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INNOCENCE IN THE AGE OF DYSTOPIA

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ABSTRACT

Dystopian literature has recently gained a great deal of popularity. Many readers are drawn to these fictional worlds that demonstrate imperfect societies. Often, these societies address fears for the future, as well as reflect aspects of current cultural beliefs. Innocence, generally considered a virtue worthy of protection, is problematic in works of dystopian literature. In this thesis, I will demonstrate that innocence is either exploited or destroyed in dystopian societies. I will analyze staples of dystopian literature, such as *Nineteen Eighty-four* and *Brave New World*, as well as more contemporary works, such as *The Giver* and *The Hunger Games*. I will compare and contrast the role of innocence as it is presented in classic works of dystopian fiction and modern works of fiction. Considering dystopia is from a long tradition of utopia, I also will explore the treatment of innocence in utopia and anti-utopia. I will analyze a utopian piece, which is also considered the first dystopia: *Gulliver's Travels*. Also, I will explore innocence in the young adult novel *Gathering Blue*.

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Chapter 1

Innocence in the Perfect World

Utopia and dystopia are bound to one another. The first work to use the term utopia is *Utopia* by Sir Thomas Moore, written in 1516. Utopian literature encompasses utopia, anti-utopian, and dystopian literature. However, in many ways, dystopia cannot exist without utopia. Utopia has implications of other dysfunctional societies. Dystopia, on the other hand, merely implies dysfunction; it does not suggest there are societies closer to perfection, just less horrible. Some even claim that dystopia is merely a reworking of the utopian tradition: "...utopia has not disappeared; it has merely mutated, within the field of [science-fiction] into something very different from the classic utopia" (James 219). Science-fiction in recent years has had more of a focus on these dysfunctional societies than the "perfect" societies of the past. Still, these works have commonalities such as communal activity, small village-style communities, elimination of money and private property, and elites imposing authority over the majority (220). A person cannot understand the horrors presented in dystopia without the reference of utopia; thus, it is important to understand utopian fiction before analyzing dystopian fiction.

Gulliver's Travels displays a utopian society, but with a twist. The novel contains four parts, each telling the story of Lemuel Gulliver's journeys through a distant land. He interacts with the natives, learning their language and customs. Three of these societies are extremely flawed. Gulliver makes comparisons between 18th century English society and the society he is visiting. 18th century English society is superior to three of four societies. These societies are all run by humans. When he meets the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver finds a utopian society. However, this society is governed by horses. England in the 18th century seems barbaric when compared with

this society ruled by animals. Though, the real display of dysfunction is when Gulliver returns home. He is unable to flourish in his homeland, and instead turns to isolationism. Modern society is displayed as a dystopia. For this reason, *Gulliver's Travels* is considered the first dystopian novel. Though *Gulliver's Travels* is a work of utopian literature, the comparison made between English society and Houyhnhnms society make it clear that 18th century England was made to appear as a dystopia.

Jonathan Swift criticizes humanity's belief in its rational and compassionate behavior. With the use of the Houyhnhnms, which are horses, Swift shows that animals can govern a better society than humans. They live in a utopia, while English society is dysfunctional and cruel. In the language of the Houyhnhnms, their name means perfection of nature (Swift 178). Humans are compared with Yahoos, the serving species on this island. Where Houyhnhnms live in harmony, the Yahoos continually fight. Yahoos are also seen as dirty beasts. When first encountering the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver believes them to be magicians in horse form: "...the behaviour of these animals was orderly and rational, so acute and judicious, that I at last concluded they must needs be magicians..." (170). His mind is so limiting that he cannot believe there is another rational creature. He instead sees them as humanity in disguise because, he believes, beasts are incapable of rational thought, which is reserved only for the human race. It becomes clear, however, that the Houyhnhnms rationality and sense of order far exceed that of humans.

As Gulliver explains 18th century England, it is clear that mankind is not only cruel but barbaric when compared with the Houyhnhnms' society. These creatures are kind and compassionate, always mindful of what is best for the collective. By contrast, humans are only focused on personal gain. This focus on the individual versus focus on the community is the most monumental difference between humans and Houyhnhnms. The Houyhnhnms do not even have a word for lying in their vocabulary (178). Lying is commonplace with humans, who often commit this act with the person's own best interests in mind. Other aspects of society seem

utterly ridiculous when discussed with these horses. For example, through discussion, it becomes clear how ludicrous legal jargon is: "...whereby they have confounded the very essence of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong..." (191). The court system was founded on the principle of discovering the truth, but within this system, this principle is undermined through this language. In the British legal system, it is not about finding truth, but instead using fancy terminology that only understandable by a small group of people. This system actually makes it more difficult to find the truth. Money seems like a waste of time, as well. It is only valuable because humans make it symbolically important. Lastly, the Houyhnhnms never have war or any fighting. The Houyhnhnms' society appears perfect, but as all things, there are some flaws.

The Houyhnhnms treatment of Lemuel Gulliver demonstrates that they are capable to cruelty toward innocent individuals. Gulliver, though free of crime, is exiled by the Houyhnhnms simply because of his appearance. Gulliver looks like the Yahoos, a race of savages, who are dirty and often steal from each other. When Gulliver first encounters these creatures, he notices the physical similarities, but believes they are completely opposite in manner: "... I was as much astonished to see the *Houyhnhnms* act like rational beings, as he or his friends, could be, in finding some marks of reason in a creature he was pleased to call a *Yahoo*; to which I owned my resemblance in every part, but could not account for their degenerate and brutal nature" (182). Despite his similar appearance, he feels nothing but resentment for these creatures. Gulliver loves the Houyhnhnms, and his continued interaction with them only increases his loathing of the Yahoos. Swift writes, "...the Yahoos were known to hate one another, more than they did any different species of animals; and the reason usually assigned was, the odiousness of their own shapes, which all could see in the rest, but not in themselves" (200). Gulliver believes their behavior to be preposterous. Their violence and aggression toward each other is founded in nothing substantial. Gulliver, however, does not make the connection between wars fought between humans over topics such as money, religion, and national pride, which the Houyhnhnms

would believe to be just as ridiculous. Gulliver's loathing never wavers, even as it becomes clear that the British are in fact similar to Yahoos in behavior. Though Gulliver swears his loyalty to the Houyhnhnms, they fear he will incite rebellion among the Yahoos. Gulliver, when first on the island, informs the Houyhnhnms how horses are dominated by humans in his world. Their fear in losing control of the island pushes them to exile a guiltless man. He has proven that he feels nothing but devotion for the species and their way of life, and has no intention of even interacting with Yahoos. Despite their extreme capability for compassion and justice, the Houyhnhnms show that they, just as all creatures, are imperfect.

Witnessing Lemuel Gulliver's return home fully demonstrates the cruelty of his banishment by the Houyhnhnms. When he is on the ship returning to England, Gulliver contemplates suicide. He believes death is more favorable than living in the dysfunctional society created by humans. When Gulliver returns to England, he can no longer assimilate into human society. Gulliver cannot bear to be around his family, whose smell repulses him. He buys two horses, and spends much of his time with them. Eventually, Gulliver learns to tolerate humans, but never to love them again. Gulliver's return to society satirizes the belief that man is perfectible. Even after learning the wisdom of the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver seems to have learned all the wrong lessons. He does not share his knowledge with humans, but he instead isolates himself, choosing instead to spend time with horses. Jonathan Swift seems to suggest that humans are doomed to live in an imperfect world. Even after learning the ways of a perfect world, humans are incapable of adapting their immoral ways.

Despite their gentle nature, the Houyhnhnms plot how to best exterminate a whole race. During Gulliver's stay on the island, the Houyhnhnms hold a council meeting to discuss "...whether the Yahoos should be exterminated from the face of the earth" (210). The Houyhnhnms are incredibly logical. They see the Yahoos as a menace, incapable of contributing anything productive. The best option, then, is to kill the Yahoos. One horse who wants to destroy

the race of Yahoos speaks, "...alleging the Yahoos were the most filthy, noisome, and deformed animal which nature ever produced, so they were the most restive and indocible, mischievous and malicious..." (210). These creatures have no redeeming qualities in the eyes of the Houyhnhnms. Yahoos are nothing but a nuisance. After speaking with Gulliver, his master gets an idea from humans. He tells the council they should castrate the Yahoos. This will help to tame their beastly nature, allowing the Houyhnhnms to continue to use them as laborers until the Houyhnhnms can breed enough donkeys to replace the Yahoos. Furthermore, this will allow the species to slowly die out, so the Houyhnhnms can "...put an end to the whole species, without destroying life..." (211). The Houyhnhnms believe it is merciful to allow these creatures to live in servitude. They do not consider the cruelty with the pain of castration, as well as emotional pain related to the inability to have children. The Houyhnhnms show much more respect to each other, as well as other animals, than they do the Yahoos, who they view as disposable. It doesn't seem the Houyhnhnms try to teach the Yahoos a different way of life, believing they are incapable of change. They instead just allow them to run their society in their barbaric ways. Whether they are incapable of another way of life, or unknowable of one, these Yahoos are innocent. They cannot help their nature; they cannot change the way they were born. If they do not know another way, the Yahoos are blameless in their lifestyle; they are only acting in the only way they know how to act. For this reason, the Houyhnhnms are destroying innocent creatures.

The society in *Gathering Blue* is neither utopian nor dystopian. Where a dystopia contains a society that is wholly bad, and a utopia has a society that is wholly good, *Gathering Blue* has a society that is some of both; thus, it is an anti-utopia. The community contains people that work together, live harmonious, and support each other. Males are given an education, but females are not allowed to receive one. On the other hand, citizens that are severely injured or disabled are left in the woods to die. The standard of living is disparate, with the children of the poor being raised in dirty conditions, with not enough food, and being abused. The Council of

Guardians exploits people given profound gifts, as well. The society is not perfect, but at the same time it isn't atrocious.

Girls are given unequal opportunity in the village. When Thomas offers to help Kira memorize the names of plants by writing them down, the reader is first informed of this disparity of education between genders: "But I can't. So even if you were to write the names, I couldn't read them. And it's not permitted for girls to learn" (88). While boys learn to read and write, girls are prohibited from learning these skills. In this way, girls are denied certain opportunities. Their lack of education also denies them positions of power, such as holding a position on the Council of Guardians. It is much more difficult for women to enact change, since they are marginalized in this society. In the companion book, *Messenger*, the reader is informed that women are allowed to be educated as result of Kira's efforts. Kira is only afforded this power to create change because of her gift. Otherwise, this society may have continued to leave women powerless over their situation.

The citizens of the village are controlled with fear incited by myths. Everyone is told there are monsters in the woods. Men go out on dangerous hunts to bring back food. Some men, like Kira's father, die during these hunts. Jamison, a Council member who defends Kira's place in the village, says to Kira, "...I saw your father taken by beasts. It was a hideous thing. Terrible" (128-129). Events such as Kira's father's death support this myth of monsters in the woods. Those who "witnessed" these events usually talk about how gruesome the attack was. These deaths do not seem to be quick and painless. One woman, Vandara, has a large scar on her neck, which is said to have been caused by a monster. Citizens do not try and travel to other villages because they are enclosed in their village by fear of death at the hands of ravenous monsters. Annabella, Kira's mentor, is the first person to question the existence of these beasts. Soon after, she is dragged to the woods by the Council of Guardians. Matt witnesses this event: "I didn't say she be wanting to! I say they *tooken* her! She be dead!" (133). This happens very close to Kira's

conversation with Annabella about beasts in the woods. Though Annabella is old, she appears healthy, able to move around the garden and create dyes easily. These mysterious circumstances place doubt in Kira's mind. Kira begins to question the existence of these monsters after Annabella's death: "But deer are gentle, frightened things. The hunters bring nothing with claws or fangs. They never catch anything that could be called a beast" (112). These claims have never been substantiated other than by eye witness accounts. Generally, these witnesses are powerful men. As Kira says, there are animals in the woods, which are eaten by the villagers, but these animals are not beastly. Later it is learned Kira's father did not die in the woods but was blinded by Jamison, the same man who told Kira how horrible the death was. These disappearances are caused at the hands of men and are works of jealousy and rage. Citizens do not need to fear beasts but instead beastly men. Kira's father was one of the strongest in the village, and even he was vulnerable to the dangers of jealous men. Kira's father, Christopher, tells her, "There were jealousies, always, and there were rivals. It was a way if life here. Perhaps it still is" (200). This violent treatment supports Swift's critique of humanity. Just as the human-like Yahoos harm each other, citizens of the village harm each other for base reasons.

Matt shows the reader the hardships of those of low social status. Matt is from the Fen, which is the poor section of the village. When Kira expresses interest in visiting the Fen, Thomas replies, "That filthy place? Why would you want to go there" (174). It is clear from Thomas's comment that those who live in the village view the Fen disapprovingly and disrespectfully. The poor are more isolated from the wealthier, who do not wish to associate with them. Like his perpetual state of filthiness, Matt is foul-mouthed. His poor grammar demonstrates his lack of education, though he is a male. Matt says phrases such as "iffen," "tooken," and "for certain sure." He steals often, taking little objects and food like a kleptomaniac. This stealing is a survival technique, since he is rarely given enough to eat at home. His options are to steal or to starve. Matt, above all, is defiant. This, again, relates to his poor home life. Like many in the Fen,

Matt's mother is abusive. Matt says, "In the Fen, iffen they give you something special, it be a kick in your buttie" (79). His mother's poor parenting, as well as her abuse, has left Matt severely disadvantaged. His shortcomings are understandable when taking into account his home life. Blaming his poor single mother isn't just, though, because it seems she was raised under similar conditions. As Kira alludes, the more fortunate, especially the gifted, must help to change history, and aid those in need. Otherwise, the cycle of violence and disadvantage will continue in the households of the Fen.

Despite Matt's shortcomings, there are many positive qualities that still shine through. Underneath Matt's dirty and difficult surface is a boy extremely caring and generous. Matt takes care of a stray dog named Branch. What little Matt has, he shares with Branch, giving the dog pieces of his meager food supply. To show his appreciation for Matt's caring, Branch follows Matt everywhere. Furthermore, Matt risks his life to find the color blue for Kira. He risks his life and travels to a distant village, unsure of the existence of monsters. Annabella tells Kira there is blue in faraway villages, so Matt, trusting Annabella's knowledge, walks to find this village with blue for his closest friend. Matt, through this process of gathering blue, reunites Kira with her father, who she believes died when her mother was pregnant. Matt is not fully an innocent child, but his shortcomings are a result of his low social status. This society's social system leaves some disadvantaged, tainting their innocence. Seriously disadvantaged and abused, Matt has developed his bad habits as a method of survival. Matt was given a bad hand, and he has tried to play it the best he can.

Viewing this world through Kira's eyes, the reader witnesses the travesties the most helpless have to endure. Individuals who are seriously hurt or disabled are left in the woods to be eaten by the monsters. These people are helpless to defend themselves, sometimes being forcibly carried by other members of the community. For example, Camilla, a weaver, breaks her arm badly, and it cannot be straightened. Though she has a husband and children, she is still forced to

go to the Field to die; her five children are taken away and given to other families, as well (55).

This society has no tolerance for weakness. Before a baby is named, it is seen as inhuman. By not naming babies born with disabilities, they are easy to dispose of: “It was the way, the custom, and it was the merciful thing, to give an unnamed, imperfect infant back to the earth before its spirit had filled it and made it human” (4). Leaving a child to die is viewed as merciful by this society where only the fittest survive. The citizens are unable to see the worth of people past their physical adeptness. They are disposing of individuals who could possibly have more to offer. Kira was born disabled, only surviving because Kira’s father had recently died, and Kira’s grandfather held a prominent place in the community. She has a club foot, and has to drag one of her legs; she usually walks with a cane. Kira, though imperfect, is able to have a role in the community. Before learning of her gift, Kira works at the weaving shed, cleaning up scraps and preparing the looms (40-41). After the death of her mother, though, Kira must fight for her place in the village. A group of women want to destroy Kira’s small house, leaving her homeless, and create a big playpen to control the children. Though this seems to be relatively ordinary request in this village, Kira is shocked by this: “It was terrifying, almost unbelievable, the casualness of the cruelty. In order to pen their disobedient toddlers and chickens, the women would turn her out of the village to be devoured by the beasts that waited in the woods to forage the Field” (11). These women are content with sending a completely capable girl, proven by her ability to survive and even thrive in the village, to her death just to take her land. Kira’s criticism of societal protocols seems completely valid. Generally, the reader supports the narrator’s position. In *Gathering Blue*, the reader not only understands her position, but feels outraged by the society’s treatment of her. This case goes before the Council, who decides to give the land to the women; they also decide to allow Kira to live in the Council Edifice. Kira’s sewing gift heightens her place in the community, pushing her to a place of prestige. However, she is only allowed to survive so the

Council can exploit her gift. Even this seemingly kind act to a disabled, orphaned girl is malicious in nature.

The exploitation of those with gifts demonstrates the society's corruption of innocence. The Council of Guardians offers to take in those with gifts when they are children. A Council member first comes to see the child's gift at the child's home; they come unannounced. After the death of the child's parents, the Council of Guardians offers to house the child in the Council Edifice. Matt, Kira, and Jo's parents all died under curious circumstances. For instance, Matt's parents were both struck by a bolt of lightning. Their gift makes them valuable to the Council, and so they use them for their talents: "Because they were artists, they had some value that she could not comprehend. Because of that value, the three of them were here, well fed, well housed, and nurtured" (153). At first, living at the Council Edifice seems like a gift, but it's more nefarious than it appears. They have no rules, except to complete the task given to them by the Council. This depends on the gift. Thomas's gift is carving, so his task is to restore the song staff. This is a large staff carved to help the Singer remember the song of the history of humanity. Thomas says, "There are no real rules. Only that you are required to do the work you were brought here for. They'll check on your work every day" (71). Though they must work, this work is enjoyable for the artists. Kira loves to weave. However, the workload is demanding, and increases as the Gathering approaches. Kira sews the history of humans on a large robe worn during the Gathering and the singing of the Song. Kira, hearing a little girl crying, investigates the source. She discovers the Council is keeping a little girl, named Jo, locked in a room in the Council Edifice. The amount of syllables signifies the age of a person. Annabella is old; thus her name has four syllables. Her one syllable name show how young Jo really is. She, like Matt, was raised in the Fen. The Council members have been forcing Jo to practice singing, which Matt informs the others she used to do on her own accord. Lastly, the singer, who will one day be Jo, sings the song about the history of human existence. It is never clear why the Gathering is so

important; though, it is definitely an important event for the village. It seems this even helps to maintain social order, keeping the same group of individuals in power. These officials do not seem to care for the good of the majority, but rather the good for themselves. They are also willing to overwork young, innocent children.

The Singer at the Gathering demonstrates that this exploitation and restriction doesn't end with age. Though grown up, the Singer continues to be restricted: "Fresh, bright blood trickled in narrow rivulets across his feet. It all came from the raw, festering skin---infected and dripping---around the metal cuffs with which he was bound. Between the thick ankle cuffs, dragging heavily as he made his way slowly from the stage, was a chain" (211). The Council of Guardians must physically restrain him, forcing him to sing. No matter the age, the Council controls its gifted citizens, exploiting their gifts for the Council's own means. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the deaths of a gifted child's parents are not coincidental. Instead, they are committed by the Council to take possession of the child. The Council of Guardians provide the façade of concern and caring, allowing the newly orphaned child to live in the Council Edifice. The Council provides the necessities for these children, only to then to push them to the extreme. These children are forced to work diligently during their days, completing projects or practicing to satisfy the Council's desires. Those born with a gift are then cursed in this society. Never given a choice in the matter, these artists are overworked, and then most likely disposed of.

In this society, only the fittest survive. Following Darwinian principle, citizens dispose of the weak and helpless. Those who are injured are left to die. They are defenseless to this treatment, unable to fight back. Many of these people are still functional, just simply flawed. The citizens of the village do not care for a gentle soul or a quick mind; they only care for a strong body. Those who are born in to poverty are abused and viewed disdainfully by other members of the village. An education is only offered to wealthy boys. Those born with a gift are exploited by those in power. Even the strong are in danger, demonstrated through the attack of Kira's father.

The least innocent are the most able to rise to power. Kira's father was too trusting, and so he was attacked. In this world, innocence is linked with defenselessness, which leads to disposal in most instances.

In *Gathering Blue* and *Gulliver's Travels*, the reader witnesses two very different societies that both focus on collective good. The Houyhnhms make positive matches in marriages for positive breeding. Marriage isn't controlled in *Gathering Blue*, but babies with any imperfections are left in the Field to die. Also, children are given to other families when their parents are taken to the Field. Furthermore, both societies have a council that makes decisions for the group. In *Gulliver's Travels*, the council decides whether or not to exterminate the Yahoos. In *Gathering Blue*, the council makes a ruling about the possession of Kira's land. Both councils make their decisions based on what is best for the community. The Houyhnhms, however, appear to be democratic, while the society in *Gathering Blue* appears to be a republic. Both are willing to make decisions that are cold in the name of impartiality. They decide to castrate Yahoos and leave a crippled girl homeless. Though they act in the name of the collective good, neither society is able to recognize the cruelty directed toward the individual.

Though *Gathering Blue* and *Gulliver's Travels* were written more than a hundred years apart and are for different audiences, these novels both criticize human nature. The Houyhnhms live harmoniously. However, a human reproduction of this society would be extremely unsuccessful. The Houyhnhms constantly seek out the good of the collective, never thinking to seek out the good for the individual. These individual desires, though dangerous, are part of humanity. Houyhnhms don't feel love or ambition. These emotions are part of the human condition; thus, humans would be unsuccessful in replicating the Houyhnhms perfect society. Humans are incapable of impartiality, as demonstrated in *Gathering Blue*. Disagreements, distrust, jealousies are always a danger. Those most corrupt rise to power in *Gathering Blue*. Only those willing to lie and kill, two unacceptable acts in Houyhnhm society, are able to hold

positions of power in the village. Both Swift and Lowry suggest that emotions, that are a part of humanity, also lead to dysfunction and corruption.

Innocence is more able to be preserved in the society of *Gulliver's Travel* than *Gathering Blue*. The Houyhnhnms, though not perfect, are still very peaceful and caring, despite their cold, indifferent logic. They are not stained by sin like those in *Gathering Blue*. As stated previously, the least innocent rise to power in the village. Council members manipulate, lie, exploit others, and sometimes even kill. This discrepancy of power is partially related to their systems of government. The democratic nature of the Houyhnhnms means individuals aren't dominated by others like they are in *Gathering Blue*. Another part of this discrepancy is the difference of species. Houyhnhnms are not emotional; if anything, they are too logical. The Council members are humans, and so they are prone to emotions that all experience, such as jealousy. The difference of disposition and government system affects the preservation of innocence within these two societies.

Chapter 2

It's Out of Our Control: Totalitarian Governments in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Hunger Games*

Dystopia is a relatively new genre. It is related to utopian literature. Instead of a perfect society, this genre focuses on extremely dysfunctional, and even destructive, societies. As stated previously, *Gulliver's Travels* is considered the first dystopian novel. Though there are several notable dystopian novels written in the 19th century, dystopia as a genre gained great popularity in the 20th century. In the age of the 21st century, this genre has become more widely available to all age groups; many dystopian novels have been written for young adults. Despite the younger readership, much of the dystopian tradition is preserved. The warnings present in dystopian novels for adults are reworked and then presented in a new way to younger readers. These older dystopias are comparable to newer dystopias for young adults.

Nineteen Eighty-four and *The Hunger Games* display destructive totalitarian governments. Freedom and happiness are taken away from the many and put in the hands of the few. However, the most heinous aspect of these societies is the governments' misuse of innocent individuals to maintain power and control over the masses. Innocence is a hindrance as opposed to a virtue in these societies. In these worlds, a person has two options: either learn to blend into the background and hope to forever go unnoticed, or lose one's innocence.

Nineteen Eighty-four is set in London in the future. The year is supposed to be 1984, but it becomes clear later in the novel that the real year is unknown. The world is divided into three large countries known as Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. Oceania is constantly at war, but their ally and enemy switches. This fighting is futile because all three powers are equally matched in ability and resources; instead, it is a control tactic to keep the government in power. Ingsoc is the

governmental body in control of Oceania. Classes are based in a caste system that has the poor masses on the bottom, known as the proles. Next, there are Outer Party members, which are similar to low-level and mid-level white collar workers of today. Lastly, there are Inner Party members, which are the rich and powerful of society. Governmental surveillance is constant through telescreens and microphones, and citizens live in constant fear of thoughtcrime; actions and thoughts are treated equally. The ultimate crime of this society is to hate the all-knowing government.

The weakest members of society, known as the proles, are continually exploited by the government in *Nineteen Eighty-four*. Ingsoc treats the poor like cattle, believing they are incapable of complex thoughts and emotions. One Party slogan states, “Proles and animals are free” (Orwell 62). Proles are subjected to less surveillance by the government, and they have fewer responsibilities than Party members. However, that does not make them happier. They have other, equally troubling woes as Party members. The Party uses the Lottery to give proles hope, but also to keep them in their proper place:

“It was probable that there were some millions of proles whom the Lottery was the principal if not the only reason for remaining alive... Winston had nothing to do with the running of the Lottery, which was managed by the Ministry of Plenty, but he was aware (indeed everyone in the Party was aware) that the prizes were largely imaginary. Only small sums were actually paid out, the winners of big prizes being nonexistent persons” (73).

By giving these destitute people a reason to believe they can overcome their situation, the Party keeps the masses content. They do not try to revolt against Ingsoc. It seems clear, as expressed by Winston, Party members would be unsuccessful in overthrowing the government, but there might be a chance of success using the proles’ sheer numbers. Instead, the masses stay disconnected from each other. Each person hopes that he is special, and that his situation can improve through

the Lottery system; though, it never does, and the masses remain under the boot of Ingsoc. Most shockingly, bombs are often dropped on the proles; millions of innocent people are killed in these bombings. Winston has a revelation, believing the Party is responsible for these bombings: “The rocket bombs that fell daily on London were probably fired by the Government of Oceania itself, “just to keep people frightened.” This was an idea that had literally never occurred to him” (127). Using the proles as sacrificial lambs, Ingsoc makes its citizens dependent on the government’s power. These bombs make people afraid of “the enemy,” and they turn to the government for protection against these murderous monsters. In actuality, Ingsoc is simply killing its own citizens to keep the masses subservient. The government, however, doesn’t see it this way. To them, the proles are disposable; it’s like sending a herd of cattle to the slaughterhouse: a necessary evil to perpetuate life.

In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, childhood innocence is corrupted by the government. Ingsoc exploits children, who are the biggest supporters of the Party. During Hate Week, the most aggressive participants are children: “The most savage yells of all came from the schoolchildren” (145). Instead of using children’s passions positively, Ingsoc uses it to perpetuate hate. These children become consumed by an animalistic rage for the always-changing enemy. During Hate Week, the enemy changes from Eurasia to Eastasia. Though Eastasia was a recent ally, the hate directed at them is as fierce as ever. It doesn’t matter who the enemy is; it just matters that there is an enemy. Children’s extreme admiration for the Party causes parents to learn to fear their children: “It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children” (24). The sacred, trusting bond between parent and child is bastardized by Ingsoc. Instead of love and trust, it becomes a relationship built on fear. Children often inform on their parents to the Thought Police. Parsons tells the reader his daughter had him sent to the Ministry of Love based on mutterings he made in his sleep. He is proud of her, believing she had saved him from his unconscious: “There I was, working away, trying to do my bit---never knew I had bad stuff in my

mind at all” (192). Parsons is a simple man, worshipping Party in his waking hours. This claim demonstrates how easy it is to inform on a person. All of Parsons’ actions display a love for the Party, but information from his daughter about mutterings in his sleep is enough to overshadow all of his daytime actions. Furthermore, his daughter’s words do not seem to be scrutinized at all. She could have easily lied to please the Party, as children sometimes do to please someone they admire. She wants love not from her parents but rather the Party. Lastly, children are the most susceptible to the Party’s control tactics. They have no trouble following doublethink, believing whatever is told to them. Children do not think to question contradictory ideas. With their willingness to trust what is told to them and their enthusiasm to please, children are the perfect Party members.

Ignorance is the only way to stay safe in this society. The people who thrive in this society are those who trudge through life without ever questioning anything. The unexamined life, as Socrates criticized, is the only way to survive in Oceania. Those who notice patterns are the ones who wind up dead: “In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it” (69). Doing the math is dangerous. It is easy to see with critical thinking that many pieces of this world don’t add up. This society is built on so many ideas that are just as ridiculous as two plus two equaling five. Syme loves the Party, but he also loves words. Syme, however, lacks the saving ignorance necessary to thrive in this society: “There was something he lacked: discretion, aloofness, a sort of saving stupidity” (48). Syme is able to do the addition and see that five is a wrong answer. He does not criticize, though, but simply notices phenomena, and this, to the Party, is dangerous. For example, Syme is fascinated by the implications of Newspeak: “Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?” (46). He recognizes the patterns created by the Party, catching a glimpse of the strings at the puppet show. No matter his devotion to the Party and his good intentions, anyone who recognizes the game they are playing is a threat, and all threats are vaporized. Syme

disappears just as mysterious as any enemy of the Party. All traces of his existence are erased, and he becomes a nonperson. However, Parsons shows the reader that ignorance is not everything. He is idiot and is completely devoted to the Party. Though he is an ideal Outer Party member, stupid and loyal, he is still brought to the Ministry of Love. No one is safe in Oceania, but it is safer to be an idiot than a genius. Ignorance is bliss in this society.

All the governmental propaganda influences people's feelings to an extreme. The masses in Oceania often are unable to distinguish fact from fiction. For example, it is unclear in the novel, even to the reader, whether the Brotherhood is a real organization or simply a Party invention. It's impossible to make critical decisions because the masses don't know their options. The Party's falsification of information helps keep Ingsoc in control. They falsify statistics, making it appear as though improvements have been made to society through the government's efforts: "And when memory failed and written records were falsified ---when that happened, the claim of the Party to have improved the conditions of human life had got to be accepted, because there did not exist, and never again could exist, any standard against which it could be tested" (79). The Party can make any claim they want because they control the flow of information. No one can ever definitively prove anything to the contrary. All the strength and power of Oceania is wrapped up in Big Brother, who is the figurehead of the Ingsoc. However, just like the Brotherhood, it is unclear if Big Brother is just a figurehead or a real leader; though, it seems more likely that he's just a figurehead. Big Brother seems to have been used by the Party for a long time, and he has never aged. Through the Two Minutes of Hate, the Party shows their strength, as well as providing an outlet for rage. All rage can be directed at a mysterious person, an underground group, and a distant country, instead of at the inadequacies of the Party. These inadequacies can be conveniently blamed on these groups, as well. Just as rage reaches its peak in the Two Minutes of Hate, Big Brother appears, calming the anger into admiration. Citizens feel blissful, as if they have nothing to fear because they have the protection and strength of Big

Brother. Furthermore, the Two Minutes of Hate make executions acceptable. Those executed are excused of being either traitors or members of the Brotherhood. In reality, these executions seem to have more to do with the executed being too knowledgeable. Knowledge, not law-breaking, is the real threat to this society.

Though the government strives to make individuals feel alone, Julia and Winston choose to trust, leading to their downfalls. With the isolating system of the Thought Police, no one can be trusted. Anyone can be a member of the Thought Police. For one's own safety, it is better to be removed from others. Julia and Winston, however, decide to risk their safety in an attempt to find happiness. Julia initiates the risk, slipping Winston a note confessing her love for him. This alone could mean trouble for Julia; however, she blindly trusts Winston, unable to be fully certain he is worthy of her trust. Though this could be a trap, Winston also trusts Julia. Initially, they are suspicious of others, going to extremes to keep their affair a secret. However, along the way, they become reckless and involve others. Julia and Winston first involve Mr. Charrington. He provides them a room without any governmental invasion, so they can conceal their secret affair. Mr. Charrington sells second hand items, and often talks of the past. He even teaches Julia and Winston an old rhyme. They believe Mr. Charrington is dissatisfied with Insoc, just as they are. They, however, risk their safety in an attempt to find others that are equally dissatisfied. They entrust O'Brien, one of Winston's co-workers, to help them gain access to the Brotherhood. Winston and Julia admit to O'Brien the ultimate offense in Oceania: hatred of Ingsoc and Big Brother. These two lovers are naïve, never scrutinizing whether Mr. Charrington and O'Brien are trust-worthy. Julia and Winston never seem to consider one other option: Mr. Charrington and O'Brien could simply be lying to them. This scrutiny could have saved Julia and Winston, who are ultimately brought down because of their trust in these two individuals. These demonstrations of dislike for the Party are merely an act used to ensnare Julia and Winston. O'Brien, who Winston inexplicably trusts, is ultimately revealed to be a member of the Thought Police. Mr.

Charrington is also a member of the Thought Police. Though not young, Julia and Winston are innocent.

Winston and Julia's ultimately downfall is linked to their childish optimism. Winston and Julia believe they can beat Ingsoc. Julia believes the war is won through personal victories. She thinks by committing small indiscretions, such as cursing the Party and having various affairs, she is overcoming the Party's control. By contrast, Winston believes the war must be won through public rebellion. He wants to join the Brotherhood, and he believes O'Brien holds the key to this. Though Julia is hesitant to join his efforts, Winston ultimately convinces her. When they are taken to the Ministry of Love, it is revealed both are wrong: the Thought Police has been following Winston and Julia for years. They are innocents, simply hoping to find happiness; however, in the eyes of the Party, they are enemies. Before entering the Ministry of Love, both agree that there is one thing the government can never take from them: their love. The tragedy of the novel is even their love cannot survive the tortures of the Ministry of Love. There appears at the end of the novel no real hope for even the smallest victory over the totalitarian powers. The reader must witness Winston's utter and complete downfall. He becomes so warped by the government that losing all that made him an individual is seen as a victory over himself. This the ultimate defeat. Winston is so defeated, he actually sees it as a personal victory.

The Hunger Games is set in the unknown future. It is unclear how distant this dystopian world is supposed to be; however, considering the Hunger Games are a seventy-four-year tradition, it appears to be set in the distant future. In Panem, people are grouped into districts. Panem is supposed to represent a post-apocalyptic United States, so the districts are composed of different areas in the continental United States. For example, District 12 takes place in Appalachia. The Capitol controls everything, most notably distribution of resources. Those that reap the resources must be content with the scraps as the citizens of the Capitol live lavishly. The most shocking aspect of Panem is the Hunger Games, a yearly competition in which a boy

and a girl from each district, between the ages of twelve and eighteen, are chosen to compete. The Hunger Games is punishment for a past rebellion that failed. Citizens all across Panem watch as these children kill each other. However, they are not shocked or saddened by these death; instead, they are entertained, treating the Hunger Games as an exciting competition.

Similar to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Hunger Games makes beasts of children. While most children are forced into the Hunger Games through the reaping, some volunteer to enter the games. They see it as a great honor, and strive to bring pride to their district. Whether forced to compete or a voluntary competitor, all children go to great lengths to survive until the end, most notably, murder. Twenty-four tributes enter the arena, but only one survives the blood bath. It is a system of control created by the Capitol to punish past uprising and prevent a future uprising: “Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch---this is the Capitol’s way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy” (Collins 18). The Hunger Games is made to make the masses feel weak and powerless against governmental control. The masses cannot even protect the youngest and weakest of society. This is bad enough, but the Capitol takes it one step further; they make the Hunger Games a great spectacle. The Hunger Games is treated as a sporting event in which districts compete against each other, similar to the Olympics. The Capitol’s fun stems from the districts’ misery. The Hunger Games is broadcasted constantly, and all are required to watch. Past Hunger Games are shown on television in the time between annual Games. Citizens have to sit back and literally watch their children being slaughtered. On top of that, they have to pretend to enjoy it. While the Party uses children to spy and propagate their ideas in *Nineteen Eighty-four*, the Capitol, by contrast, uses children as sacrificial lambs. Both governments, however, ultimately use children to help perpetuate their systems of control and power.

Not only are the sent to the slaughter, but they become inhuman, killing other children to be the last one standing. *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* discuss the psychological backlash

associated with being a victor. Many of the victors, in an attempt to escape the horrors they faced in the Games, turn to drugs and alcohol. Two competitors from District 6 have bodies wrecked by morphling, a drug similar to morphine, when forced to return to the Hunger Games in *Catching Fire*. Johanna Mason states the Capitol cannot hurt her anymore because she doesn't have anyone to love anymore. Finnick, a beautiful male victor from District 4, tells in *Mockingjay* how he was forced into prostitution by President Snow. Though the victors survive the bloodbath, there are no true winners of the Hunger Games.

The Hunger Games distracts the citizens of the districts away from the real enemy. Competitors are taught to hate each other. Katniss realizes this is a trick by the Capitol after she kills the boy who killed Rue: "To hate the boy from District 1, who also appears so vulnerable in death, seems inadequate. It's the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us" (236). All these competitors are like each other: forced into a bad situation, and simply trying to survive to return home. They are all too young to die, and they have loved ones back in their districts. Distracted by their hate of the other districts, citizens lose focus of the real enemy, the person who is forcing them into this awful fate: the Capitol. However, the Capitol is so powerful and unreachable, while the competitors are in easy reach of each other. Districts are powerless against the Capitol, but they can kill those in the arena. Similar to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Capitol is using redirection of rage as a tool of control. During the Two Minutes of Hate, Ingsoc provides a person for citizens to feel protected by: Big Brother. The Capitol does not do this. This makes their redirection less lasting than Ingsoc's. Citizens of the districts are able to see the game the Capitol is playing more easily than the citizens of Oceania.

The Hunger Games, in the end, is a show for the Capitol. It is a system of control, but also a system of entertainment for the wealthy masses. Katniss tells of one Hunger Games in which many of the contests froze to death because there was no wood to make fires: "It was considered very anticlimactic in the Capitol, all those quiet bloodless deaths" (39). The Capitol

citizens like to have a show. The more drama during the Hunger Games, the more interesting it is for them. While the citizens of the districts would prefer to forget past Hunger Games, those of the Capitol love to relive these events: “The arenas are historic sites, preserved after the Games. Popular destinations for Capitol residents to visit, to vacation” (144). These Games are not only entertainment but distraction, as well. Many citizens help with the Hunger Games, either through pampering the tributes or planning the Games. Those who do not have a hand directly in the Games can be a sponsor and donate exorbitant amounts of money to pay for items to be sent to the tributes in the arena. The tributes show their abilities to the Gamemakers, who give them a score between one and twelve; twelve is the highest score and means the tribute shows a lot of ability. Higher scores show sponsors that a tribute has a good chance of winning and is worth investing in. However, not all donations are based solely on ability: “The Hunger Games aren’t a beauty contest, but the best-looking tributes always seem to pull more sponsors” (58). The Hunger Games is treated as a reality show to these people. Those of the Capitol don’t stop to think of the moral implications of the Hunger Games. They mindlessly consume. Similar to *Nineteen Eighty-four*, citizens are safest if they do not question. Questioning a seventy-four-year tradition of killing children would only lead to danger, or death, for those that question. Unlike *Nineteen Eighty-four*, it is unclear the reason these people act without thought. This may be from social conditioning or a survival technique; though, it seems more likely that the reason is social conditioning.

Similar to *Nineteen Eighty-four*, individuals sometimes disappear in *The Hunger Games*. Panem is not as extreme as Oceania, where even the memories of people are destroyed. Those who go against the government in Panem are generally executed, sometimes publically, sometimes discreetly. Katniss remembers watching a boy killed while running through the woods outside of District 12. She didn’t know what happened to the girl with him until the Hunger Games. Some antagonists aren’t killed, but instead forced into servitude. They are called Avoxes.

Not only must they serve those of the Capitol, but also they have their tongues cut out. This prevents them from ever speaking again. It seems these people are also tortured before serving others; though, it is never directly stated in any of the novels. The Capitol, as a result, has access to a free working force. This approach is very different from the one in *Nineteen Eighty-four*. In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, the government tries to dispose of governmental antagonists without suspicion. Those who are killed publically are said to be part of the Brotherhood or supporting the country Oceania is at war with. By contrast, the Capitol shows public displays of dominance through public executions and use of Avoxes. The Party's technique leads to admiration, displaying its competency at finding secret enemies. This helps citizens feel safer in the hands of the government. By contrast, the Capitol's technique leads to fear. Admiration is a more powerful tool than fear, which is why *Mockingjay* ends with a successful rebellion, while *Nineteen Eighty-four* ends with the continuation of Party power.

In *The Hunger Games*, many individuals are powerless in Panem. There is extreme wealth disparity; the wealthy live lavishly in the Capitol, while people starve in the districts. Unlike the proles in *Nineteen Eighty-four*, poor citizens of poor districts have small hope for improved conditions. They have no lottery, but they do have the Hunger Games. Victors of the Hunger Games win money and a big house in the Victors Village. Victors help their whole district, winning rations for their district for a year. However, the odds of winning are low, especially when from a poorer district, such as District 12. With better fed and better trained competitors, the odds are against a victor from a poorer district. Some districts are richer than others, especially those that are closest allies of the Capitol. For example, District One mines diamonds, a much more profitable commodity than textiles in District Eight. Districts One and Two are viewed as Career Districts, in which tributes train for the Hunger Games at an early age. Though this is against the rules, the Capitol turns a blind eye to this because they have a good

relationship with these districts. District Twelve is the poorest districts, mining coal. The Capitol's strict control leaves those in the poorer districts with no control over their own fates.

The poor of each district are disadvantaged in the reaping system. The reaping system appears to give equal opportunity for all children to be chosen, but this is not the case in reality: "The reaping system is unfair, with the poor getting the worst of it" (13). In the reaping system, children enter their name in a pool once at twelve-years-old, and then one more is added every consecutive year until the age of eighteen. This means an eighteen-year-old should only have his name entered seven times. However, there is the tesserae system, which disadvantages the poor, putting the odds less in their favor. Tesserae allow for poor children to enter their name extra times in exchange for a year's supply of grain and oil for one person. A child can enter his or her name more times to supply for his or her family members. This means that parents must sacrifice their children's safety in order to survive. Starvation can push people to their limits, prompting them to do things they would never consider under different conditions. These additions add up, making the total number of entries much higher than seven for some: "So now, at the age of sixteen, my name will be in the reaping twenty times. Gale, who is eighteen and has been either helping or single-handedly feeding a family of five for seven years, will have his name in forty-two times" (13). The poor, like in *Nineteen Eighty-four*, are more likely to die. While the Party drops bombs on the proles, the Capitol has the poor more likely to compete, and die, in the Hunger Games. The poor are viewed as disposable in both governments, and they are disposed of at strategic times.

When Prim's name is pulled in the reaping, the injustice in Panem becomes clear. Prim is only twelve-years-old. This means her name is only entered once in the reaping, compared to Katniss, whose name was entered forty-three times. The odds are in Prim's favor, and yet she is still chosen. She wants to help more than hurt, which is displayed by her relationship with Buttercup, a stray cat she takes care of. Prim doesn't have the survival skills to last in the Hunger

Games. However, no one cares about these factors. The people of the Capitol want to be entertained by first the spectacle and then the violence of the Hunger Games. Prim is only saved by Katniss's sacrifice. Though many view her act as courageous and noble, no one thinks to question the reason Prim was entering in the first place. They do not care if noble Katniss wins or dies.

Rue's death demonstrates the society's corruption of innocent. Rue is the youngest competitor in the Hunger Games, only twelve-years-old. She survives by avoiding the other tributes, traveling through the treetops. Rue blindly trusts Katniss, making an alliance with her without question. She later cuddles with Katniss as they sleep in the tree. This demonstrates her innocence because she is creating a bond with Katniss, even though one or both of them will soon be dead. Furthermore, this death could even be at the hands of her ally; there can only be one winner. Though Rue has a minor role in the sabotage of the Careers' supplies, simply lighting fires to lead the Careers astray, Rue pays dearly. She becomes entangled in a net, and then stabbed in the belly by a spear thrown by another tribute. After committing her first act that engages her in the violence of the Hunger Games, Rue is killed. Katniss attempts to shame the citizens of the Capitol, who watch these murderous games for entertainment: "I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own" (236). Katniss places flowers around Rue. This becomes a famous moment; however, it doesn't shame the citizens of the Capitol as she hoped. It is a beautiful happy moment, but this act of defiance instead becomes just a dramatic moment of the Games. They are moved, but not moved to even consider any change.

Prim and Rue show the reader there is no place for innocence in Panem. Innocence is exploited by the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-four*. They use children's willingness to please to promote their ideologies, as well as their ignorance to help maintain governmental power. By

contrast, innocence is destroyed in Panem. This is shown by Prim's rapid maturity in *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*, as well as Rue's death in *The Hunger Games*. These caring young girls can only survive by going unnoticed by others. As soon as attention is drawn to them, they must be protected by someone stronger; in both cases, this is Katniss. Only those that can fight, deceive, and sometimes even kill, thrive in this society. Even Peeta, who believes in the good of humanity with childlike innocence, deceives the Careers in order to help protect Katniss and survive in the Hunger Games. A person cannot be pure and survive. This point is strengthened throughout the series. The reader watches Gale become corrupted, sacrificing innocent lives for the "greater good." It is revealed a plan he concocted ultimately leads to Prim's death in *Mockingjay*. Katniss is brought to her knees with Prim's death, and her broken mental state leaves her powerless. Katniss and Peeta, in the end, spend their days in solidarity in the ashes of District 12, hiding away from view instead of fighting for justice. Many readers were angered by this ending, especially since it is a novel for younger readers, but this bleak ending reinforces an idea Suzanne Collins built throughout the series: all power is corrupting, and the weak are always targeted.

The Hunger Games and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* both have very likable protagonists. The reader can't help but hope for their successes against these totalitarian governments. The authors trick the reader into feelings of childish optimism, believing that is possible to have a fair and just society, and fighting for it is worth everything. However, both Suzanne Collins and George Orwell hit the reader with reality in these novels. Neither allows their protagonists to simply die; death, in both cases, seems the preferable ending. Both must live and both must face defeat. Katniss witnesses the death of her sister, the same sister she volunteered to enter the Hunger Games to save. Winston and Julia's love dies, and Winston, instead, loves the Party and Big Brother. Dystopias generally echo real life. Both authors seem to warn against allowing power to be taken from the many and put in the hands of the few. If fiction transformed into reality, these authors seem to suggest the masses would be unable to reclaim their power.

The control of information by a governmental body is present in both novels; however, the extent of control is less clear in *The Hunger Games* compared to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In *Catching Fire*, it is clear the government lies to its citizens, most notably with the false destruction of District 13. Citizens of the districts learn that District 13's chief industry was graphite before its destruction; though, it is learned that its chief industry was really nuclear weapons. District 13 was allowed to secretly survive because of the creation of this weaponry. Other than this blatant falsification of information, there is little discussion about the flow of information in the districts. By contrast, the control of information is a central issue in *Nineteen Eighty-four*. Ingsoc uses so many tricks and false information that citizens are trapped into supporting the government; they cannot even foresee other options. The government destroys and falsifies documents, as well as records of citizens. As stated previously, even the reader doesn't know what is true and what is a creation of Ingsoc. Those who decide to risk rebellion, or simply learn too much, are either tortured into submission or executed. The control of information is central to Ingsoc's control in *Nineteen Eighty-four*.

The representation of family dynamics is one big difference between *The Hunger Games* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Oceania is so much more isolating than Panem. Having a loving family can make even the worst conditions more bearable. Furthermore, love can inspire hope. Hope is a powerful tool, used to inspire people to act for change, even when change seems impossible. Though Katniss's father died and her mother experienced depression, in which she became neglectful, Katniss still has people around her that truly love her. She enters the Hunger Games to save her sister who she loves. Katniss and Peeta's love displayed in the Hunger Games helps their popularity in the Capitol. Winston experiences love shortly with Julia, but the Ministry of Love tortures them until their love is extinguished. The people of Panem may not have much, but they do have the right to love, which is deprived of the people of Oceania.

Chapter 3

Life is Too Easy

Within the stories of *Brave New World* and *The Giver*, there is a similar warning: blindly putting faith in the government in the name of happiness will lead to extreme sacrifices and only a shallow happiness. Both of these societies aim for a utopian society founded on generating happiness for the masses. In the name of happiness, the government controls many aspects of personal choice. These governments make choices for their citizens early in life, deciding their occupation, societal rank, and beliefs. One society forces citizens to mature early, but adults are childlike, while the other leaves citizens perpetually innocent. Both of these systems exploit the ignorance of its people. In *Brave New World*, innocence is destroyed at a young age, and in *The Giver*, innocence is exploited to maintain the status quo.

With the beginning of life, the government already imposes life-long implications for its citizens in *Brave New World*. Everyone is created in a laboratory with no idea of parentage. A person's entire life is planned within the initial moments of life within a test tube. To control population growth, seventy percent of female embryos are sterilized. Those who aren't sterilized are forced to take birth control. It is viewed as disgusting and unnatural to experience pregnancy and natural birth. This society is so opposed to natural bodily experiences, such as pregnancy and aging, that it is repulsed by them. Workers create certain conditions for the embryos, leading some to thrive and others to suffer. For example, the lower the class, the longer the embryos are cut off from oxygen in one stage of development. This leads to brain damage and stunted growth. Henry Foster, a conventional Alpha, says, "Nothing like oxygen-shortage for keeping an embryo below par" (Huxley 15). The government makes these decisions, putting societal needs before the needs of the individual. The Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre manufacture

humans to mostly be lower class, creating a large body of complacent workers to complete the mundane jobs required for a society to survive. A society cannot survive comprised of academics; it needs trash collectors, mailmen, elevator operators, and so on. Mustapha Mond, the leader of post-Fordian England, says, “The optimum population is modeled on the iceberg—eight-ninths below the water line, one-ninth above” (268). Though they have the ability to make all people genetically superior, only a small percentage is created this way. The society, instead, has generated a way to force individuals into these low-level jobs through manipulation of embryos. Intellectual and physical inferiority doesn’t guarantee a complacent workforce, though. They could still be enraged by the injustice of their social position. However, the government have also created a way for this workforce to feel happy in these jobs.

Some of the most horrifying aspects of the civilization presented in *Brave New World* relate to the society’s corruption of innocence. Child-like wonder is dismantled in this society. Instead of having the chance to determine personal interests and hobbies, children are conditioned to make decisions the government deems positive for their class, which is determined by governmental officials at artificial conception. For example, children of lower classes are conditioned to hate rural areas, but also conditioned to enjoy rural sports. During adulthood, these lower-class citizens spend exorbitant amounts of money to buy equipment for sports and travel to a place they are trained to dislike. This conditioning relates to capitalism, which is of the utmost importance in this society. The society reveres Henry Ford as a god-like figure, applying his production model to all aspects of society. This conditioning is also used to create a complacent work force: “All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny” (17). As stated previously, the society needs lower-level workers to survive. By brainwashing them, the government makes them happy to work these menial jobs without ever being given a choice. After conditioning, children are given lessons in their sleep, known as hypnopædia. Phrases are repeated during sleep, and enforce enjoyment of one’s class, and distaste for other

classes. There are some phrases that transcend class, which relate to social order, such as phrases discussing capitalistic principles, promiscuity, and drug use. The Director of Hatchery and Conditioning refers to hypnopaedia as “The greatest moralizing and socializing force of all time” (31). Hypnopaedia shapes people’s beliefs into that deemed acceptable by the government. They have a society of citizens that all have the same beliefs; thus, citizens are brainwashed. There is no room to vary or disagree, which leads to conflict. Instead, there is only contentment. These sayings are automatic; people repeat them at certain times without even thinking. Conditioning and hypnopaedic lessons confine citizens to a certain set of values. Citizens make decisions unconsciously, simply following what has been engrained in them during childhood.

Children are desensitized at early ages to more adult topics. A child is deemed atypical if not playing sexual games with other children at the age of six. One nurse notes of a child, “It’s just that this little boy seems rather reluctant to join in the ordinary erotic play” (35). He is taken away by the nurse because he needs to receive more conditioning. His choice to engage in this play is not considered; clearly, he is just defective in some way. Furthermore, eight-year-old children are forced to witness death repeatedly in order to feel detached from it. This way no one mourns an individual death; no one person actually matters that much. Though these children are forced to face more adult topics at an early age, they never grow-up.

While children are forced to mature before their time, adults act child-like. They put personal wants before all else in search of a shallow happiness. The goal of the society is to create happiness for the majority. However, this happiness becomes deluded, satisfying humans’ most base needs. Adults mask unpleasant feelings with “soma.” As one hypnopaedic proverb goes “A gramme is better than a damn” (136). Instant gratification is the societal standard. Leisurely activities are shallow. These activities include “feelies” and various high-tech sports, like elevator squash. “Feelies” are movies, pornographic in nature, in which the audience feels the events of the movie through grabbing handles on a special chair. Sports preoccupy people’s time. The

sports depend on a lot of expensive equipment. People are conditioned to enjoy these sports in order to perpetuate capitalism. Furthermore, promiscuity is encouraged. This way, no lasting attachment is made between partners. Actually, it's seen as anti-social to go on too many dates with the same person. Another hynopaedic proverb says, "...everyone belongs to everyone else" (46). After the Director of Hatchery and Condition smacks Lenina on the behind, Fanny remarks, "That shows what he stands for. The strictest conventionality" (48). In this society, promiscuity is convention. These adults never learn to restrain themselves, instead receiving whatever they desire instantaneously. If they cannot have something, they can simply take a soma and forget all about it. In this way, the adults of this society are like spoiled children. Lenina says, "Never put off till to-morrow the fun you can have to-day" (110). This really encapsulates the whole belief system of enjoyment in post-Fordian England. Pleasure and enjoyment are for the immediate, and there is no reason ever to delay this gratification. However, this instant gratification leads to overall boredom and discontentment. This is demonstrated by citizens continually need to have more of everything: more possessions, more lovers, more soma, and so on. Ultimately, these people are unsatisfied with life. In this way, the societal goal of happiness for the masses is unable to be met.

Bernard Marx demonstrates the perils of being different in which all is pre-planned. He is short, an indicator of the lower classes. His slight height difference has made him feel like an outcast among the elite. There is a rumor that Bernard received too much alcohol surrogate when he was being decanted. Bothered by his difference, Bernard often feels like an outsider. He doesn't get along with his colleagues. They are off-put by Bernard's eccentricities, but mainly, Bernard is rude to them. He feels trapped in this society, looking for a way to feel special and individual. When looking at a storm on the ocean with Lenina, she feels horrified, but he enjoys the view. He attempts to tell her why enjoys this terrifying sight: "It makes me feel as though...as though I were more *me*, if you see what I mean. More on my own, not so completely part of

something else. Not just a cell in the social body” (106). He believes everyone to be mindless savages other than himself and Helmholtz Watson. Bernard often contemplates how to be more than his conditioning. Bernard tries to abstain from sex and soma. For example, he feels regretful after having sex with Lenina on their first date. When Lenina expresses confusion for the reason for his annoyance, Bernard says, “I know you don’t And that’s why we went to bed together yesterday—like infants—instead of being adults and waiting” (110). Bernard, unlike those around him, understands this belief in instant gratitude is childish. He is an enlightened in a body of mindlessness, only able to think differently because of his unconventional appearance. However, this hope dissolves when Bernard gains notoriety for bringing the Savage to London. This demonstrates the corrupting nature of this society. After being forced into exile for helping the Savage, Bernard seems to transform back to how he thought acted before the Savage came to England. Guiltless in the circumstances of his difference, Bernard Marx must live a tormented life.

Helmholtz Watson shows the reader that those genetically superior can feel discontentment in this society. Helmholtz represents the best of his kind. Smart, handsome, and physically fit, Helmholtz has accomplished much in his life, and has found success around every turn. Even with all his success, he still feels discontented: “. . . sport, women, communal activities were only, so far as he was concerned, second bests. Really, and at the bottom, he was interested in something else. But in what? In what” (80). Helmholtz is an incredible success by his society’s standards; yet, he feels unfilled. Unable to be sure what he is missing, Helmholtz searches. He ultimately is drawn to Bernard Marx, who also feels incomplete. However, opposite of Helmholtz, Bernard is slightly imperfect. Helmholtz is a writer, but he feels as though he is limited in his writing, only able to write propaganda. He wants to write something more, but he is unable to quantify it. Later in the novel, Helmholtz writes a poem about loneliness: “I wanted to do a bit of propaganda; I was trying to engineer them into feeling as I’d felt when I wrote the

rhymes” (215). Even though he is more enlightened than the general public, still he is stuck in the language of the society around him, describing his poetry as a type of personal propaganda. Helmholtz doesn’t see it as something inherently different than the writing he completes for the government. For this, and defending the Savage, Helmholtz Watson is exiled, where he plans to continue his writing. Helmholtz is arguably the most important character in demonstrating how dysfunctional post-Fordian England really is. The Savage is an outsider and Bernard is a reject. On the contrary, Helmholtz has lived in this society his whole life, is admired by many, and is successful; yet, he still sees problems within the society. Complaints from someone who reaps the benefit of this society hold more weight than complaints from an outsider and a social reject.

When the Savage enters the society, the reader is fully able to witness the depravity of this world. After witnessing the degrading quality of soma on his mother, John wants to rid the world of the horrible drug. He sees a group of Deltas receiving their soma ration. John attempts to free the oppressed masses, expressing the horrible effects of soma to them; though, they ignore him. Feeling frustrated, he resorts to drastic measures, throwing their ration of soma out a window. They, however, do not appreciate his liberation, and attack the Savage in a rage. The people do not want to break out their societal chains. They, instead, revolt against John, who has spoiled their emotional bliss. The Savage has the best intentions when he throws away the soma. He naively believes people will easily reject enjoyable drugs that are socially reinforced. He does not see the possible resistance and distrust towards him until he begins to be attacked. Earlier in the novel, John weeps after his mother dies. There are children there for their death conditioning, and witness this act. A nurse becomes enraged: “Undoing all their wholesome death-conditioning with this disgusting outcry—as though death were something terrible, as though any one mattered as much as all that!” (247). John has loved and protected his mother his whole life. He has not been conditioned like the others to hold certain beliefs. His innocence, though, is met with frustration and disgust. John reacts naturally, mourning the loss of his mother, while society trains

its citizens to have an unnatural reaction. Raised by a different set of cultural values, the Savage is seen as a menace to society. He is unable to understand their ways, just as they often misunderstand him. John acts in the way he deems is best. None of his actions are meant to be problematic; he is merely expressing his emotions. In this way, John's emotions make him innocent. His natural feelings cause friction between members of this society, but they also make it easier for these citizens to corrupt this pure man.

The Savage's corruption is the real tragedy of *Brave New World*. Given the title Savage for his archaic beliefs, John proves to be the most civilized character in *Brave New World*. He rejects his lustful feelings for Lenina, embraces misery, and seeks higher knowledge. Despite his efforts to remain innocent, the society imposes its beliefs onto the man. His downfall is correlated to his return to his more primal urges; thus, he fulfills the expectations of his title. This culminates in the final pages of the novel. The Savage leaves the greater society to live a more simplistic life: "After those weeks in London, with nothing to do, whenever he wanted anything, but to press a switch or turn a handle, it was pure delight to be doing something that demanded skill and patience" (296). The Savage actually prefers work and tedium to luxury and continual excitement. He strives to have experiences, not merely instant gratification. To purge his past sins, the Savage mutilates his body and forces himself to vomit. However, the Savage is soon discovered and assaulted by reporters and inquisitive spectators. His rage leads to lust, and an "orgy of atonement" (310) ensues on the island. It is unclear if it is out of feelings of remorse, disgust, or entrapment, but the Savage cannot bear to continue to live. The novel ends with the Savage's suicide. John desires to live life purely; yet, society will not let him live his life in peace. They, instead, make a spectacle of the Savage. The only way he can escape their corrupting force is through suicide. The Savage's suicide shows the depravity of this society. They corrupt all innocence. John resists as best he can, but his ultimate submission demonstrates the impossibility of resistance.

In contrast with *Brave New World*, innocence is widely celebrated in *The Giver*.

Childhood is arguably the best stage of life in the Community. Children are given time to play and explore, unlike in post-Fordian England. Though decisions in adulthood, such as spouse and career, are chosen by others, like in *Brave New World*, citizens can enjoy their first twelve years of life in freedom. Also, the Committee of Elders takes each citizen's interests into consideration when determining each individual's career. The Community teaches lessons to the society through giving presents to children. For example, "Fours, Fives, and Sixes all wore jackets that fastened down the back so that they would have to help each other dress and would learn interdependence" (Lowry 40). The children cannot button the coat themselves and must ask other children to button it for them. Each of these presents coincides with a benchmark in life. These presents also mark an increase in the child's freedom. For example, at age nine, children are given a bike, so that they can travel wherever they want. This freedom is gradual, slowly building up until age twelve, which is where children become adults. They are given a job in the Community, chosen by the Committee of Elders. At the Ceremony of Twelve, each child is thanked for his or her childhood. While life is enjoyable and care-free during childhood, there becomes more concerning issues that arise in adulthood.

Sexuality is strictly controlled in the Community. Contrasting the promiscuity in *Brave New World*, the society in *The Giver* suppresses sexual feelings. This lack of sex has the same end goal as the promiscuity in *Brave New World*: no lasting attachments are made between individuals. Furthermore, the natural, which in this case is sexual urges, are made to be seen as unnatural. In *Brave New World*, pregnancy and aging are seen as repulsive. After reaching a certain age, citizens take a pill to control "the Stirrings," which are the name given to sexual urges. The dosage is adjusted for individual need. Jonas expresses his dislike for these pills after he stops taking them: "The Stirrings had returned, and he felt a little guilty and embarrassed about the pleasurable dreams that came to him as he slept. But he knew he couldn't go back to the

world of no feelings that he had lived in so long” (130-131). Jonas demonstrates these pills not only numb sexual desire, but also other intense feelings. Through sexual control, the Community controls other emotions, helping to keep individuals feeling complacent. Furthermore, spouses are determined by the Committee of Elders. These marriages are sexless, since citizens have to take the pills through adulthood. Similar to *Brave New World*, children never know their real parents. However, children are raised in a household instead of a government-controlled facility. Children are conceived by a limited number of “birth mothers,” which are presumably artificially inseminated, and then distributed to select couples in *The Giver*. These couples must go through an application process, and there is a two child per household limit. All these guidelines regarding sexuality keep citizens blindly content. They feel little, and so they have no room to feel anger, love, depression, and so on. Feeling little helps to keep this society in line. People do not feel enough of any emotion to desire any kind of change.

Families in *The Giver* are founded in functionality, not love. The word love has been lost in the ages. When Jonas asks his family about love, his mother says, “Your father means that you used a very generalized word, so meaningless it’s become almost obsolete” (127). The meaning is unclear, so it cannot be used in precise language. Precision is limiting, making it possible to only discuss the concrete, which excludes discussion of emotions. The concept linked with the word has also degraded. This is partially due to the medicine that controls the Stirrings, which stated previously, dampens all emotions. The other part is people of the Community don’t know what love is. They live in a world of predictability, functionality, and sameness, not one of emotions.

Marriage is simply a social institution. The Committee of Elders chooses spouses, attempting to choose individuals they deem “compatible.” Children are raised by a mother and father, but once they leave the home, they never speak to their “parents” again. Jonas says, “As long as they’re still working and contributing to the community, they’ll go and live with the other Childless Adults. And they won’t be part of my life anymore” (124). Once children grow up, the function

of parents is complete; thus, the relationship between parent and child ends. These families do not create bonds with one another. They simply live together for the prescribed number of years.

Similar to *Brave New World*, relationships ultimately lead to pain. To prevent this, both societies dampen any lasting relationships, most notably the relationship between child and parent.

Though communication is important for the citizens of the Community, not everything can be communicated. Citizens of the Community are taught to speak precisely, helping people how to best communicate with each other. They express their thoughts and feelings. Part of this language is the being forbidden to ever lie. Furthermore, they have rules to avoid rudeness. It is considered rude to point out a person's uniqueness; sameness is valued in the Community. Despite using precise language, some experiences cannot be quantified in words: "Even trained for years as they all had been in precision of language, what words could you use which would give another the experience of sunshine?" (89). As stated previously, this language is so limiting, allowing people to only discuss concrete concepts. Ideas that are difficult, such as love, sunshine, and color, go without discussion because these things can only be seen, felt, and explained abstractly. Community members are limited in their thinking as a result of this. Only Jonas and The Giver have experienced these sensations first hand. They are not allowed to speak to anyone about what they have experience. Even if they were allowed to, as explained previously, they would have difficulty finding the words to express these concepts. This relates to Helmholtz poem of loneliness in *Brave New World*. Just as it is difficult to explain sunshine to those who have never felt it, Helmholtz is unsuccessful in his ability to explain loneliness to those constantly surrounded by others. Greatness is a curse in *Brave New World* and *The Giver*. These great characters are given these gifts; they don't choose to be great. In this way, they are punished for something they have no control over; thus, they are innocent.

The Giver and Jonas must bear the burden of the past alone in order to protect the rest of the Community. The Receiver is responsible for retaining memories of the past. He cannot share

any of his knowledge with others. The Giver, before Jonas, is burdened by this isolation from those around him. He tells Jonas, “The worst part of holding the memories is not the pain. It’s the loneliness of it. Memories need to be shared” (154). Unable to discuss the emotions they are grappling with, The Giver and Jonas feel alone in the Community. Those around them cannot even begin to understand what they are feeling because they have no concept of some of these things; they wouldn’t even be able to understand their loneliness. These complex emotions are incredibly difficult to explain to another person, especially to someone who has never experienced them. By keeping all these good and bad memories to himself, the Receiver shields the Community from these difficult emotions: “But then everyone would be burdened and pained. They don’t want that. And that’s the real reason The Receiver is so vital to them, and so honored. They selected me---and you---to lift that burden from themselves” (112-113). Jonas and The Giver must live an unhappy life in order to protect the masses. It is unfair for one person to deal with all of these memories alone, especially since this responsibility was thrust upon The Giver and Jonas; they had no ability to reject this burden. They are forced into to this unsavory position for the “greater good.”

Though innocence is so highly valued, ignorance is the unintended consequence. The Savage in *Brave New World* knows something different. His ignorance to their ways gets him into trouble. In *The Giver*, ignorance is the norm. Where the Savage is disgruntled as a result of his ignorance, the citizens of the Community are blissfully ignorant, unaware of anything different. There are several ethical quandaries that arise in the novel. First, Fiona tells Jonas the elderly are sometime beaten with “disciple wands,” just as children are. The two weakest members of society, the young and the elderly, are beaten with batons by the individuals that take care of them. Unable to defend themselves, they are subjected to physical abuse. The level of abuse increases with offenses: “The Childcare specialists were trained very carefully in disciple methods: a quick smack across the hand for a bit of minor misbehavior; three sharper smacks on

the bare legs for a second offense” (54). This method of discipline may not seem too extreme, which it isn't; the problem is that the weak and innocent are subjected to this treatment.

Furthermore, the elderly are revered as the most honored members of society, but they are not treated with respect; they are treated as misbehaving children. The most shocking ethical quandary happens when Jonas's father kills a newborn infant. He does it without thinking, never questioning the moral implications of murdering a newborn. When twins are born, one twin is killed to prevent the discomfort associated with having two identical individuals. Jonas's father just does what he is supposed to do. This process is called “release,” and just as the infant is killed and disposed of, the old and those who break the rules three times endure a similar fate. These people learn to place all their trust in authority. One's whole life is decided by a group of people. This is a lot of power and control placed in the hands of few. Citizens never question the Committee of Elders; though, they are human, and thus are just as susceptible to make mistakes. These people are led, as the blind is led by a guide, through life by their superiors, unable to comprehend the gravity of their actions. The Giver says to Jonas, “Listen to me, Jonas. They can't help it. *They know nothing*” (153). When a small child colors on the wall, not considering the repercussions, he is blameless. These people are the same; they do not know any better. Unable to see the possibility of options, they live their lives in a straight path, never stepping out of line or even questioning why they have to behave in certain ways. There is no possibility for change in this world; there is only sameness.

Natural states of being are seen as repulsive in both novels. In *The Giver* and *Brave New World*, pregnancy and birth are seen as unnatural. Birth mothers are looked down upon in *The Giver*. Even the mention of natural birth is obscene in *Brave New World*. Sexual urges are unacceptable in *The Giver* and are controlled through medication. Aging is seen as disgusting. Citizens sacrifice some longevity, only living until about the age of sixty, in order to appear youthful for their whole lives. Death in both societies is viewed with apathy. In *Brave New*

World, bodies are cremated and their organic matter is reused. Citizens of the Community are released, which means they are given a lethal injection, during old age; no one dies of natural causes. Also, sometimes babies, and rule breakers are also killed. This break from the natural way of life shows both societies move toward humans as machines. They're function is merely to consume and manufacture. Citizens continue to be merely a cog the machine in society even after death in *Brave New World*. Natural emotional connections are compromised in both *Brave New World* and *The Giver*, as well. Citizens are taught to go against the natural emotion to love. Friendship is distant, consisting of cordial conversation with colleagues. Marriages are either non-existent or between two people chosen by a higher power. There no natural parents. Children are conceived under government regulation. They are raised by the greater society, either raised by government officials or raised by two individuals deemed fit. These societies have changed the natural order of existence. Pregnancy, aging, and death have a very different meaning in these societies than they do in today's society. These emotional bonds ultimately lead to pain, through fights, break-ups, deaths, estrangements, and so on. They also are a part of the human condition. By destroying these natural states of being and emotional bonds, these societies are working to make humans more like machines.

In *Brave New World* and *The Giver*, people do not know any better. They are never given alternative options. They act in the only way they know how. Citizens are taught to simply act, not question. In both societies, life doesn't seem to its citizens to be atrociously bad. They are content. The basic needs of the masses are met. However, those in power know there is more out there. In *The Giver*, the members of the Committee of Elders are not exactly sure what life was like, but they know enough to know history must be hidden from the masses. They only call on the Receiver when they are going to make changes to the Community, which is rarely. Still, they show the Receiver little respect and listen to him little, despite his important position in the Community. Mustapha Mond has a storage of relics from the past, including art and literature.

He speaks with the Savage and explains that mass contentment is not compatible with these valuables from the past. Mond says,

“The world’s stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can’t get. They’re well off; they’re safe; they’re never ill; they’re not afraid of death; they’re blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they’re plagued with no mothers of fathers; they’ve got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they’re so conditioned that they practically can’t help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there’s *soma*” (Huxley 264).

Citizens of post-Fordian England cannot appreciate these delights of the past. Unlike the past, they do not suffer. They do not endure heartbreak and sickness, but they also do not connect with others meaningfully. Both societies function on the principle that what the masses don’t know won’t hurt them. However, there are people who still want for something that cannot quantify. Even Lenina, who is pretty conventional, in *Brave New World* has feelings of emptiness that something is missing. It seems inadequate to simply place blame in those in power, for it takes the masses to perpetuate a society. However, their ignorance is so blinding they truly do not know any better. In the past, the masses have placed all important decisions in the hands of the few. Citizens only know to trust.

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