Moira's acts of defiance are not strictly bound to her exclusively, as she actively seeks to help other Handmaids, albeit intransigent. When Janine breaks down in earnest, Moira tries to pull her out of depression;

> *Moira took Janine by the shoulders and shook her. Snap out of it, Janine, she said roughly. (...) Janine smiled. You have a nice day, now, she said. Moira slapped her across the face, twice, back and forth. Get back here, she said. Get right back here! You can't stay there, you aren't there anymore. That's all gone.*[139]

Despite Moira's resilience and seeming indomitability, Commander Fred unwittingly shatters Offred's idolisation of her. Offred discovers that Moira is among the women who got a choice between working in a brothel or toiling in the Colonies. The regime puts irreconcilable women of Moira's calibre out of societal boundaries to divest them of influence. Once a proud activist and tenacious opponent of Gilead's oppression, Moira now gives in and settles with the few benefits of Jezebel's, a brothel for the privileged. Offred is horrified upon seeing the change in her longstanding role model;

> *'So here I am. They even give you face cream. You should figure out some way of getting in here. (…) The food's not bad and there's drink and drugs, if you want it, and we only work nights.'*
> *'Moira,' I say. 'You don't mean that.' She is frightening me now, because what I hear in her voice is indifference, a lack of volition.*[140]

While Moira gains some minor advantages and appreciates a looser regime, she is still subservient and forced to sell her body. Perhaps unable to reconcile with her situation, her actual defeat, she prefers delusion as a coping mechanism. Ultimately, the proud Moira broke beyond repair, much to Offred's disappointment.

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[138] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 133.
[139] Ibid, p. 216.
[140] Ibid, p. 249.

## 6.2 Dehumanisation of Handmaids

Handmaids have a precarious position in Gilead society. On one hand, they are preeminent part of society, because they can give birth. On the other hand, society forces them into greater submission and deference, resulting in most Handmaids break mentally under tutelage of often fanatical Aunts.

Aunts serve as willing and fanatical checking measure, checking Handmaids and ensuring their subservience using diverse strategies. They are not beyond the physical eradication of dissent, usually administered with meticulous efficiency, as illustrated in Moira, a rebellious Handmaid;

> *It was the feet they'd do, for a first offense. They used steel cables, frayed at the ends. After that the hands. They didn't care what they did to your feet or your hands, even if it was permanent. Remember, said Aunt Lydia. For our purposes your feet and your hands are not essential.*[141]

Although fully capable of administering violence, Aunts excel at psychological manipulation, enforcing the notion of inferiority and a sense of low self-worth disguised beneath the veneer of humbleness;

> *You're getting the best, you know, said Aunt Lydia. There's a war on, things are rationed. You are spoiled girls, she twinkled, as if rebuking a kitten. Naughty puss*.[142]

The manipulative effect of Aunts is showcased many times throughout the novel, for example, during "Testifying" in the Red Center, which is Gilead's version of therapy sessions with a twist. Aunts provide a supposed safe space for Handmaids where they can share their troubles.

The true purpose of Testifying is to undermine their self-esteem and internalise the blame. Concretely, Handmaid Janine confesses being gang-raped by the age fourteen and the subsequent abortion. Aunt Helena shames Janine before the other Handmaids, demanding they denounce Janine;

> *But whose fault was it? Aunt Helena says, holding up one plump finger. Her fault, her fault, her fault, we chant in unison.*

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[141] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 91.
[142] Ibid, p. 89.

*Who led them on? Aunt Helena beams, pleased with us. She did. She did. She did.*
*Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen?*
*Teach her a lesson. Teach her a lesson. Teach her a lesson.*[143]

Public humiliation follows as Aunts forces Janine to kneel and abase herself before a gathered class of Handmaids, who verbally assault her. Offred, internally and externally, voices her disgust at the apparent weakness with a faint trace of guilt. As for Janine, she learns her lesson and the following week proclaims her fault;

*This week Janine doesn't wait for us to jeer at her. It was my fault, she says. It was my own fault. I led them on. I deserved the pain.*[144]

The perverted form of testifying serves a similar purpose to Oceania's Two Minutes Hate, albeit in a much less severe form and aimed at the actual existing persona. Also, Helena's approach is, in a way, reminiscent of O'Brien's torture and his subsequent praise when Winston gives in.

The comparison to Two Minutes Hate becomes even more palpable when considering the idea behind "Particicution", the compound by itself analogous to Newspeak. Particicution is a method of execution performed by a collective beating by Handmaids on a man charged with rape or violence towards Handmaids. The regime abuses the punishment to remove dissenters and to give Handmaids an outlet for violence and rage. The procedure is firmly in the hands of Aunts, who direct the retribution of Handmaids through whistle;

*'This man' said Aunt Lydia, 'has been convicted of rape.' Her voice trembles with rage, and a kind of triumph. 'He was once a Guardian. He has disgraced his uniform. He has abused his position of trust. His partner in viciousness has already been shot.*[145] *(...)*

*'I will not offend your ears with any details, except to say that one woman was pregnant and the baby died.' A sigh goes up from us; despite myself I feel my hands clench. It is too much, this violation. (...) We jostle forward, our heads turn from side to side, our nostrils flare, sniffing death, we look at one another, seeing the hatred.*[146]

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[143] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 72.
[144] Ibid, p. 72.
[145] Ibid, p. 278.
[146] Ibid, p. 279.

Aunt Lydia gives the command through the whistle, and Handmaids collectively throw themselves at the offender in a sudden outburst of frenzy. Such behaviour is highly uncharacteristic for the otherwise docile social class, yet the regime allows and even endorses the violence as long as their representatives regulate it.

Mistreatment of the regime concerns every woman in Gilead. However, perhaps the most notorious example of the abuse is Janine, a formerly perceptive young girl who understandably struggles with the regime's harshness. As mentioned earlier, Aunts publicly shamed Janine, yet her tribulations only piled further. Janine successfully gave birth to a child, and enjoys a brief sensation of triumph;

> *Aunt Elizabeth is gently washing the baby off, it isn't crying much, it stops. As quietly as possible, so as not to startle it, we rise, crowd around Janine, squeezing her, patting her.*[147]

Wives almost push Handmaids aside, surround Janine and express their congratulations with a faint trace of venom. The true heroine of the procedure is Serena Joy, who eventually gets to claim the baby, much to Janine's chagrin;

> *The Wives are here to bear witness to the naming. It's the Wives who do the naming, around here.*
> *'Angela,' says the Commander's Wife.*
> *'Angela, Angela,' the Wives repeat, twittering. 'What a sweet name! Oh, she's perfect! Oh, she's wonderful!'*[148]

After the initial enthusiasm, realisation comes to previously assisting Handmaids;

> *We ache. Each of us holds in her lap a phantom, a ghost baby. What confronts us, now the excitement is over, is our own failure.*[149]

As for Janine, her success soon turns into a disaster, as Angela perishes prematurely, which is, in Gilead's terminology, called "shredder". Janine quite understandably completely lapses out of sanity due to unendurable guilt, as it happened for a second time.

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[147] ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, p. 126.
[148] Ibid, p. 126.
[149] Ibid, p. 127.

## 6.3 The profane duality of conformity and subversion

Attwood riddled the novel with the symbolism of duality, often presenting two opposing forces or contradictory attitudes within the confines of Gilead. One may notice the duality of men and women, two functionally antagonistic groups, or the duality between hope and despair. Attwood also broadly elaborates on the duality of rigid theocratic principles and the hypocrisy of the ruling class.

There, *The Handmaid's Tale* departs from the other analysed works, as the ruling elite in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* scarcely show hypocrisy. In the former, O'Brien does enjoy advantages yet is a fanatical adherent of the dogma. In the latter, Mond regards his position with a degree of reluctance and feels somewhat guilty about having the ability to think independently, viewing his function as a Controller as a necessary evil.

The most striking is the paradoxical duality of conformity to the rules and subversive acts of rebellion. While such ambivalence is a common feature of dystopian fiction, it is more pronounced in *The Handmaid's Tale*, as it covers not only the dissidents but also the upper echelons of power. Orwell's O'Brien would only deviate from the principles of Ingsoc if it entailed compromising thought criminals. On his own, O'Brien is an exemplar of orthodoxy, notwithstanding double-think.

*Brave New World's* Mustapha Mond has little need to break the rules, as the World State's code of conduct is almost customary and heavily rooted in societal roles. Mond's unique rank sees him at the top and simultaneously outside the official class system.

As to his motivations, Mond is an elevated and rational scientist, an allegory to Plato's notions about Republic led by an elite cadre of philosophers. Mond believes that the current establishment of the World State is in the best interest of broader humanity, the best chance at a plausible Utopia. Plato would arguably agree with the core idea. In any case, Mond does not act out of selfish impulses.

The characters representing the oppressive regime in *The Handmaid's Tale* stand out because they regularly break the rules willingly and out of biased causes. The fabled Commanders have, officially, their authority constrained by rules, yet they constantly twist or break them, most apparent in the case of Commander Fred. Commanders are supposed to be moral paragons but, in reality, are ethically corrupted and drunk with power. Wives, by purpose, are bitter and ill-wishing but victims nonetheless. They, too, break the rules on numerous occasions.

Handmaids possess only a tiny sliver of influence due to their function as sanctioned breeders. Logically, Handmaids commit countless notable transgressions per capita, albeit mostly only minor demonstrations of aversion. Probably the only caste wholly orthodox are the Aunts, without any doubt the most arduous proponents of the regime, champions of capital punishments and all too eager to debase other women.

# 7. Subservience in *The Children of Men*

Published in 1992, *The Children of Men* depicts a speculative vision of a near-future Britain. The narrative reveals that humanity has faced an unprecedented catastrophe of global infertility lasting more than twenty-five years. Given the duration of the crisis, the novel presents the sixth extinction scenario, the extinction of the human race, which in the novel is highly plausible, as the last children were born in 1995.

The underlying notion of the novel is that the rapidly declining condition is divine punishment for misdemeanours and lack of faith. James herself was conservative and religious, yet her vision pictures a strictly secular United Kingdom wherein religion lost its place in the everyday discourse.

Needless to say, Atwood was a potent inspiration for James, as one may identify numerous similarities, which is intriguing given the different outlooks and opposite placement on the political spectrum of both authors; James was an Anglican Tory and criticised the decline of Christianity in the Western world, while Atwood is a liberal American feminist who implemented patriarchy and Christian fundamentalism fusing into an oppressive theocratic regime.

Out of the analysed works, *The Children of Men* presents the most plausible future vision. *The Handmaid's Tale* spoke predominantly to the realities of its time, Ronald Reagan's presidency and the fundamentalist Christian influences that pervaded high politics, coinciding with Reagan's long-standing refusal to acknowledge AIDS as a severe health issue. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* admonishes the Soviet Union and communism, and *Brave New World* cautions against overreliance on technology in an overtly capitalist state.

James focuses instead on the issue of infertility, which is a genuine concern in the current geopolitical situation. Admittedly, Atwood also deals with the issue. However, in her novel, the Gilead theocracy dictates the overall narrative, whereas James maintains a secular state not dissimilar to contemporary Britain, which makes her concept more relevant and imaginable. There is a substantial amount of prescience in the novel, not merely regarding the populational decline but also in pure comprehension and relatability; some

of the scenes depict women treating animals as children, which seems peculiar at first, yet familiar in our current society. The realisation that some of the elements are already at play in the present time makes James's dystopia frightening to contemplate.

The oppressive government within the novel is called "Warden Forces", led by the "Council of Guardians", who maintain a rather harsh rule using mass surveillance and detention camps, among other measures, and various state-approved programmes and campaigns.

The grimmest programme by far is called "Quietus"; in other words, a mass suicide ritual reserved for people past sixty years of age. The state encourages the elderly, non-productive parts of the community, to alleviate their burden on society by willingly accepting death. It is, of course, a potent tool in population control, which is socially accepted. Financial compensation for the relatives eases general approval of the practice.

Not surprisingly, it eventually becomes apparent that participation is not necessarily voluntary, which is a significant plot point of the resistance movement. Quietus is somewhat reminiscent of the forced elimination of the impaired populace in the Third Reich prior to the outset of World War II.

The one possible recourse from the pathos lies in the Omegas, the last-born generation before global infertility pummelled humanity's prospects. Many expect Omegas will rise to the occasion and prevent the extinction of humanity. Not only can they unseat the regime, but they also can lead humanity towards a new beginning, re-structure and rebuild society. Omegas present the only feasible hope in an otherwise depressing setting of constant reproach.

Society collectively failed, and Omegas represent either salvation or annihilation. From the perspective of several characters, it looks more like the latter, as Omegas are appropriately spoiled and indulgent, borderline psychopathic; genuine guilt seems to originate from their overly liberal upbringing. They are distinctly reminiscent of the gangs from *The Clockwork*

*Orange*, who also terrorise their surroundings, entirely disregarding societal norms.

Subservience in the novel mainly revolves around the crippling guilt stemming from a concept of collective failure. Most of the populace is complacent and largely lethargic, making it easier for the Council to perpetuate their rule. In the case of organised opposition, Warden Forces stand ready to instil order and obedience. The Council also established state-approved religion called "The Church of England Purified", which combines some elements of Christianity with state ideology, further enforcing subservience.

Nihilism and the general lack of will to oppose the system is a significant facet that helps perpetuate the oppressive regime, whose figureheads have varying motivations. Numerous characters try to escape from guilt, be it individual or collective, using various means; substances abuse in more destructive urges or denial, alternatively, escapism. Considering the mental state of society, it is not so challenging to extort subservience.

## 7.1 Infertility and the collective guilt of humanity

To fully grasp the notion of guilt within the novel, it is crucial to remember the primary plot device and its full ramifications. *The Children of Men* presents the prospect of a future with no future due to an onset of cataclysmic worldwide infertility. Humankind is facing the inadvertent prospect of a slow downfall with no feasible amelioration. By the novel's opening, the situation continues for a quarter of a Century, and entire generations are missing from the picture. Crippling and profound dejection affect a significant portion of the population, constantly questioning why things come to such a dismal state.

The worst part about the widespread sterility is that there is no consensus or scientific explanation, which is stupendously humiliating and shameful. Consigned to oblivion without knowing the cause, that only rubs salt into the wound and aggravates the grave situation. The novel's protagonist, Theodore Faron, also referred to as Theo, appropriately sums up the collective sentiment by writing the following;

> *We are outraged and demoralized less by the impending end of our species, less even by our inability to prevent it, than by our failure to discover the cause. Western science and Western medicine haven't prepared us for the magnitude and humiliation of this ultimate failure.*[150]

Theodore further complains that universal infertility brought about the collapse of science, a modern iteration of religion with a caring and benevolent god unbothered by a lack of devotees. It is understandable if an admitted dilettante utters a somewhat harsh complaint, yet Theodor's frustration is perfectly justified;

> *Like a lecherous stud suddenly stricken with impotence, we are humiliated at the very heart of our faith in ourselves. For all our knowledge, out intelligence, our power, we can no longer do what the animals do without thought. No wonder we worship and resent them.*[151]

Theodore alludes to animals having a unique position within the public. Society in the novel displays a curious yet discernible preference for keeping pets. It is beyond a mere cultural trend, as pets perform the role of recompense

[150] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 5.
[151] Ibid, p. 6.

for children. New born pets unwittingly demonstrate the dystopia and related moral and spiritual decline of James's vision perhaps better than any other indicator.

Aside from animals, dolls are the only comparable substitute for offspring, and the novel mentions the doll industry experiencing a boom. From a psychological standpoint, these compensation strategies are excusable, especially given the petrifying prospects of no meaningful future. However, there is an underlying sense of envy and animosity, with strict regulations on the quantity of the young.

Prevalent toxicity concerns not only the number of animals but also their ownership; in a way, they legitimately substitute children with legal custody and court proceedings. Theodore, himself a proud owner of a cat named Nell, at one point, ruminates on the remorselessness of custody cases;

> *As the registered part-owner on the fecund-domestic-animal licence I could, of course, have applied to the Animal Custody Court for joint custody or an access order, but I had no wish to submit myself to that humiliation. Some of the animal custody cases are fiercely, expensively and publicly fought and I have no intention of adding to their number.*[152]

Some remain doggedly diligent in their resentment and aversion towards animals due to a lasting disturbance of an unsteady notion of human superiority. When a young deer briefly disturbs a sermon, a minor and forgettable offence under normal circumstances, the chaplain suddenly loses his balance;

> *The chaplain had turned to Theo, tears streaming down his face. 'Christ, why can't they wait? Bloody animals. They'll have it all soon enough. Why can't they wait? '*[153]

Another outlet of guilt for the perceived collective failing lies in the widespread utilisation of dolls, usually commissioned with prams and the necessary accessories for women desperately craving maternal affection. As Theo notes, dolls came in many shapes and varying quality, with those more sophisticated easily exceeding two thousand pounds.

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[152] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 116.
[153] Ibid, p. 36.

What followed was a desperate and heart-breaking outset of pseudo-births, which merely deepened the denial and frustration of the populace. Theo's diary mentions one particular incident;

> *Aware of his gaze, the woman smiled, an idiot smile, inviting connivance, congratulations. As their eyes met and he dropped his, so that she shouldn't see his small pity and his greater contempt, she jerked the pram back, then put out a shielding arm as if to ward off his masculine importunities.*[154]

The poor woman misunderstands his reaction, but the worst comes afterwards when a seeming congratulant, another woman, violently destroys the doll. The reaction of the first woman is inappropriate, yet unfortunately wholly understandable, considering the context of the setting;

> *The second woman suddenly seized the doll, tore it form the coverings and, without a word, swung it twice round her head by the legs and dashed it against the stone wall with tremendous force. (…). The owner was for two seconds absolutely silent. And then she screamed. (...) She stood there, hat askew, head thrown back to the heavens, her mouth stretched into a gape from which poured her agony, her grief, her anger.*[155]

Similar incidents are commonplace and originate in profound trauma related to the mentioned outbreak of infertility. Aside from repeated attempts to substitute the hollowness, Theo also mentions the effort to dismantle the reminders of the past, which aptly highlights the collective mental anguish stemming from the whole crisis;

> *In our universal bereavement, like grieving parents, we have put away all painful reminders of out loss. The children's playgrounds in our parks have been dismantled.*[156]

The government realised the necessary measures to prevent widespread descent into insanity. These arrangements support weekly training sessions in survival skills, and the Council encourages sports and physical health. For most citizens, it becomes a question of wanting to stay alive, practically an obsession with bodily functions and control over one's ageing.

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[154] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 35.
[155] Ibid, p. 35.
[156] Ibid, p. 9.

### 7.1.1 Theodore's guilt and shame

Theodore Faron of Oxford, a former history professor, is among the more influential constituents of the narrative, given his kinship with the self-appointed, ruling Warden of England, Xan Lyppiatt. While their relationship is primarily tense and defined by their many different facets, the two have a grudging respect for each other.

Theodore's perception of guilt stems from external as well as internal reasons. Like his fellow citizens, he also feels the crushing pressure of the overall decline and the bludgeoning of complacency and charade. Theo tends to look down on his contemporaries, maintaining his jaded approach throughout the novel. As it turns out, however, the borderline disapproving attitude is merely the result of his constant fears of inadequacy and personal traumatic experiences.

In 1994, almost a year before Omega, Theo tragically ran over his fifteen-month-old daughter Natalie, an accident he describes vividly in his diary, alongside his immediate thought process;

> *The immediate knowledge, certain, absolute, terrifying, of what it was. And the five seconds of total silence before the screaming began. I knew that it was Helena screaming and yet part of my mind couldn't believe that what I was hearing was a human sound. And I remember the humiliation. I couldn't move, couldn't get out of the car, couldn't even stretch out my hand to the door.*
>
> *And then George Hawkins, our neighbour, was banging on the glass and shouting, 'Get out you bastard, get out!' And I can remember the irrelevance of my thought, seeing that gross, anger-distorted face pressing against the glass: He never liked me. And I can't pretend that it didn't happen. I can't pretend it was someone else. I can't pretend I wasn't responsible.*[157]

Deeply affected by the tragedy, Theo found only contempt and unspoken accusation on his wife's part, which fed the downward spiral of grief and further guilt resulting from a failed marriage. Theo admits there never was much affection, to begin with, yet the misfortune further divided the two, much to Theo's chagrin.

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[157] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 28-29.

His wife, Helena, understandably withdrew, and although approved of moving out, she practised emotional distance and eventually relocated to a separate room, outspokenly indicating that Theo dashed hopes of any present or future offspring. That was less than a year before Omega; after that, there was no feasible way of conceiving a child. Not that Helena would acquiesce, but it accentuates the tragedy of the accident.

> *She thought I cared less, and she was right. She thought that I cared less because I loved less, and she was right about that too.*[158]

Theo provides his perception of the aftermath, along with a "litany of justification", which is more of a desperate attempt to alleviate the guilt, same as the preceding lines nearly denigrating Nathalie as unsightly and caricature of his father-in-law;

> *For Christ's sake, it was an accident. I didn't mean to do it. I'm not the only father to have run down his child. She was supposed to be looking after Natalie, the child was her responsibility, she made it plain enough it wasn't mine.*[159]

Profound shame at was has transpired haunts Theodore constantly, recollections of his daughter marred by misfortune and associated solely with failings and personal shortcomings, such as an incident where his selfish motivation overrode the needs of his daughter;

> *The weekend break had begun with the usual resentment and had continued with half-repressed ill-humour. It was, of course, his fault. He had been more ready to hurt his wife's feelings and deprive his daughter than to inconvenience a pub full of strangers. He wished there could be one memory of his dead child which wasn't tainted with guilt and regret.*[160]

The other prominent source of guilt derives from Theo's involvement with the Five Fishes group, a resistance movement intent on displacing Xan as the Warden and introducing restorative reforms. Ultimately, guilt adds to a scarcely bearable amount until Theo's moment of catharsis, detailed further due to the complexity of his narrative arc.

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[158] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 29.
[159] Ibid, p. 29-30.
[160] Ibid, p. 70.

### 7.1.2 The Five Fishes and their demands

The Five Fishes is the designation for a group of dissenters who seek to change the established order for the better. The name develops over time, at first a mere gathering of five like-minded individuals. The five members designate code names denoting fish; Rolf, the self-proclaimed leader of the group, going by "Rudd", Gascoigne "Gurdon", Luke "Loach", Miriam "Minnow", Julian "John Dory". Theo becomes the notional sixth of the clandestine group and a vital asset due to his ties to the Warden.

Theodore gradually learns more about the individual members, although the information is still partial. Rolf, a burly engineer, is the husband of Julian, the actual figurehead of the group. There is mutual antipathy between Theo and Rolf, lasting until the bitter end. Luke is a priest, and secret lover of Julian and father of her child. Miriam is an older midwife, a stable anchor of the group. Gascoigne is the former driver and has the looks of a much younger man, but James is reluctant to provide further characterisation, as Gascoigne is the first to fall.

Theo briefly contemplates the assemblage and concludes his ruminations with the following conclusion;

> *The little group had no real cohesion and, he suspected, no common purpose. Gascoigne was fuelled by indignation about the appropriation of the name Grenadier, Miriam by some motive which was, as yet, unclear, Julian and Luke by religious idealism, Rolf by jealousy and ambition.*[161]

The Five Fishes familiarise their demands, which are highly heretical with full implications. Their goals aim at reducing the oppressive measures established by the Council, such as forced medical examinations and, by extension, Quietus procedure;

> *Luke said: 'It isn't only the semen testing. He should stop the compulsory gynaecological examinations. They degrade women. And we want him to put an end to the Quietus. I know that all the old people are supposed to be volunteers. Maybe it started out like that. Maybe some of them still are.'*[162]

[161] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 60.
[162] Ibid, p. 58.

Members further call for dealing with the question of "Sojourners" and wish to restructure the Penal Colony on the Isle of Man. The expectations and execution of the group's actions are somewhat naive, as Theo correctly assumed. Frequently, friction becomes unavoidable, considering highly individualist aims and a lack of proper planning. Despite the difficulties, the group genuinely inflicts damage to the regime, yet as Theo himself points out;

> *'You've lasted this long because the Warden wanted you to last. He could have had you picked months ago. He didn't because you're more useful to him at large than imprisoned. He doesn't want martyrs. What he does want is the pretence of an internal threat to good public order. It helps buttress his authority. All tyrants have needed that from time to time.'*[163]

Furthermore, from the conversation with Rolf, Theo begins to suspect Rolf's goals align with Xan's, meaning there is a not-so-distinct possibility of replacing one tyranny with another, should the group succeed;

> *'I shall appoint my own Council but without Xan Lyppiatt as a member. Lyppiatt's had his share of power.' 'Presumably you'll do something about pacifying the Isle of Man.' 'That's hardly a priority. The country won't exactly thank me for releasing a gang of criminal psychopaths on them. I'll wait until they reduce themselves by natural wastage. That problem will solve itself.'*[164]

The group fails in the original intent, yet Theo and Julian survive and arguably attain the desired outcome in many ways better than the original plan. Rolf demonstrates a faulty idealist who is remorseless and willing to betray his closest associates in exchange for filling the position of Xan. It is also worth noticing that earlier in the novel, Theo mentions that Rolf is mere years separate from the Omega generation. For undisclosed reasons, people born close to this milestone are severely affected by external means. In the case of Rolf, Theo explicitly states the disappointment parents of Rolf's generation felt. It might explain Rolf's thought process, an underlying sense of guilt at failing to meet expectations;

> *It was a generation programmed for failure, the ultimate disappointment to the parents who had bred them and the race which had invested in them so much careful nurturing and so much hope.*[165]

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[163] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 146.
[164] Ibid, p. 167.
[165] Ibid, p. 54.

### 7.1.3 The privileged and the despised (Omegas and the Isle of Man)

The novel contrasts two particular unconnected social groups that still share many characteristics. Omegas constitute the last-born generation, a source of much ambivalence given their anticipated role as restorers and the last stake in the future. As Theo reflects multiple times throughout the novel, Omegas collectively failed just as the previous generation, which deepens the extinction psychosis of a dying species.

The failure of Omegas is all the more disconcerting considering all the care invested into their development; after all, they are to inherit the future, shape their surroundings for the better and make amends for the sins of their predecessors. The societal pressure must have been enormous, and one hardly wonders that the entire Omega generation fell short in the face of such presumptuous ambition. Even in the face of extinction, humankind thought itself master of destiny and paid dearly for the impudence.

Nevertheless, there are hints and undeniable proof of Omegas being profoundly affected by some hardly discernible factors. James never elaborates on what ails the generation, yet given the overall Biblical influences, it seems supernatural, just like the infertility pandemic. At the novel's conclusion, there is a new-born, practically a miracle by all accounts, and the child is born to two devout Christians.

Theo, in particular, seems not overly fond of Omegas, although others concur more or less outspokenly. Omegas are a privileged social class, a spoiled and ill-disciplined assortment of conceited individuals. Many have a propensity towards violence and form gang-like parties, often intentionally breaking the law. Theo observes that Omegas frequently receive special treatment;

> *It is said when an Omega is caught he is offered immunity if he is prepared to join the State Security Police, whereas the rest of the gang, no more guilty, are sent on conviction to the Penal Colony on the Isle of Man, to which all those convicted of crimes of violence, burglary or repeated theft are now banished.*[166]

[166] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 10.

Understandably, Theo often contemplates the nature of Omegas, trying to trace the cause of their erratic and often barbaric violent impulses. Theo's diary entry considers the reasons for the overt dispositions of Omegas;

> *Perhaps we have made our Omegas what they are by out own folly; a regime which combines perpetual surveillance with total indulgence is hardly conductive to healthy development. If from infancy you treat children as gods they are liable in adulthood to act as devils.*[167]

As mentioned previously, nurture is crucial to how Omegas turned out, yet the novel repeats and hammers the notion of some divine intervention; humanity sinned and now faces the consequences of divine wrath, reflected in-universe.

As for the more unstable elements of the generation, Theo refers to whole gangs of "Painted Faces" supposedly consisting of Omegas, first a mere rumour, later, a painful understanding of the revolting reality. During their journey, a roving band of Painted Faces attacks Five Fishes, and despite their apparent savagery and boundless cruelty, the gang demonstrates substantial intellect. Luke perishes in ritual lynching, beaten to a pulp. The scene gives the impression of Omegas enacting a perverse game, role-playing as a savage tribe;

> *(…) Luke was down, and his murderers fell upon him like beasts round their prey, jostling for a place, raining their blows in a frenzy*.[168]

If these people make a prospect of the future, no wonder Theo has such jaded sentiment, and the others run out of hope. It is remarkably depressing, and on the deterioration of Omegas, James's dystopia shines with all the ramifications. Contrasting with Omegas are offenders sent to the Isle of Man Penal Colony. The Warden and, by extension, the Council scarcely care about the conditions, so the situation within the colony descends into mayhem, much to Xan's indifference; the colony is merely a tool for isolating the undesired and fixing them in one place. Naturally, the Isle of Man is the regime's leverage and presents a possibility of eliminating dissenters. The conditions are horrid;

> *All the stored food has been eaten now, gardens and fields stripped. Now, when people die, some get eaten too.*[169]

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[167] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 11.
[168] Ibid, p. 184.
[169] Ibid, p. 63.

## 7.2 Theo's self-punishment and the quest for redemption

At the novel's start, Theo is a broken man among the whole nation of broken people with only delusional dreams. At first glance, Theo is a resentful, bitter and condescending man antagonising his surroundings. However, his attitude reflects the inner turmoil and deep trauma his scholarly mind cannot deal with, so he punishes himself mentally for his numerous let-downs. The punishment comprises his deliberate isolation and antagonistic tendencies, which give the impression that Theo feels unworthy of a meaningful affinity. Human connection always reminds him of his wife and the tragic demise of his daughter, his own doing. Although he seldom mentions guilt directly, the sentiment practically seeps from most of his retrospective entries. Throughout the novel, it becomes apparent just how tormented Theo truly is.

Theo's overreaching guilt also instils a sense of inadequacy, which he desperately tries to deny and hide from his peers and social circle. Deep down, Theo is an anguished soul devoid of vigour, merely carrying on with surviving. Meeting the Five Fishes restored some of his faculties, as he inadvertently took to liking several members, particularly Julian, with whom she developed romantic feelings despite himself. While the affiliation slightly mends his broken psyche, new concerns appear; fear of failing the group, Julian primarily, which vividly affected Theo's dream;

> *He could hear a woman screaming as Helena had screamed. Rolf was there, scarlet-faced, pounding his fists against the car and shouting: 'You've killed Julian, you've killed Julian!' At the front of the car stood Luke, mutely pointing his bleeding stump. He was unable to move, locked in a rigor like the rigor of death. He heard their angry voices, 'Get out! Get out!,' but he couldn't move. He sat there staring with blank eyes through the windscreen at Luke's accusing figure, waiting for the door to be wrenched open, for hands to drag him out and confront him with the horror of what he, and he alone, had done.*[170]

The conflicting emotions surrounding his dubitable collaboration with the Five Fishes create a potent mix of anguish, and the fear of once again letting someone down, somehow repeating his past mistakes, this time affecting more

[170] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 140.

lives. Upon realising the old parson had died, a supporter of the group, Theo succumbs to sudden despair;

> *His pointless small pilgrimage had only deepened his sense of impotence, of impending disaster.*[171]

It is far from the only significant moment of doubt, as Theo experiences multiple moments of uncertainty, yet he increasingly copes with better efficiency and renewed motivation. The crucial moment of his character evolution comes with the fundamental change of established order with Julian's pregnancy. Theo steps out of his comfort zone and commits to previously unthinkable deeds he would perceive as futile or naive.

His reinstated mindset sees him becoming a man of his destiny, leading to a final taxing event that tests his mettle and threatens to break his newly gained purpose. During his desperate quest to save pregnant Julian from the predation of Xan and his intentions, the occasion forces Theo to break into a house of an elderly couple to steal their supplies and car, with the ultimate aim of providing for Julian and her future baby. Although he ponders on the morality of the deed, due to dire circumstances proceeds and successfully carries out his intention.

To his credit, Theo shows remarkable kindness towards the captives, making it obvious he profoundly regrets the situation. Theo entertains his captor's requests and complies with their wishes. Feeling guilty about the whole endeavour, he anxiously hopes the couple will turn unaffected.

Much to his chagrin, the radio broadcast mentions the break-in, resulting in the old lady's death. Suddenly, the whole world collapses around Theo, who loses his balance in a display of pure anguish;

> *He was conscious only of the pounding of his heart and of a sick misery which descended and enveloped him, physical as a mortal illness, horror and self-disgust dragging him almost to his knees. He thought: If this is guilt, I can't bear it. I won't bear it.*[172]

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[171] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 141.
[172] Ibid, p. 217.

By that point, only Miriam, Julian and he remain out of the rebel group. With Theo nearing the breaking point, Miriam refocuses his purpose, strengthens his conviction. Theo needs this moment, but given his antagonistic attitude, no one has had the opportunity to rein in his self-deprecating ways. Miriam bluntly confronts Theo, saying;

> *'If you want to wallow in guilt, that's your affair, but leave it until later. OK, she's dead and you feel guilty, and feeling guilt isn't something you enjoy. Too bad. Get used to it. Why the hell should you escape guilt? It's part of being human. Or hadn't you noticed? '*[173]

Miriam's no-nonsense attitude is expressive enough, and Theo gives in, and instead of further complaints, he sets to purpose. Despite the still present reservations, Theo changes considerably, which is without doubt due to his attachment to Julian and the desire to protect her child.

During the final confrontation, when the choice finally comes, and Xan tries to get Theo on his side, Theo doubtlessly wishes to avoid failing yet another child. He risks his life protecting the child and manages to shoot down Xan, effectively ending his rule and indirectly entertaining the idea of a different establishment. In the overall narrative, Theo attains redemption through his unselfish deeds, burying the ghosts of the past in exchange for the promise of the future. The question remains whether Theo's administration will differ from that of Xan's, considering the subtle indications of his inner thought process;

> *There were evils to be remedied; but they must take their turn. He couldn't do everything at once, there had to be priorities.*[174]

Julian notices the ring on Theo's hand, formerly the symbol of Xan and his authority. Unsurprisingly, Julian seems somewhat worried, and her commentary provokes a similar reaction to Xan's;

> *Julian looked up at him. For the first time she noticed the ring. She said: 'That wasn't made for your finger.'*
> *For a second, no more, he felt something close to irritation. It must be for him to decide when he would take it off.*[175]

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[173] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 219.
[174] Ibid, p. 241.
[175] Ibid, p. 241.

## 7.3 Subversion as a reflection of humanity's desperation and will to survive

The fragility of human civilisation caused broad scepticism not only of science but also of human identity. Multitudes have become complacent and apathetic, surviving their days and cursing the innate weakness that inevitably led to the infertility catastrophe.

The struggle for survival devolved into mere waiting for death, with the government eager to propose programmes such as Quietus, the advertised and purportedly painless and humane suicide. The novel's foremost villain, the Warden Xan, seized power only due to general indifference towards politics, making the novel stand out among the other analysed works, where most characters actively meddle in politicking.

Theo briefly glimpses at the principles of the regime represented by the Council, mentioning Xan's three only official tenets;

> *Resolutions by a two-thirds majority go to the Council of England, who can reject or accept as they will. The system has the merit of simplicity and gives the illusion of democracy to people who no longer have the energy to care how or by whom they are governed as long as they get what the Warden has promised: freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from boredom.*[176]

All revolves around the stale and lasting status quo, which is what makes James's iteration of a dystopia genuinely frightening. Desire and human attachment gradually vanished, and suicide rates increased, so Xan had to implement monetary penalties for the bereaved. Theo mentions a profound lassitude that pervades the whole narrative, fittingly expressed by an academic colleague of Theo;

> *'In the light of these mass extinctions it really does seem unreasonable to suppose that Homo sapiens should be exempt. Our species will have been one of the shortest-lived of all, a mere blink, you may say, in the eye of time. Omega apart, there may well be an asteroid of sufficient size to destroy this planet on its way to us now.'*[177]

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[176] JAMES, P.D., *The Children of Men*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 89.
[177] Ibid, p. 12.

Despite the startling complacency and the encouragement to not try to adjust anything as change is inconvenient, the novel demonstrates an underlying disposition to revolt. The novel's malcontents, the Five Fishes, revolt not so much against the oppression as against the indecency of Xan's rule, and they are not remarkably united in their aims either.

However, these rebels are the only genuinely living characters, as their subversive acts give them hope and the drive needed to rise above the nauseating and choking atmosphere of the Warden's England.

The five renegades have yet to give up and intend to change the status quo through sacrifice. Their dissent becomes all the more meaningful with Julian's pregnancy, which completely changes the dynamics and nature of their resistance; now, there is real hope for the future, which is in their hands. Ultimately, Julian and Theo become a catalyst for the transformation of society, and their inevitable subversive acts secure the broader picture.

# Conclusion

All the analysed novels bear the label of dystopian fiction, and while there are some standard, unifying features, each work is unique in its perception of an oppressive society. Nor are the works proportionally equal in terms of sheer dreadfulness, thankfully, as it would eliminate any sense of singularity and the message the work conveys.

The appalling and inhuman cruelty of the Inner Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* works only once, as does the frightening exploitation of Handmaids within *The Handmaid's Tale* and the artificial and pretentious pseudo-culture presented by the World State in *Brave New World*.

Guilt and shame present a relatively broad range of emotions and overall complicated psychological phenomena that are innately human and natural yet complicated within the boundaries of society due to their ramifications and impacts on the quality of life. At the same time, what is natural is undesired and repressed with urgency, as both perfectly human sensations negatively influence day-to-day operations. Our guilt thus makes us vulnerable and frail, and it is a possible exploitable weakness, provided the perturbator can discern its origin and cause. Knowing one's shame and guilt provides unique power and leverage to force one's agenda and enforce subservience through psychological abuse or mere threat of leaking the shameful details into the world.

All the analysed works implement the notion of guilt as an effective social mechanism solidifying the oppressive or outright tyrannical regime. Subservience perpetuates the ruling mandate and keeps the general populace docile under the yoke of despots. One feeds the other in a vicious cycle that degrades and reduces the majority to de-humanised cattle, abused and persecuted at will. Each author chose a different path and means for presenting the undesired landscape and implemented guilt distinctly.

Huxley's world functions on the premise of creating an effective and optimal society highly intertwined with technology and soothed by chemical substances to accommodate the need for emotional attachment and the feeling of

fulfilment. To that end, people are predestined and produced solely through scientific means and tampered with in the embryo stage. The rulers, aptly called Controllers, present the state of affairs as the painfully achieved state of balance; emotions and inherent human impulses, such as maternal instinct, are substituted by a powerful substance called soma.

Guilt and shame in *Brave New World* stem primarily from failure to conform to societal demands, which checks the majority population in their supposed place. Provided the societal pressure fails, soma overrides any dissent and all unpleasant or unorthodox thoughts. Soma is every bit an oppressive measure as it is an escape mechanism. The only disturbance to the stale balance of the World State comes in the shape of an outsider, John, who doggedly refuses the societal norms out of his twisted yet partly understandable personal convictions. Already a relatively unstable character, John is crushed under the pretence and farce of the World State, committing suicide out of unbearable guilt.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell chose a significantly more straightforward and dreadful route in his Oceania. The Inner Party, comprising a low percentage of society, preys on the Outer Party and rules using inhuman brutality and well-considered surveillance. Agents of the Party can expose anyone, as mere heretical thoughts are a sufficient charge.

"Thought criminals" undergo intricate physical and psychological torture until finally, they break and concede their folly, betray their ideals and submit totally to the Party and Big Brother. There is virtually no escape and no possibility of things ever changing, and the Party established an indomitable regime. The only feasible challenge lies in the Proles; the majority population kept deliberately unattended and ignorant. As a demonstration of the regime's influence, Orwell presents the case of his protagonist. The protagonist, Winston, has been led into an elaborate trap for the last seven years, and despite his initial defiance, Winston inevitably falls just like the others.

While Winston feels personal guilt regarding his mother's and sister's fate, the narrative mainly focuses on his duality of desire to dethrone the Party and the guilt stemming from it. Secondary characters, such as the Parsons family,

demonstrate the horrible reality of Oceania to its full extent. The novel's climax sees Winston betraying his principles and love for Julia, the co-malcontent who inspired his dissent in the first place.

*The Handmaid's Tale* by Attwood presents a Christian patriarchal theocracy heavily influenced by the events of the mid-1980s; the friction between the feminist movement and the presidency of Ronald Reagan led to conservative, borderline fundamentalist, religious sentiments within domestic politics, coinciding with the AIDS crisis. Where Huxley established an allegory on consumerist society, Attwood castigated outdated reactionary conceptions. Interestingly, all the punitive measures within the novel draw from authentic historical experiences across different periods. The primary inspiration, by all accounts, is Puritanism.

Gilead is a strictly patriarchal society where so-called Commanders, rulers and moral authorities hold all the power. The hierarchy is tangled and multi-faceted, with women divided into several classes according to their societal function. Even the wives of Commanders enjoy a questionable status at best, subordinate to their husbands and forced to tolerate infidelities. The most explored group are the Handmaids, with the main protagonist Offred, by real name June. Offred itself is a possessive denomination; "of" Fred and "off" red. Handmaids belong to a particular Commander, bear a child and move on to the next Commander.

Attwood works with the analysed concepts more noticeably, as shame is the device through which Commanders maintain their rule; women are shamed for their sexuality or perceived inferiority with no factual basis. Worse still, Aunts, a class practically analogical to moral police, regularly and intentionally humiliate other women into submission to the Gilead tenets. Gilead relates guilt to displays of free will and individuality, while Commanders hypocritically visit brothels where stubborn malcontents serve their whims.

The novel *The Children of Men* by P.D. James is also heavily inspired by religious themes, albeit James chose a different approach than Attwood. Instead of a religious theocracy, James presents a near-future England ruled by a largely secular regime of the Council of England and its primary

representative, the Warden of England. Like Attwood, James too incorporated the notion of infertility, which is the main reason for the existence of Handmaids in the former's work. James related infertility globally to the human race, marking Year Omega as the last year children were born. What comes after is global dismay at the inadvertent extinction of humanity and spiritual and psychological decay stemming from the realisation.

James relates guilt to the collective failure to produce offspring, despite the extensive research and multiple attempts to amend the crisis. People use substitutes for maternal and other affinities, dolls or kittens to replace children, and shared pet custody is not unheard of.

Shame only deepens, considering the Omega generation failed to multiply and even presents an increasing threat to the safety of those still surviving. Omegas are reminiscent of the troublesome gangs of Burgess's Clockwork Orange, with their violent and condescending impulses.

The novel's protagonist, a scholar and historian, Theodore Faron, undergoes a perilous journey. James takes particular care to provide his underlying and profound guilt originating from a traumatic experience of accidentally killing his daughter a mere year before the Omega event. More than other authors, save maybe for Attwood, James provides a detailed psychological analysis of her protagonist, and the perception of guilt and shame primarily extends to Theodore's past. Unlike the other authors, James provides a happy ending of sorts, with the faintest possible hint of Theodore slipping into the same trap as his predecessor; hunger for power.

## Summary

The thesis aimed to analyse the motifs of guilt and shame regarding masochism and the concept of subservience within the four selected dystopian novels from acclaimed Anglo-American authors;

*Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood and *The Children of Men* by Phyllis Dorothy James.

The theoretical part of the thesis first introduces critical components of the dystopian genre, primarily the notion of subservience, relinquishment of liberty and addiction-induced guilt. For this purpose, the thesis leans on the relevant sources, mainly Heinz-Peter Röhr, Burrhus Frederic Skinner, Erich Fromm or Friedrich Nietzsche and Judith Shklar and their mainstay works of psychology and philosophy, respectively. Röhr's notion of “programmes” and “anti-programmes” receive a particular and detailed mention, as does Fromm's conception of freedom "from" and freedom "to".

The next section of the theoretical part is devoted to individual authors, the particularities of their lives and crucial milestones of their careers. The relevant subchapters elaborate on specific factors that enabled the formation of the analysed works and their associated historical and social context.

In Huxley's case, the fascination with satire and inspiration from Shakespeare, in Orwell's painful experience with totalitarian regimes and personal tragedies, in Attwood's unique upbringing and literary merit along with the complicated relationship towards feminism, in James's impoverished background and her experience with National Health Service and later Criminal Division of the British Home Office.

The last part of the theoretical part considers the concept of guilt and shame as a catalyst for masochistic tendencies, with an elaboration on the role of guilt in dystopian societies and societal mechanisms that manipulate and invoke guilt, and finally, with a brief return to Fromm's notion of freedom, the reflection on internalisation of guilt within dystopian arrangement of human society.

The practical part subsequently provides a comparative analysis of the individual works and the themes of subservience and guilt as perceived by individuals and society. The analysis considers multiple angles of perception of guilt and shame, and further presents and interprets the themes of guilt and shame within the overall narrative with the necessary references to particular sections of the analysed novels. Subservience is examined in regard to guilt, as the analysis attempts to intertwine the two and highlight the specific manifestations of oppression as guilt-inducing mechanisms.

For Huxley, it is the guilt of non-conformity on the part of the populace and guilt of personal desire on John's part; for Orwell guilt of subversion and inner guilt of Winston, induced by the regime; for Attwood, the shame and guilt of being a woman and finally, for James, the collective shame of humanity, underscored by the personal anguish of the protagonist.

The findings of the analysis conclude that the authors implement the examined themes differently, yet guilt occurs in relation to the individual as well as the majority of society. In the works guilt and shame consists of the fundamental power dynamics and cultivates subservience stemming from fear or resigned apathy.

# Resumé

Cílem této diplomové práce byla analýza motivu viny a studu v souvislosti s masochismem a konceptem podřízenosti v rámci čtyř vybraných dystopických románů od uznávaných anglo-amerických autorů;

*Konec civilizace* Aldouse Huxleyho, *1984* George Orwella, *Příběh služebnice* Margaret Atwood a *Potomci lidí* Phyllis Dorothy James.

Teoretická část práce nejprve představuje klíčové komponenty žánru dystopie, především představu podřízenosti, vzdání se svobody a závislostí-vyvolanou vinu. Za tímto účelem se práce opírá o relevantní zdroje a díla význačných osobností z oblasti psychologie a filozofie, především Heinze Peterea Röhra, Burrhuse Fredericka Skinnera, Ericha Fromma či Friedricha Nietzscheho a Judithy Shklar. Největší pozornost je věnována Röhrově představě "programů" a "antiprogramů" a Frommově koncepci svobody "od" a svobody "k".

Následující sekce teoretické části je zaměřena na zvolené autory, specifika jejich životů a zásadní milníky jejich kariéry. Příslušné podkapitoly rozvádějí konkrétní faktory, které pomohly s formováním analyzovaných děl a přibližují jejich historický a sociální kontext.

V případě Huxleyho se jedná o fascinaci satirou a inspiraci Shakespearem, u Orwella o bolestivou zkušenost s totalitními režimy a osobními tragédiemi, u Atwood sehrála svou roli jedinečná výchova a literární přínos společně s komplikovaným vztahem k feminismu, v případě James lze hovořit o nelehké socio-ekonomické situaci její rodiny a autorčiných zkušenostech s Národní zdravotní službou a později s kriminálním oddělením britské Home Office.

Poslední kapitola teoretické části uvažuje o konceptu viny a studu jako o katalyzátoru pro masochistické tendence. Popsána je zejména role viny v dystopických společenstvích a sociální mechanismy, které manipulují osobností a vyvolávají vinu. Konečně, s krátkým ohlédnutím na Frommovo pojetí svobody, práce pojednává o internalizaci viny v rámci dystopického uspořádání lidské společnosti.

Praktická část se soustředí na komparativní analýzu jednotlivých děl a motivů podřízenosti a viny z pohledu jednotlivců a společnosti. Analýza zvažuje různé úhly, ze kterých lze vnímat vinu stud. Dále předkládá a interpretuje tyto motivy v celkovém narativu s nezbytnými odkazy na signifikantní úryvky z vybraných děl. Analýza se pokouší o propojení motivu podřízenosti s pociťovanou vinou a uvádí konkrétní manifestace útlaku, které fungují jako vinu vzbuzující mechanismy.

Na základě komparace sledovaných tematických oblastí lze říci, že v Huxleyho díle pramení vina z nekonformity ze strany většinové populace a z pohledu jedince ji lze spojit s jistou osobní touhou. V Orwellově díle se pro změnu jedná o vinu související s podvratnou a odbojovou činností a vnitřním konfliktem protagonisty. Attwood vztahuje zkoumané motivy k ženskosti. James se soustředí zejména na kolektivní vinu, kterou interpretuje jako selhání lidstva pramenící z celosvětové neplodnosti a současně toto zklamání prolíná i s osobním utrpením hlavního hrdiny.

Z výsledků analýzy vyplývá, že autoři pracují se zkoumanými motivy odlišně, přesto se vina v jejich dílech vyskytuje jak ve spojitosti s jednotlivcem, tak i většinovou společností. Vina a stud zde vytváří zásadní mocenskou dynamiku a kultivuje podřízenost pramenící ze strachu či odevzdané apatie.

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