

# ***Vineland* and Dystopian Fiction**

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Pynchon's *Vineland* (1990) presents a vivid and chilling picture of contemporary America as a land of lost hopes and broken dreams, a place where huge, impersonal forces have subtly gained the power to dictate the courses of individual lives. It therefore has much in common with the modern tradition of dystopian fiction, as its setting in 1984 indicates, including, in addition to George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). All these dystopian fictions involve an opposition between rationality (usually the cold rationality of official control) and irrationality (typically the irrational passion of human feeling). This conflict between society and individual, or reason and passion, figures in dystopian fictions in a variety of ways. For example, the authoritarian governments depicted by authors of dystopian fiction tend to regard sexuality as a focus for social control of individual lives, just as those who rebel against such governments often consider sexual emancipation an important part of their rebellions. Dystopian governments also frequently proscribe practices (like the taking of mind-altering drugs) that might lead to alternative states of consciousness or ways of viewing reality. The treatment of the rationality-irrationality and society-individual oppositions by Zamyatin, Huxley, Orwell and Pynchon can be usefully illuminated within the framework of theories of modern culture like those proposed by Michel Foucault. Indeed, the treatment of this issue in dystopian fiction resonates with a number of modern theoretical debates concerning the merits of reason as the paradigm of modern society.

## 1. "The Spilled, the Broken World"

Asked in a late interview to characterize himself and his intellectual project, Foucault responded by suggesting that it is not what we are that matters, but what we might become: "The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning."<sup>1</sup> Foucault's later work (especially the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*) is primarily an exploration of what he calls "technologies of the self"—the ways human beings constitute themselves as subjects through interaction with other subjects and

with objects in the world. For the later Foucault, this process of self-constitution is the central human activity, one with great creative and emancipatory potential. At the same time, the process is highly complex and paradoxical, since any choice we make in constituting ourselves must be made at the expense of excluding possible alternatives, and any structure we impose on our lives tends to limit our freedom to investigate other structures. Moreover, the kinds of selves available to us are also limited by the constraints imposed on individuals by the institutions, conventions and expectations of society at large. Earlier Foucault works like *Discipline and Punish* focus on these constraints, though Foucault argues in his later work that these constraints may not be as insurmountable as most people tend to believe.

This conflict between the demands of society and the free exploration of individuality is an informing energy of dystopian fiction. Indeed, one of the surest literary signs of the modern crisis in individual identity has been the rise in the twentieth century of dystopian fiction as a well-defined genre that calls into question the assumptions and hopes of a utopian tradition that goes back at least as far as Plato's *Republic*. Zamyatin's *We*, Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984* stand out as the classics of this young genre. Many other examples can be cited as well, most of them having in common the depiction of a future society in which something has gone badly wrong, and in which technological and/or political developments have led to dehumanization and oppression. *Vineland*, while not a pure example of the dystopian genre, is informed by dystopian energies, though with a temporal twist. Unlike most dystopian works (for example, Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*, which grows out of many of the same political realities as does *Vineland*), *Vineland* does not warn against a possible future. Pynchon's book, like Orwell's, is set in 1984; but for *Vineland*, published in 1990, 1984 is not the future but the recent past. Pynchon's depiction of 1984 America as a dystopia is thus particularly chilling because it suggests, not that the conditions it outlines may develop, but that they already have developed.<sup>2</sup>

*Vineland* is so embedded in the here and now that its relation to the genre of dystopian fiction may not be immediately clear. *Vineland* is filled with real people, real places and real events from recent history, giving it a concreteness not typically associated with dystopian fiction. The books of Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell allude to real-world dictators like Stalin, but their fictional totalitarian dictators, the Benefactor, Mustapha Mond and Big Brother, lack the specificity of *Vineland*, whose diabolical political leaders are figures like Ronald Reagan and George Bush. But in point of fact, while dystopian fictions

are typically set in places or times far from the authors' own, their real referents are usually quite concrete and near at hand. *We* is set in an undisclosed location a thousand years in the future, but it is very much about ominous trends Zamyatin sensed in the postrevolutionary society of Soviet Russia. *Brave New World* takes place in a far-future England, but its satire is directed at excesses already brewing in Huxley's contemporary world. And *1984*'s prediction of a future totalitarian state gains much of its energy from its echoes of the Stalinist and fascist states of Orwell's own present and recent past. A comparison of *Vineland* with its major predecessors in dystopian fiction shows its affinities with the genre and gives added force to its bleak figuration of cultural and political realities in contemporary America. Meanwhile, Pynchon's postmodernist dystopia is congruent with Foucault's vision, which thus provides a useful theoretical framework for connecting *Vineland* to other works of dystopian fiction. And reading such dystopian fictions along with Foucault helps to place them within the context of contemporary theoretical debates on culture and society.

For one thing, *Vineland* sets its dreary depiction of contemporary reality against former utopian dreams of what America might one day become. Although the title refers to the novel's setting in the fictional (but realistic) town of Vineland, California, it also obviously evokes the name given America by the Vikings, a name that conveys a sense of abundance and promise. The New World as a whole originally functioned in the European psyche as a locus of hopeful idealism. It is, for example, no accident that Spanish conqueror Vasco de Quiroga stalked about sixteenth-century colonial Mexico bearing with him a well-annotated copy of Thomas More's *Utopia*. But the cruelty with which de Quiroga and his fellow conquistadors subdued the native population of Mexico anticipates Pynchon's suggestion in *Vineland* that the American dream has become a nightmare. The United States, as the richest portion of the Americas, has functioned for generations of immigrants as a land of hope and freedom where virtually unlimited opportunities await those who are simply willing to work hard enough to achieve them. *Vineland* suggests that America is not the land of dreams envisioned in this long-lived utopian fantasy, having become "the spilled, the broken world."<sup>3</sup> At the same time, *Vineland* focuses on the decade of the sixties, suggesting that the emancipatory political rhetoric of that decade (much of which Foucault also questions) was a reinscription of these fantasies that lacked the theoretical sophistication to have any real hope of success.

Pynchon's placing the present time of *Vineland* in 1984 can hardly fail to evoke Orwell. Indeed, echoes of *1984* can be found in much of Pynchon's work, as with the suggestions in *Gravity's Rainbow* that the

Second World War was largely a conspiracy of private forces like defense contractors, recalling the way perpetual warfare is used in *1984* as a tool to control the economy. *Vineland* recalls Orwell's novel in several other ways, as we will see. The engineer Zamyatin is also a logical predecessor of the former engineering-physics student Pynchon. Both authors, for example, use entropy as a key metaphor.<sup>4</sup> But Huxley's *Brave New World* is the most direct predecessor of *Vineland* as a dystopian fiction. Orwell's dystopia derives from conditions in Stalinist Russia, and Zamyatin's from his sense of foreboding that the Russian revolution would degenerate into the conservative and conformist force it became under Stalin. Huxley's book carries resonances of totalitarianism too, but his dystopia is a capitalist one, informed, like Pynchon's, by bourgeois values run amok.

Zamyatin's and Orwell's satires of communism thus parallel Huxley's and Pynchon's satires of capitalism in a number of ways, suggesting that, in the end, authoritarian ideologies are all very much alike despite their specific ideological pretensions. Reading *Vineland* in the tradition of these dystopian novels reinforces Pynchon's point that it *can* happen here, and that oppression is not merely something that happens elsewhere. Similarities between Pynchon's dystopia and his literary predecessors' come particularly well into focus when read through the optic of Foucault. For example, the dystopian societies of Zamyatin, Huxley, Orwell and Pynchon all include extensive programs for surveillance of private citizens as a means of ensuring obedience and conformity. And all four use popular culture to promulgate the official ideology by producing innocuous models of behavior for the populace which consumes that culture.

A central image in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault's exploration of the history and philosophy of the modern prison, is Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, an experimental prison in which inmates could be kept under observation at all times. For Foucault, this design is symptomatic of a general tendency in modern society, in which official power depends more and more on the ability to acquire a constant flow of information about the activities of the subjects of that power. This knowledge-based administration of power finds its model in the medieval Inquisition, but reaches new levels through the capacities of modern technology. In Foucault's rather dystopian vision of modern society, the typical citizen is constantly under surveillance in a way that differs very little, fundamentally, from the plight of the inmate of the Panopticon. With so many modern institutions deriving from this same emphasis on the gathering of knowledge about individuals, modern "prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons."<sup>5</sup> For Foucault, modern society itself is carceral,

and the difference between life inside a prison and outside is not so large as might first appear.

Foucault's vision of the importance of surveillance in administering modern political-power structures closely corresponds to the insights of Zamyatin, Huxley, Orwell and Pynchon in their dystopian fictions. In the surrealistic One State of *We*, all citizens live and work in structures made entirely of glass, so that—except during brief private periods reserved primarily for sex—their activities can be constantly observed by those around them.<sup>6</sup> This constant surveillance is the official responsibility of the "Guardians," a state security force, but the citizens are so conditioned that they accept this official observation willingly. Indeed, in one of the book's many parallels between modern totalitarianism and traditional Christianity, these Guardians are thought of as guardian angels who protect the populace from trouble. As Zamyatin's narrator and central character, D-503, explains, "How good it is to know that a vigilant eye is fixed upon you, lovingly protecting you against the slightest error."<sup>7</sup> But the Guardians' surveillance is largely superfluous, since the citizens of the One State already keep one another under observation, immediately reporting any deviant behavior to the proper authorities. D-503 notes that "we are always visible, always washed in light. We have nothing to conceal from one another" (18).

*1984*, which was strongly influenced by *We*, continues this theme of surveillance, which is again carried out mainly by the citizens themselves. In Oceania, children routinely inform on their parents, spouses on each other, and so on. But Orwell's most strikingly depicted surveillance occurs via the ever-present telescreens through which the Party of Oceania keeps track of its members. Perhaps the most notable congruence between *1984* and *Vineland* is the emphasis in both on the role of television as a tool of authoritarian control. Orwell's anticipation of the power of television is the most prescient aspect of *1984*, and for most readers the ubiquitous telescreens of Oceania are the most memorable element of Orwell's dystopian vision. The homes of all Party members in Oceania feature these video screens, as do all public places Party members might frequent. The citizenry is unable to escape the constant barrage of video propaganda; these screens are on at all times, and can be turned off only in the homes of members of the elite "Inner Party."

The incessant video broadcasts of Oceania literalize what Louis Althusser calls "interpellation," or "calling" of the subject—constructing individual subjects in a mold advantageous to the prevailing ideology.<sup>8</sup> Althusser's analysis of the subject as a product of prevailing ideologies arises from the same structuralist concepts that inform Foucault's early

project. But Althusser's rather pessimistic vision of the strict positioning of the subject in society contrasts sharply with the creative self-constitution envisioned in Foucault's later explorations of technologies of the self. The opposition between society and individual that informs dystopian fiction can be read as an opposition between Althusser's strict interpellation of the subject and Foucault's more flexible self-constitution. In dystopian fictions like *1984*, society generally wins this battle, suggesting that Althusser's vision may ultimately be more accurate. But both Althusser and Foucault usefully problematize the opposition between individual and society fundamental to dystopian fiction by suggesting that the individual is largely a social phenomenon and that, therefore, the two poles of this opposition cannot be neatly separated.

The telescreens of Oceania can quite literally call out to individual subjects, à la Althusser. But the element of surveillance in this interpellation recalls Foucault. The two-way telescreens at least potentially allow the authorities to keep all Party members under surveillance at all times. Viewers whose behavior seems inappropriate or whose response to the programming seems inadequate can be individually addressed and urged to adjust their behavior. As the book's memorable slogan announces: "Big Brother Is Watching You." The Party members are well aware of this surveillance and so modify their behavior accordingly: "You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized."<sup>9</sup> Among other things, this awareness of being watched at all times helps to suppress individuality, since Party members know they are never truly alone. The very nature of human subjectivity in Oceania is thus modified by this ever-present surveillance, increasing the interpellating power of the telescreens.

These telescreens are part of a general program of surveillance and control that makes it virtually impossible for Party members to mount any effective opposition to the rule of Big Brother and the Party elite. However, Party members make up only fifteen percent of the population of Oceania. The other eighty-five percent are the lowly proles, whose lives go largely disregarded by the powers that be. "If there is hope," Orwell's Winston Smith notes in his clandestine diary, "it lies in the proles" (60). And the proles do seem to be a potential emancipatory force, both because they live relatively free of surveillance and direct control and because they are such a large majority of the populace: "If they chose they could blow the Party to pieces tomorrow morning" (60). The proles show no signs of mounting this revolt in *1984*, but they do suggest the potential power of the

working class virtues in which Orwell himself seemed to place great faith.

In *Brave New World*, Huxley's World Government relies more on interpellation before the fact than on surveillance after the fact to keep its citizens in line. The method of surveillance involves a fierce suppression of individuality, including a constant peer pressure that attaches a strong stigma to any deviation from the communal norm. Citizens of Huxley's dystopia are expected to spend virtually no time alone, so they are constantly under others' observation. And the roles citizens are expected to play are quite well defined, so any deviation is immediately noticeable to their fellows. But, if this citizen-based approach is more subtle than the government surveillance programs of *We* and *1984*, it is not necessarily less effective or more benevolent. In many ways, Huxley's World Controllers exert an even more thoroughgoing domination over their citizenry than do the more heavy-handed Benefactor and Big Brother. In Huxley's future world, the interpellation of the subject is concretized through a program of genetic engineering that literally manufactures human beings specifically designed to be members of certain social and professional classes. This biological conditioning is supplemented and reinforced with a program of psychological conditioning which ensures that people will continue to behave in the prescribed manner. For a member of this society, as World Controller Mustapha Mond explains to John the Savage, "his conditioning has laid down rails along which he's got to run. He can't help himself; he's foredoomed."<sup>10</sup>

Surveillance is also an element of the dystopian society depicted in *Vineland*, in which Pynchon's figuration of an America fully in the grips of authoritarian control resonates strikingly with Foucault's ruminations on the mechanisms of power. The carceral nature of society in *Vineland* is suggested by allegations that the United States government has for some time been building a massive system for political incarceration in response to the revolutionary energies of the sixties. This "Political Re-Education Program, or PREP" (268), involves the establishment of a system of camps where political undesirables can be taught to think appropriately, much as in the Stalinesque Ministry of Love in *1984*. As dissident ninjette DL Chastain explains to teenager Prairie Wheeler, "Nixon had machinery for mass detention all in place and set to go. Reagan's got it for when he invades Nicaragua" (264). Moreover, like Foucault, Pynchon suggests that this carceral system extends far beyond the walls of actual prisons, into the society at large. Evoking the motif of Orwell's famed Thought Police, record producer and Pynchon veteran Mucho Maas explains to

ex-hippie Zoyd Wheeler the extent to which official power has tightened its grip on American society:

"Just please go careful, Zoyd. 'Cause soon they're gonna be coming after everything, not just drugs, but beer, cigarettes, sugar, salt, fat, you name it, anything that could remotely please any of your senses, because they need to control all that. And they will. . . .

"Perfume Police. Tube Police. Music Police. Good Healthy Shit Police. Best to renounce everything now, get a head start." (313)

Official surveillance plays a large role in the administration of this program of control, as it does in *We* and *1984*. Some of *Vineland's* central characters are paid government informers, part of a network of domestic spies that stretches across the country. Informer Flash Fletcher justifies his vocation by arguing that he is fundamentally no different from anyone else: "'Everybody's a squealer. We're in th' Info Revolution here. Anytime you use a credit card you're tellin' the Man more than you meant to. Don't matter if it's big or small, he can use it all'" (74). Fletcher's credit card example points toward the suggestion in *Vineland* that computerized information-management has given the government unprecedented means to keep track of citizens. Recalling the reduction of human beings to numbers in *We*, this computerization reduces human lives to mere digitized strings of ones and zeroes. As do most other works in the dystopian tradition, *Vineland* thus suggests that the evolution of technology has proved to be, not liberating, but oppressive and dehumanizing. "We are digits in God's computer," ex-dissident and present government informer Frenesi Gates hums; "What we cry, what we contend for, in our world of toil and blood, it all lies beneath the notice of the hacker we call God" (91).

One subplot in *Vineland* involves the efforts of Frenesi and her 24fps film collective to turn technological surveillance against the government. Evoking the ongoing official rewriting of history in *1984* (and in Stalinist Russia), Frenesi's leftist mother, Sasha, notes that the history of the American movie industry is continually being rewritten as if this history were itself a movie script (81). Taking this metaphor seriously, Frenesi and the other radicals in 24fps follow the wave of revolutionary activity in sixties America, filming demonstrations and official reactions to them to produce a "true" film history of these events undistorted by official editing. What the members of 24fps do not realize is that their own representation of history is also ideological, as all representations of history necessarily are. Further, they do not understand that their conversion of real events into film images is



complicit with a general confusion between fiction and reality with which the government reinforces its ability to manipulate the perceptions of the populace. The authorities convert revolutionary counter-surveillance into just another version of official surveillance. Seduced by government agent Brock Vond, Frenesi becomes a government informer; when she then films the activities of the revolutionary "People's Republic of Rock and Roll" (209), Vond uses her footage to keep tabs on the fledgling republic, which he ultimately subverts with Frenesi's help.

Government surveillance operates in other ways in *Vineland* as well. As the book opens, Zoyd prepares to do "something publicly crazy" (3) to demonstrate that he still qualifies for the government mental-disability checks which help him support himself and his daughter, Prairie. He is readying himself to perform his annual act of "transfenestration" (7), a carnivalesque exhibition in which he hurls himself through the plate glass window of some local business. Pynchon makes it clear that Zoyd is not really crazy and that his annual act of lunacy is mere theater, staged for the benefit of the authorities. At first glance, then, it would appear that Zoyd has found a way with this scam to get the last laugh on the powers that be. But the authorities are in full complicity with Zoyd's staged transgression, which becomes a mere media event, complete with live television coverage and fake candy-glass window to insure all goes well. Realizing his act of subversion has been appropriated by those it is designed to subvert, Zoyd characteristically turns to the tube for a metaphor to express his frustration: "It was like being on 'Wheel of Fortune,' only here there were no genial vibes from any Pat Sajak to find comfort in, no tanned and beautiful Vanna White at the corner of his vision to cheer on the Wheel, to wish him well, to flip over one by one letters of a message he knew he didn't want to read anyway" (12-13).

Zoyd's television allusion, together with the media coverage of his transfenestration, points to the role popular culture plays throughout *Vineland*, recalling also the importance of television as a tool of surveillance and control in 1984. And it turns out that Zoyd's transgressions are even more thoroughly administered and authorized than he at first realizes. The government uses Zoyd's annual demonstration of public craziness to help keep tabs on his whereabouts, recalling Foucault's argument that the prison system is designed not to eliminate crime but merely to establish a well-identified population of "delinquents" whose crimes can thus be monitored and kept within the limits of the "politically harmless and economically negligible" (278).

These delinquents also provide a marginal group against which society can define itself by exclusion, as do the insane Foucault discusses in *Madness and Civilization* and homosexuals in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. This need for an official Other frequently figures in dystopian fiction, as when the Party of Orwell's Oceania promotes solidarity among its members through organized hatred of the Trotskyesque Emmanuel Goldstein. *Vineland* similarly suggests that official authority needs a target group against which to exercise its power: "Communists then, dopers now, tomorrow, who knew, maybe the faggots, so what, it was all the same beef, wasn't it? Anybody looking like a normal American but living a secret life was always good for a pop if times got slow—easy and cost-effective, that was simple Law Enforcement 101" (339). Pynchon (again echoing Foucault) goes so far as to suggest that the government is not above creating target groups artificially. In a conspiracy theory reminiscent of earlier Pynchon works like *Gravity's Rainbow*, drug agent Roy Ibble suggests in *Vineland* that the CIA—especially during the tenure of George Bush as Director—has stimulated the importation of drugs into the U.S., thereby creating a population of drug users who can be defined as official delinquents: "'for verily I say that wheresoever the CIA putteth in its meathooks upon the world, there also are to be found those substances which God may have created but the U.S. Code hath decided to control'" (354).

One reason the government in *Vineland* is forced to stimulate transgression is that official power has done such a thorough job of suppressing any genuine resistance. This suppression is effected largely through an extensive program of interpellation carried out via popular culture, especially television. Although popular culture is important in all Pynchon's work, Orwell's influence on the sinister figuration of television in *Vineland* is particularly clear. In one scene, the TV movie television addict Hector Zuñiga is watching is suddenly interrupted (apparently through a technical error) by a brief shot of government agents in the process of planning a security operation, sending an ominous chill through Hector: "Could it be that some silly-ass national-emergency exercise was finally coming true? As if the Tube were suddenly to stop showing pictures and instead announce, 'From now on, I'm watching you'" (340).

If surveillance via television is not quite a technological reality in Pynchon's 1984 America, television in *Vineland* is in many ways even more effective at enforcing conformity than in 1984. In Pynchon's modern America, the omnipresence of television infects everyone, not just a Party elite. Orwell's television programming may be more blatantly directed toward control of behavior, but *Vineland* suggests

that the more subtle techniques of contemporary American television may make it all the more effective as an interpellating force. Characters in *Vineland* approach the world with expectations developed from popular culture, especially television, interpreting their experiences within the framework of programs like *Gilligan's Island*, *Star Trek* and *Hawaii Five-O*. And the mind-numbing effects of this constant exposure to television, by rendering the populace incapable of critical thought, make any genuine resistance to official authority virtually impossible.

The negative figuration of popular culture in *Vineland* is not limited to television. Even the supposedly transgressive counterculture of rock and roll is just another element in an endless barrage of sensations that keeps the minds of Pynchon's Americans occupied with a mere processing of data without analysis. As Mucho explains to Zoyd, rock and roll turns out to be anything but a revolutionary tool. To Mucho—who was himself not above using the power of rock and roll to seduce young girls in *The Crying of Lot 49*—contemporary music dulls the minds and enthusiasm of would-be revolutionaries through a process of sensory and information overload: "Give us too much to process, fill up every minute, keep us distracted, it's what the Tube is for, and though it kills me to say it, it's what rock and roll is becoming—just another way to claim our attention, so that beautiful certainty we had starts to fade, and after a while they have us convinced all over again that we really are going to die" (314).

In *Vineland*, popular culture is so successful at indoctrinating the populace with the official ideology that, by 1984, the PREP project, begun in 1970, is cancelled as unnecessary. Popular culture and other mechanisms at work in society (what Althusser would call "Ideological State Apparatuses") are so effective in molding the youth of America into obedient citizens that there are no serious political undesirables left for the PREP camps to process: "they did a study, found out since about '81 kids were comín in all on their own askín about careers, no need for no separate facility anymore" (347). What is left in Pynchon's America of 1984 is a conformist nation of zombies, a population of "drug-free Americans all pulling their weight and all locked in to the official economy, inoffensive music, endless family specials on the Tube, church all week long, and, on special days, for extra-good behavior, maybe a cookie" (222).

In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault investigates the role sexuality played in the process of self-constitution in ancient Greece, finding that sexual practices in this era were determined not so much by moral codes as by a highly aesthetic sense of style. For the Greeks, sexual behavior was part of a broad network

of practices through which they could constitute themselves as ethically admirable subjects, "by offering oneself as an example, or by seeking to give one's personal life a form that answers to criteria of brilliance, beauty, nobility, or perfection."<sup>11</sup> In short, the principal goal of Greek life was the making of one's life into a masterful work of art for appreciation, admiration and emulation.

According to this notion, persons are to constitute themselves as ethically admirable subjects after the model of aesthetically admirable works of art. But surely the criteria by which works of art are judged are, to a great extent, conditioned by the prevailing ideologies of a given society. Foucault's creative self-constitution thus may become just another variant of Althusser's interpellation. Indeed, the societies depicted in dystopian fiction pay close attention to the control of art and culture. David Cowart contrasts the wealth of allusions to high culture in Pynchon's earlier work with their virtual absence from *Vineland*, where "the density of reference to the ephemera of popular culture is almost numbing."<sup>12</sup> The lack of high culture in *Vineland* mirrors the situation in the society it depicts, where about the only culture to which the populace is ever exposed is a popular culture that hardly offers plausible models for aesthetic constitution of the self. The models this culture offers seem designed specifically to undermine creative explorations of selfhood, encouraging the populace, not to explore new possibilities, but to conform to stereotypes. For example, despite her own countercultural protestations, Prairie secretly admires the "teenagers in sitcoms, girls in commercials learning from their moms about how to cook and dress and deal with their dads." These characters from the Tube exert a strong pull, leaving the envious Prairie "knowing like exiled royalty that that's who she was supposed to be" (327).

The role popular culture plays in *Vineland* recalls the importance of images and material from popular culture in Pynchon's earlier work, though the negative figuration of popular culture in *Vineland* calls into question suggestions that postmodernist literature is in general informed in positive ways by popular culture.<sup>13</sup> Many other works of the dystopian tradition share Pynchon's understanding of how mass culture stifles creative individuality. In addition to keeping up the barrage of televised propaganda, Orwell's Party maintains a strict control over other cultural products as well. All culture in Oceania is produced by the Ministry of Truth, which supplies Party members with "newspapers, films, textbooks, telescreen programs, plays, novels—with every conceivable kind of information, instruction, or entertainment" (39). Even the proles are not exempt from this strict cultural control, and one of the reasons they need not undergo

constant surveillance is that they are effectively kept in line by the Ministry's departments of proletarian culture, which produce "rubbishy newspapers, containing almost nothing except sport, crime, and astrology, sensational five-cent novelettes, films oozing with sex, and sentimental songs which were composed entirely by mechanical means" (39). Anticipating Foucault's argument that modern governments seek not to extirpate crime but to administer it, the Party even produces pornography, which it then officially bans but makes easily available to "proletarian youths who were under the impression that they were buying something illegal" (108-09).

Since the cultural products of Oceania are devoid of creativity, they can be turned out by machine, following simple compositional algorithms. After all, "[b]ooks were just a commodity that had to be produced, like jam or bootlaces" (108). Orwell's Party is diligently working to make language itself mechanical through the development of "Newspeak," an official language with obvious authoritarian intentions. As the linguist Syme explains to Winston Smith, "the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought. In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it" (46). The Newspeak project extends to literature as well, since the classics of past literature are informed by precisely the kinds of polyphonic energies and human passions the Party seeks to suppress. As Syme continues: "The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron—they'll exist only in the Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be" (47).

The commodification of culture in Oceania recalls the dystopian society of *Brave New World*, whose god is Henry Ford, and in which every aspect of life is directed toward the efficient production and consumption of goods. Even human beings *are* goods, produced like so many automobiles or bars of soap on factory assembly lines, different social classes corresponding to different models or brands. As in *1984* and *Vineland*, conformity is enforced in Huxley's future society mainly through the proliferation of a passive mindlessness that renders the citizens incapable of the thought required to question the models the World Controllers provide for them. Popular culture is an important element in this program. A massive Adornian Culture Industry bombards the populace with a constant stream of mind-numbing stimuli for the senses, not only of sight and sound, but of touch and smell as well.<sup>14</sup> This industry is administered by various "Bureaux of Propaganda," whose techniques are developed in a "College of Emotional Engineering." The products of this culture

industry are devoid of any content that might lead to thought or analysis. Books are almost nonexistent, because reading is a largely individual activity the results of which are difficult to control, and because they take too long to read, creating the danger of an extended exposure that might lead to thought and meanwhile diverting readers from economically more "productive" activities in this ultra-capitalist society: "You can't consume much if you sit still and read books" (37).

Huxley emphasizes the degraded condition of mass culture in *Brave New World* by opposing that culture to the high art of Western tradition. John the Savage, whose rearing on a Savage Reservation exempts him from the strict interpellation of the "civilized" world, is a great reader and admirer of Shakespeare, who has been officially banned by the World Controllers. As Mond explains to John, it has been necessary to ban Shakespeare because his works (especially the tragedies) evoke the kind of strong passions the World Government, in the interest of "happiness," seeks to suppress. According to Mond, "that's the price we have to pay for stability. You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We've sacrificed the high art. We have the feelies and the scent organ instead" (169).

But Huxley's contrast between the high art of Shakespeare and the banality of popular cultural products like the feelies is far from simplistic. Popular culture may aid in the interpellation of subjects into the positions demanded by official authority, but, in point of fact, John the Savage has been just as thoroughly interpellated by Shakespeare. John's expectations from and reactions to his experiences are almost entirely conditioned by his reading of literature. But Huxley's world is a far different stage from Shakespeare's, so John's Shakespearean processing of the stimuli he receives is entirely inappropriate. Shakespeare's plays may be infinitely richer than the insipid feelies produced by the World Government's culture industry, but John still lacks the powers of abstraction and analysis to be able properly to apply what he has learned from Shakespeare to conditions in his world, or creatively to constitute himself as anything other than a stereotype. The disjunction between John's Shakespearean expectations and the reality he encounters only increases his alienation in a society where he is already an outsider. He becomes a hermit, living alone in an isolated spot and attempting to purify himself through self-flagellation—which then becomes a media event, itself the subject of a popular feely. In the end he is driven—like Emma Bovary—to suicide. Literature for Huxley can be a powerful humanizing force, but it can be a destructive one as well, especially if its readers lose the ability to distinguish between fiction and reality.

Popular culture figures prominently in *We* as well, in ways that strikingly anticipate Zamyatin's successors among writers of dystopian fiction. For example, music in the One State is composed according to strictly rational mathematical principles, devoid of all inspiration or feeling. It is produced, in fact, by a machine called a "musicometer," as D-503 learns in one of the many lectures he and his fellow citizens are required to attend: "Simply by turning this handle, any of you can produce up to three sonatas an hour. Yet think how much effort this had cost our forebears! They were able to create only by whipping themselves up to fits of "inspiration"—an unknown form of epilepsy" (17). Poetry in the One State is still written by humans, but by specially trained state poets who construct their compositions for purely didactic purposes according to the principles of effective industrial management laid down by the early-twentieth-century American efficiency expert Frederick Winslow Taylor.<sup>16</sup> These poems are intended, not for private reading and meditation, but for performance at the various public spectacles periodically held to reinforce the power of the One State and its Benefactor. The One State has "harnessed the once wild element of poetry. Today, poetry is no longer the idle, impudent whistling of a nightingale; poetry is civic service, poetry is useful" (68). And if this project seems to suppress the imaginative energies traditionally associated with poetry, so much the better. Imagination is, in fact, the great enemy of the One State, which eventually goes to the length of requiring all citizens to submit to a surgical procedure for removal of the imagination.

In a parody of the pressure exerted on Zamyatin and his fellow writers in postrevolutionary Soviet Russia to produce didactic works in the service of the revolution, the unimaginative official poets of the One State are "inspired" to produce such memorable works as *Red Flowers of Court Sentences*, *He Who Was Late to Work* and *Stanzas on Sexual Hygiene*. Zamyatin makes clear in essays like "Literature, Evolution, Entropy, and Other Matters" his distaste for such "useful" literature, suggesting that "[d]ogmatization in science, religion, social life, or art is the entropy of thought."<sup>16</sup> But for Zamyatin, poetry has an inherent revolutionary potential that is not so easily subdued as the rulers of the One State of *We* might like to believe. The official poet R-13 turns out to be a secret dissident, and remembrances of writers past, like Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Shakespeare, flicker through the world of the One State despite official attempts to suppress them. The "wild element" of poetry is only one of many such elements the One State seeks unsuccessfully to suppress. By the book's end, a full-scale revolt is in progress, the outcome of which remains uncertain, though D-503 has been safely lobotomized.

The uncertain outcome of the revolt in *We* gives Zamyatin's book a much more hopeful ending than those of *Brave New World* and (especially) *1984*, but there are hints of hope in all three books. This hope often lies in the realm of the aesthetic, as Foucault's technologies-of-the-self project would suggest, and as the fear of art shown by almost all governments in dystopian fiction would support. For Zamyatin, the power of the aesthetic is tied to a faith in nature, passion and feeling, key ingredients of art which remain alive in the wild areas outside the glass walls of the One State and which remain latent even within the citizens of the One State. Huxley shows less faith in nature, depicting conditions in the savage reservations as cruel and primitive, hardly preferable to those in his civilized dystopia. But certain basic human passions remain alive in that dystopia, especially in the realm of art. Emotional engineer Helmholtz is a state-supported writer of feelies and slogans, but he aspires to write a new *Othello*. And Mond himself is an avid reader of the banned Shakespeare. Even the ultra-pessimistic Orwell seems to share at least some of Winston Smith's hopes for the proles, echoing Zamyatin's faith in the wild tribes outside the walls of the One State. Perhaps the clearest expression of this hope (and the one that resonates most with the treatment of popular culture in *1984*) involves a peasant woman Smith overhears singing while she hangs diapers on a clothesline. The song she sings is a product of the Ministry of Truth, turned out by "versificators," the descendants of Zamyatin's musicometers. But this woman endows the song, however mechanical it may be, with some of her own genuine human spirit, singing "so tunefully as to turn the dreadful rubbish into an almost pleasant sound" (115).

*Vineland* alone among these dystopian novels presents an ostensibly happy ending, with the evil Vond appropriately dispatched to hell and the lost dog Desmond safely returned to the Wheelers. And though this romance ending seems mostly parodic, *Vineland* itself stands as an excellent example of the creative potential still inhering in popular culture, despite the attempts of the Culture Industry to make its products intentionally empty and banal. Pynchon's book is itself a patchwork of bits and pieces of popular culture, seeking to turn that culture against its makers and suggesting the creative possibilities in an active reclamation of popular culture for the populace it supposedly serves. Despite its critical attitude toward contemporary popular culture, *Vineland* is anything but an elitist rejection of that culture in favor of some traditional notion of high art. Popular culture for Pynchon may be produced and disseminated by an immense network of forces whose main goal is to stimulate conformity and mindlessness, but that does not mean we must necessarily consume it in conformist



and mindless ways. In the end, popular culture is what we make it. Pynchon makes it an important element in a major addition to the genre of dystopian fiction.

## 2. Freud, Foucault and Dystopian Fiction: Rationality and Irrationality in Modern Culture

*Vineland's* depiction of would-be student revolutionaries reminds us of the sexual revolution's centrality to the anti-establishment political and cultural movements of the sixties. However, *Vineland* suggests that unrestricted sexual activity does not necessarily strike a blow against existing structures of political power; it may, in fact, support those structures by diverting subversive energies from the realm of politics into the relatively harmless one of impersonal sex. During one episode of *Vineland*, a group of previously-conformist college students—inspired by demon marijuana—decides to secede from the United States and form their own independent counter-country, the People's Republic of Rock and Roll. As this somewhat frivolous-sounding name suggests, these students are not the most profound political thinkers: "None of these kids had been doing any analysis" (205). Most of their revolutionary activities consist of an unrestrained hedonism, presumably a sort of carnivalesque reaction against the repression of the society from which they have seceded: "Led Zeppelin music blasted from the PA, bottles and joints circulated, one or two couples—it was hard to see—had found some space and started fucking" (209–10). But if sexuality plays a role in this rebellion, it also plays a major part in the new republic's eventual fall. The students are led by math professor Weed Atman, who becomes sexually involved with leftist activist Frenesi Gates, who has come to film the revolt for the 24fps film collective, a group organized to provide alternative coverage of sixties revolutionary activities. But Frenesi is also involved in a dark sexual relation with government agent Brock Vond, who eventually uses her to undermine the Republic and to trigger Atman's murder by one of his own lieutenants.

In his manipulation of Frenesi and Atman's sexual relation, we are told, Vond reveals "a secret about power in the world" (214). For Vond, the interests of official power are served, not by repressing sexual energies, but by using those energies in the interest of authority. Pynchon also suggests this complicity between sex and power in the sexual fascination exercised upon both Frenesi and her leftist mother by figures of official authority. Both women experience an irresistible sexual attraction to men in uniform, "as if some Cosmic Fascist had spliced in a DNA sequence requiring this form of seduction and

initiation into the dark joys of social control" (83). Sasha explicitly wonders if all her various acts of resistance to official authority are merely attempts to deny the dangerous erotic pull figures of power exercise on her.

This Foucauldian complicity between sex and power is further suggested throughout the text by images of sadomasochism. A lawn-care service with the highly Pynchonesque name of "The Marquis de Sod" promises to whip the unruly lawns of its customers into submission. And Pynchon invokes a common cultural stereotype with his depiction of the mysterious dentist Larry Elasm, who haunts Atman with sinister hints of what might go on in his dental office, "Dr. Larry's World of Discomfort" (228). The comic tone of such examples does not efface an underlying note of darkness, a note that surfaces most clearly in Vond's sadistic treatment of Frenesi, the sexual domination of whom he seems to regard as a demonstration of his ability to defeat the larger countercultural forces she represents. Vond continually plays power-and-sex games, and gets erections at the very idea of suppressing rebellion. Visiting a camp where dissidents, including Frenesi, are imprisoned, he experiences a powerful sexual thrill at the abject subjugation of his enemies. And when Frenesi greets him sardonically, he immediately reacts with fantasies of sexual control: "One day he would order her down on her knees in front of all these cryptically staring children, put a pistol to her head, and give her something to do with her smart mouth" (273).

Pynchon's version of the political conflicts of the sixties embodies a clash between rival theories of the workings of sexuality in modern society. His rebels appear to adhere to a Freudian repressive hypothesis according to which society seeks to thwart sexual desire and therefore to harness its energies for socially productive work. Following neo-Freudians like Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown, they regard sexual liberation as a step toward a more general social and political freedom. But Vond and other representatives of official authority are not at all convinced that sexual energies necessarily run counter to their attempts to dominate and control the populace. Like Foucault, they question the repressive hypothesis and appear to regard sexuality as a potential tool of oppression, as "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power."<sup>17</sup> For Foucault, sexuality is not an expression of natural passion so much as a product of socially conditioned discourses. Modern society seeks, not to repress or even extirpate sexuality, but instead to administer sexuality and turn sexual energies to its own advantage: "Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another" (HS1 48).

Events in *Vineland* support Foucault's analysis over Freud's. Attempts in the book to use sex as a means of subversion generally end in disaster, while the attempts of Vond and others to use sex as a tool of control generally lead to success. Pynchon's predecessors among authors of dystopian fiction also address sexuality in ways the theories of Freud and Foucault illuminate. In 1984, for example, both the ruling Party and its subversive opponents appear to accept the Freudian repressive hypothesis. Freud argues that civilizations tend to repress sexuality so sexual energies can be sublimated into activities that benefit society as a whole, society understanding that "a large amount of the psychological energy which it uses for its own purposes has to be withdrawn from sexuality."<sup>18</sup> The Party of Oceania accepts this same energy-based model of sublimation, feeling that "[w]hen you make love you're using up energy" that might be employed in the service of the Party. As a result, sexual pleasure is a waste of emotional energy, since "sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war fever and leader worship" (110).

The Party thus seeks strictly to control and limit sexual desire. Echoing their predecessors in the Christian (especially Catholic) tradition, the Party sees sex as existing primarily for the purpose of manufacturing human beings: "The only recognized purpose of marriage was to beget children for the service of the Party. Sexual intercourse was to be looked on as a slightly disgusting minor operation, like having an enema" (57). As a result of this policy of official repression, enemies of the Party identify sexuality as a locus for transgression against the Party's rule. Would-be rebel Winston Smith concludes that "[t]he sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion" (59). He enacts his subversive tendencies through an unauthorized sexual relation with Julia, a young woman who shares his view of intercourse as rebellion. After consummating their illicit passion, both partners conclude that sexuality is "the force that would tear the Party to pieces," and that their union "was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act" (105). On the other hand, Smith later becomes concerned about Julia's lack of theoretical awareness, accusing her of being "only a rebel from the waist downwards" (129). Smith and Julia's sexual rebellion turns out to be entirely ineffectual. Both are arrested, tortured and brainwashed, and forced to turn against each other. In the book's chilling conclusion, the official appropriation of Smith's passion for Julia becomes complete: he sublimates his desire for the woman in a socially acceptable direction, realizing that his only love is now directed toward Big Brother, the Stalinesque personification of official power.

The dismal failure of Smith and Julia's sexual rebellion in *1984* casts considerable doubt on the validity of their identification of sex as inherently subversive. In this sense, Orwell's book, though thoroughly informed by the Freudian vision of repression, anticipates Foucault. *1984* bears out Foucault's figuration of sexuality in several ways. Despite its negative view of sex, Orwell's Party does not seek to do away with desire. Instead, it seeks to rechannel sexual energies into a love for Big Brother and a concomitant hatred for the Party's official enemy, Emmanuel Goldstein. In many cases, the Party covertly encourages supposedly illicit sexual activities because they help to divert energies from more specifically political activities. As we have noted, the Party itself secretly produces pornography, which it then officially bans but makes easily available.

The Party's strict control of sexual behavior in Oceania is only one part of a general attempt to control all aspects of its members' lives, thus depriving them of any true individuality. A principal anathema of the Party is the Newspeak concept of "ownlife," or "individualism and eccentricity" (70). The Party's belief that sexuality is an area in which individuality might arise again recalls Foucault's exploration of the ways the ancient Greeks employed sexuality as a technology of the self. As we have seen, Foucault suggests that sexuality for the Greeks functioned as one of several practices through which persons could exercise a creative freedom in constituting themselves as ethically admirable subjects. Sexual behavior was a principal means by which the goal of making one's life into a masterful work of art might be achieved.

However, if this figuration of sexuality as a realm of aesthetic practice seems to contradict Foucault's earlier notion of sexuality as a "transfer point" for power relations, power remains very much at the center of sexuality in his discussion of the Greeks. Foucault emphasizes that one criterion for judging sexual style involved *enkrateia*, a process of self-mastery in which one demonstrates control of one's pleasures and desires through "domination of oneself by oneself" (HS2 65). Sexuality becomes, not the domain of unrestrained passion, but a means of demonstrating, through the exercise of moderation and restraint, that one's passions are in fact under control. The essentially internal nature of this struggle makes mastery an ethical and aesthetic concept among the ancient Greeks, as opposed to Christians, for whom the introduction of Satan leads to a new conception of mastery as defeat of an external enemy. There are obvious political implications in this Christian emphasis on mastery of the Other. In Christianity itself, it leads to an oppressive, code-oriented morality based on strict prohibition of certain activities, rules which

limit and constrain the creativity of self-constitution. And in Western society in general, the notion that personal mastery is to be gained through domination, not of oneself, but of the Other contributes to the kinds of ideologies of domination typically enacted in dystopian fictions.

Even in Foucault's ancient Greece, self-mastery involved a notion of mastery of others. The mastery exerted over oneself in sexual conduct was viewed as a mirror of the mastery required to govern a household or even a city-state. Thus, "sexual relations—always conceived in terms of the model act of penetration, assuming a polarity that opposed activity and passivity—were seen as being of the same type as the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, an individual who dominates and one who is dominated, one who commands and one who complies, one who vanquishes and one who is vanquished" (HS2 215). One corollary of this attitude was that the freedom actively to author oneself as a sort of artistic or literary work belonged only to free males, who in fact defined themselves in relation to passive groups like women and slaves.

The element of domination of the Other that thus inheres even in Foucault's somewhat idealized depiction of self-constitution in ancient Greece illustrates the highly complex nature of the technologies of the self Foucault describes in his later work. The process of creative self-constitution as a quest for self-mastery is always in danger of degenerating into the short-cut approach of achieving a sense of mastery through the domination of some weaker Other. Conversely, the subject in quest of mastery is in constant danger of becoming the object of domination by other questing subjects or by more impersonal forces like institutions and conventions. Finally, the subject who is too successful in dominating himself through self-mastery will paradoxically experience a limitation on his ability to seek mastery by imposing overly rigid constraints on his own behavior.

The repressive sexual policies of Orwell's Party indicate an understanding of sexuality's importance as a technology of the self. These policies also have a historical referent, being at least partially a reflection of the prudery of the Stalinist Soviet regime that provides one model for Orwell's book. Zamyatin's *We* (written in 1920–21) arises within a postrevolutionary Russian context of attitudes toward sexuality very different from those of the later Stalinist period. Many young Communists in this early period looked upon having sex as a fulfillment of natural needs roughly equivalent to drinking a glass of water. For these young Communists, this attitude was a sort of political statement, part of a general challenge to traditional morality that was regarded "almost as a Communist rite of passage."<sup>19</sup> In

short, both the young Communists of the postrevolutionary period and the older Communists of the later Stalinist period seemed to accept the repressive hypothesis of sexuality in society, the difference being that the first group saw themselves as enemies of authority while the second group had already become authority. This rapid turn from revolution to conservatism and repression recalls Zamyatin's observations in essays like "Scythians?" that successful revolutions are always in danger of descending into institutionalized conformity (SH 20–33). *We* also advances this same insight. Sexual relations in the One State are not discouraged: "free" sex is openly approved though strictly regulated by the official bureaucracy. The One State takes a purely practical approach to sexuality, which it regards as a purely physical process, so that "what to the ancients was the source of innumerable stupid tragedies has been reduced to a harmonious, pleasant, and useful function of the organism, a function like sleep, physical labor, the consumption of food, defecation, and so on" (22).

These attempts officially to administer and control sexual energies in the One State satirize the errant rationalism and materialism advocated by many in postrevolutionary Russia and warn against the consequences of the victory of this attitude. They anticipate both Stalin's regime and Foucault's charge of a complicity between pleasure and power in modern society. This amoral attitude toward sex turns out to be anything but liberating. Even without traditional moral restrictions, sexual behavior in the One State is very strictly controlled. Granted, citizens of the One State can have sex with anyone they want—but only after filing the proper paperwork, and only as often as the government has determined to be necessary: "You are carefully examined in the laboratories of the Sexual Department; the exact content of sexual hormones in your blood is determined, and you are provided with an appropriate Table of sexual days. After that, you declare that on your sexual days you wish to use number so-and-so, and you receive your book of coupons (pink)" (22). According to this bureaucratic procedure, one need merely register to have sexual relations with another "number" (as the citizens of the One State are called, indicating their dehumanization) to be granted permission to do so. That other number need not even be consulted, it presumably being his or her duty to the State to comply with any officially approved request for sexual favors. Instead of being *forbidden* to have sex, citizens of the One State may in fact be *compelled* to do so. This incongruity in sexual practices in the One State parallels that in Foucault's figuration of sexuality as a locus for creative self-constitution, in which people demonstrate mastery in their sexual behavior at the expense of the partners being mastered.<sup>20</sup>

Given the strict regulation of sexual conduct in *The One State*, it comes as no surprise that sexuality in *We* functions as a focal point for subversion. Mathematician/scientist D-503, designer of the *Integral*, a spaceship the One State plans to use to colonize the universe,<sup>21</sup> is initially very much an establishment figure, a pillar of conformity and proper behavior, though there are hints that a primitive potential for passion lurks within him. For example, his hands are "hairy, shaggy—a stupid atavism" (7). In a parodic retelling of the Eden myth, D-503 is seduced from his mindless conformity to authority (and especially to reason) through the sexual charms of a subversive woman, the mysterious I-330. In his vertiginous sexual encounters with I-330, D-503 at last breaks free of his obedience to bureaucratic control, discovering for the first time the energies of a natural passion with "no pink coupon, no accounting, no State" (74).

I-330 entices D-503 to join an organized revolt, which leads eventually to his being lobotomized and to her torture and execution. The practical effectiveness of their sexual revolt is thus open to question. Moreover, it may be that I-330 uses her sexual charms in a purely calculated effort to win the extremely useful D-503 over to the side of the rebellion. Still, *We* does seem to suggest a positive potential in the way D-503's sexual relation with I-330 leads him to experience a genuinely humanizing emotion. And when the revolution does break out, sexual rebellion plays a role in the apocalyptic breakdown of administrative control. As a stunned D-503 walks through the tumultuous city, he sees "male and female numbers copulating shamelessly—without even dropping the shades, without coupons, at midday" (219). The book ends with the revolution still in progress, its outcome still in doubt.

Whatever the differences between official attitudes toward sex in Zamyatin's *One State* and Orwell's *Oceania*, the real object of concern in both is not so much the physical act of sex as the strong emotions that might be unleashed through uncontrolled sexual relations. As William Matter notes in his discussion of official suppression of human emotion in *Brave New World*, this fear of passion as a threat to social stability in attempts to envision an ideal society dates back at least to Plato's *Republic*.<sup>22</sup> However, whereas Plato regards the suppression of emotion as a good, modern dystopian fictions tend to privilege the needs and desires of individuals over the demands of society. This conflict between passion and authority is central to the hedonistic dystopia of *Brave New World*, where flagrant promiscuity is not only endorsed but encouraged by the state, and where sexuality is only one among many activities for the attainment of pure physical pleasure. Here, there is no strict bureaucratic regimentation of sexual conduct as

in Zamyatin's *One State*. Instead, citizens are simply conditioned from a very early age to regard sex as a pleasurable ludic activity, a sort of sport, and the pressure to participate in this sport comes mainly from one's peers, who regard abstention or monogamy as aberrant anti-social behavior.

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud argues that modern society "does not like sexuality as a source of pleasure in its own right and is only prepared to tolerate it because there is so far no substitute for it as a means of propagating the human race" (58). At first glance, the official encouragement of promiscuity in *Brave New World* seems almost the exact opposite of the repressive attitude Freud describes. Unlike modern society as Freud characterizes it, Huxley's dystopian society views sexuality exclusively as a source of pleasure, and it has indeed found a substitute means of propagating the race. Children in this world are produced by genetic engineering on assembly lines, then reared and educated in public institutions. The very notion of a live birth or of a "viviparous mother" is considered obscenely repellent, while the notion of a "father" is regarded as a kind of scatological joke.

In the ultra-capitalist society of *Brave New World*, human beings are thoroughly commodified. Sexuality is commodified as well. Deprived of any use value through universal contraception, sexuality becomes a matter of pure exchange value, with sexual favors being freely traded like any other commodity. In this sense, Huxley's vision of the devaluation of sex in *Brave New World* is consistent with Freud's analysis in several ways. The citizens of Huxley's dystopia do in fact derive a great deal of recreational pleasure from sex, but it is a low-key pleasure devoid of any strong feelings. About the only sexual activity frowned upon in this society is monogamy, because exclusive sexual partners might begin to develop emotional attachments and to feel a loyalty to each other that supersedes their loyalty to the community at large. In short, Huxley's World Controllers seem to share the concern Freud attributes to civilization that "sexual love is a relationship between two individuals in which a third can only be superfluous or disturbing, whereas civilization depends on relationships between a considerable number of individuals" (61). However, whereas Freud suggests that society seeks to undermine private sexual loyalties by repressing sexuality itself, the society of Huxley's book elects the alternative strategy of defusing the emotional charge normally associated with sexual relations and by stigmatizing monogamy.

But Huxley's book is not a simple warning against the dehumanizing potential of free sex. Against the promiscuity of his dystopian civilization he sets the conventional sexual morality still



practiced in the Savage Reservations, areas yet to be placed under strict government control. Among the savages, conventional monogamy is still the norm, but this situation leads as often to jealousy and violence as to humanizing love. When John the Savage comes to live in London, he is repelled by the sexual freedom of the "civilized" world, but his repressive alternative is hardly preferable. The "pneumatic" Lenina Crowne develops an interest in John and attempts to seduce him, though the strongest expression of feeling she is able to muster as a product of her society is a quotation from an insipid popular song that tellingly indicates the role of sex in her world as an opiate of the masses: "Hug me till you drug me, honey" (149). John, an avid reader of Shakespeare, violently pushes Lenina away and launches into an impassioned Hamletesque tirade on the disgusting physicality of women. His revulsion against sex leads to violence not only against Lenina but against himself. Taking Foucault's notion of self-mastery to an especially literal and violent extreme, John flees to a remote location and attempts to rid himself of the contamination of civilization through repeated self-flagellation and finally through suicide.

For Huxley, both the repression of sexuality in conventional Christian morality and the devaluation of sex in his amoral, materialistic dystopia are obstacles to the achievement of genuine intersubjective attachments. The World Controllers fear such attachments, as the society's especially strong phobia toward traditional family relations shows. This official opposition to the family again recalls Freud, who suggests that family attachments can run counter to the interests of society at large: "The more closely the members of a family are attached to one another, the more often do they tend to cut themselves off from others, and the more difficult it is for them to enter into the wider circle of life" (56). Huxley's World Controller Mond shares this attitude: "What suffocating intimacies, what dangerous, insane, obscene relationships between the members of the family group!" (27).

For Freud, of course, the nuclear family is fundamental to the human condition as we know it; so, in the opposition between nature and society, family functions primarily on the side of nature, despite the obviously social element of the family structure. Like Huxley's World Controllers, the governments of many other dystopian societies seem to agree. In the One State of *We*, for example, families and marriages are strictly forbidden. D-503, feeling an emptiness in his life, longs for the sense of connectedness a family might supply. Attempting to romanticize the relation among himself, his frequent sexual partner O-90 and his friend R-13 (also a sexual partner of O-90), D-503 envisions the three of them as "a family. And it is so good

occasionally, if only briefly, to relax, to rest, to enclose yourself in a simple, strong triangle from all that" (44). Yearning for a sense of himself as a unique individual, D-503 fantasizes about what it would be like to have a mother, who would regard him, not just as a useful member of society, but as "a simple human being—a piece of herself" (216). Reinforcing this suggestion that the bond between mother and child confers a genuine humanity that runs counter to the One State's cold drive for reason, one of *We's* most powerful images of rebellion against authority also involves motherhood. Late in the book, O-90 becomes illegally pregnant by D-503, then escapes into the wild lands beyond the Green Wall that rings the crystalline city of the One State. Here, among primitive people who live free of the repressive civilization inside the Wall, she will be able to deliver her child and to function as its natural mother.

In 1984, families do exist, and sexual relations outside the traditional structure of marriage are forbidden. But the Party is careful to ensure that the kinds of private emotional attachments Freud associates with the family do not arise in Oceania. Family members are effectively turned against one another, with children being encouraged to inform on their parents and spouses encouraged to spy on each other. In Oceania, "[t]he family had become in effect an extension of the Thought Police" (111).

The Party's use of the family as a tool to further its own power recalls the Stalinist era in the Soviet Union of the 1930s, which saw "not only an assertion of traditional family values but also an extension of the principle of legitimate personal conduct from Communists alone to the population as a whole" (Fitzpatrick 150). In this sense, the strategy of Orwell's Party (and Stalin's) differs significantly from the anti-family stance of the dystopian governments in *We* and *Brave New World*, though it involves a similar recognition of the potential importance of the family structure. But Orwell's vision of the family as an extension of the Thought Police contrasts sharply with Freud's concept of the family as a natural human unit. Foucault also sees a complicity between the family and official structures of power, arguing that the family has been one of the principal means through which modern society administers and controls its citizens' sexuality: "since the eighteenth century the family has become an obligatory locus of affects, feelings, love; . . . sexuality has its privileged point of development in the family" (HS1 108).

The radical disagreement between Freud and Foucault over the role of the family in civilization is part of a more fundamental disagreement over the nature of sexuality, which for Freud is a natural, instinctive (and therefore anti-social) drive, but which for Foucault is a social and

discursive construct. If the example of Stalinist exaltation of the family parallels Foucault's vision of the family as a tool of the state, it also ominously foreshadows recent developments in America. Stalin's regime promoted marriage, outlawed homosexuality and abortion, and apotheosized children and family in "sentimental and sanctimonious tones" (Fitzpatrick 150). In short, the rhetoric of the Stalinist retreat of the 1930s bears some suspicious similarities to that of the new conservative values of Reagan-Bush America. And Pynchon's treatment of the family in *Vineland* is in many ways consonant with Orwell's Stalin-inspired vision of the family as an arm of official power. Families in *Vineland* do not, in general, function well—like the rest of Pynchon's lost and broken world. Family life is part of the officially packaged American dream, as when Prairie fantasizes about being a member of a traditional nuclear family, "some family in a family car, with no problems that couldn't be solved in half an hour of wisecracks and commercials, on their way to a fun weekend at some beach" (191).

But this idealized vision of the family, supported by the powers that be and promulgated through the medium of television sitcoms, hardly corresponds to the real family lives of *Vineland*'s characters. Prairie herself has not seen her mother, Frenesi, since infancy, and Prairie's father, Zoyd, is a less than ideal, though loving, parent. And when Prairie expresses envy for her friend Ché, who lives with her mother and the mother's boyfriend Lucky, because "[a]t least you have the whole set," Ché assures her that life in the Oedipal triangle is not all it's cracked up to be: "A mom who watches MTV all day and her boyfriend who transforms into Asshole of the Universe anytime he gets to see a inch of teen skin, family of the year for sure" (329). Far from being a dream, Ché's family life is a nightmare of sexual abuse at the hands of her would-be stepfather and undeserved blame from a mother who accuses the daughter of seducing the mother's boyfriend. The sexual and emotional energies associated with the family lead, not to bonding and unity, but to conflict and recriminations.

Vond recognizes the widespread desire for a family connection and believes he, like Orwell's Party, can use this desire to further his official power. Reversing (but echoing) Orwell's vision of the family as an extension of the Thought Police, Vond views the state as an extension of the family: "While the Tube was proclaiming youth revolution against parents of all kinds and most viewers were accepting this story, Brock saw the deep—if he'd allowed himself to feel it, the sometimes touching—need only to stay children forever, safe inside some extended national Family" (269). For Vond, parents are images of authority, and people have a secret erotic desire for the security

submission to authority can afford. Family "love" thus functions, not as a counter to the demands of society, but as a training ground for obedience to authority.

*Vineland* powerfully questions the motivation of the pro-family rhetoric of the Reagan-Bush administration it so thoroughly critiques. At the same time, the book hints that family can nevertheless function as a locus for genuine and valuable intersubjective connection. N. Katherine Hayles argues that *Vineland* presents the family as a possible means of salvation, suggesting that it is structured along the lines of an opposition between two "antagonistic force fields." One of these fields, the "snitch system," is composed of the network of government agents and informers who monitor and control the lives of ordinary citizens. The other field is a "kinship system" based on the communal loyalty and positive emotional experience conventionally associated with the family.<sup>23</sup> Hayles is correct that some of the most touching moments in *Vineland* occur when characters achieve genuinely rewarding emotional experience through the bonds of family, but she does not really come to grips with the fact that most families in the book are dysfunctional, or that the snitch and kinship systems are intertwined, snitches too being members of families. All in all, *Vineland's* figuration of family life is highly complex. Pynchon appears to acknowledge a positive potential in family connection, while remaining extremely wary of official authorities' ability to manipulate family emotions for their own ends.

Emotion and irrationality often serve in *Vineland* as means to resist the cold rationality of established authority, as possible avenues for exploring perceptions of reality that run counter to the officially prescribed versions. Along these lines, Pynchon depicts the attempts of sixties radicals to tap the energies of the irrational and to explore alternative states of consciousness through the use of drugs. The clash between drug users like Zoyd and government drug agents like Vond and Hector Zuñiga is another figuration of the conflict between individuals and authority. The cruel and sinister way the drug agents go about their business contrasts with a relatively sympathetic characterization of users like Zoyd, leading David Cowart to conclude that drugs function symbolically in *Vineland* as a transgressive alternative to official society (74). But just as Vond attempts to harness the irrational energies of sexuality and family feeling in the interests of the state, so too are there hints in *Vineland* that drugs function as a tool of official power, not as a subversion of it. Despite its fierce criticisms of American drug-enforcement policies, *Vineland* hardly presents the drug culture as a utopian alternative to contemporary society. On the contrary, it continually suggests that

drugs functioned in the sixties as a literal opiate of the masses, dulling the awareness of those in the counterculture and helping the authorities maintain and solidify their power. Echoing Foucault's charge that official society attempts not to repress sexuality but to administer it, Pynchon suggests, as we have already noted, that U.S. drug-enforcement procedures are intended not to eliminate drug use but merely to circumscribe drug users as an official Other against whom to exercise official power—and that the CIA in fact stimulates the importation of drugs into the U.S.

Drugs frequently figure as a motif in dystopian fiction. In the hyper-rational One State of *We*, for example, mind-altering drugs of any kind are strictly forbidden. Alcohol and even tobacco are banned, and any hint of alternative consciousness is so strongly opposed by the state that its citizens do not even dream. The subversive I-330 both drinks and smokes as part of her rebellion against authority, and D-503 begins to dream as he falls under her influence. In *1984*, on the other hand, alcohol and tobacco are allowed, but only under strict government control. Party members can get government-supplied Victory Gin and Victory Cigarettes, but both are poor in quality and short in quantity. The proles can officially get only a watery beer, though in practice they can also get gin fairly easily. *Brave New World* takes this subsidizing of the liquor industry a step further: the government freely distributes narcotics as literal opiates of the masses. In this dystopia, the official drug of choice is "soma," which has "[a]ll the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects" (42). The universally-prescribed soma helps keep the populace in a happy stupor, incapable of mounting (or even conceiving) any assault on the status quo.<sup>24</sup>

The ubiquitous soma is only one of many means by which Huxley's World Government seeks to sedate its subjects and "protect" them from developing emotions that might be difficult to control. Zamyatin's One State shows a similar fear of the emotional. In Orwell's Oceania, however, the Party does not suppress emotion so much as seek to harness it for its own use. Thus, in public demonstrations like the regular "Two Minutes Hate," Party members are driven to frenzies of hatred for the Party's enemies, especially the semi-mythical Emmanuel Goldstein. Writing in the shadow of the horrors of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, Orwell recognizes that, in point of fact, modern totalitarian states often thrive on emotion.

*1984*, though strongly influenced by *We*, inverts the earlier book's treatment of the clash between reason and the irrational. In Zamyatin's book, an errant reason represents a dehumanizing tyranny, resistance to which arises mainly in the realm of the irrational, the

natural and the primitive. But in Orwell's book, these latter energies are precisely those used by the Party to further its power, and, if there is hope for resistance to that power, it would seem to reside in a good healthy dose of rationality. For example, Orwell's Party demonstrates its control over Winston Smith by teaching him to believe that, if the Party so dictates, two plus two equals five, regardless of what his reason tells him. In Zamyatin's *One State*, on the other hand, "There is only one truth, and one true way; this truth is two times two, and the true way—four" (67).

The reliance of Zamyatin's *One State* on the multiplication table as a sort of alternative God resonates with the observation by Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* that the demand that two times two must always equal four exemplifies the dehumanizing tyranny of reason. The *Underground Man*'s anti-rationalist tirades, largely a response to the rationalism espoused in Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?*, participate in a debate between proponents of civilized rationality and of natural feeling that also informs Zamyatin's book. The issue carries a special charge in a late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Russian context, where rationality was typically associated with the foreign cultural influence of the West and the irrational with the indigenous cultural energies of Mother Russia. This opposition came into particular focus in the 1917 Russian Revolution and the ensuing civil war, in which a rationalist, Western-inspired Marxism clashed with forces representing traditional Russian culture.

*We* is very much a Russian book, arising directly from this conflict. But the issues Zamyatin raises are not irrelevant to the West, where a debate between those who see reason as a liberating force and those who see it as an oppressive one is central to modern culture as well. For example, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno warn against the turn to instrumental reason they see informing the Enlightenment, arguing that this turn leads to an emphasis on domination of nature and ultimately of others, paving the way for the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. Horkheimer and Adorno participate in a broader modern intellectual movement that questions the legitimacy of reason as a cultural paradigm. This movement includes Bataille and Derrida, and can claim Nietzsche as a forebear. Others, however, warn against an unrestrained acceptance of irrationalism. For example, Jürgen Habermas, the Frankfurt School successor to Horkheimer and Adorno, sees a positive value in the Enlightenment that should not be lightly tossed aside. He argues that any solution to our modern social and cultural problems will require rational communication, and that we should learn from the mistakes of the Enlightenment rather than simply reject its values out of hand.

Foucault is sometimes grouped (especially by Habermas) in the irrationalist camp, though Foucault's own challenges to Bataille and Derrida call this categorization into question.<sup>25</sup> Foucault himself, while acknowledging a "relationship between rationalization and excesses of political power," nonetheless vigorously denies that he supports "nonreason" as an alternative.<sup>26</sup> Foucault's argument that the boundary between reason and madness is an artificial social construct does challenge the hegemony of reason in the modern world; but his sense of the "precariousness of a reason that can at any moment be compromised, and definitively, by madness"<sup>27</sup> does not so much privilege madness as challenge reason's claim to be, as in Zamyatin's *One State*, the "one truth."

Dystopian fictions, then, participate in the modern theoretical debate over rationality. The treatment of the issue in Zamyatin, Huxley, Orwell and Pynchon illuminates Foucault's dialogue with Freud, generally coming down on Foucault's side. For example, the tendency of the *One State* to see as sickness all behavior that deviates from its strictly rational dictates anticipates Foucault's charge of a complicity between Freudian psychoanalysis and the modern cultural dominance of reason. But if Zamyatin warns against the tyranny of reason in *We*, Orwell warns equally gravely against the possible tyranny of a rejection of reason in *1984*, though both Zamyatin and Orwell can be construed as recommending neither pure rationality nor irrationality as a ruling paradigm. Huxley's vision in *Brave New World* is even more hybrid. His World Controllers seek to extirpate all emotion, but in their use of sex and drugs as means of doing so, they hardly demand that their subjects limit themselves to the realm of the rational. Similarly in *Vineland*, rationality and irrationality are not so easily distinguished. Official power in the book is in some ways coldly rational, but it consistently attempts to use sexuality, family emotions and mind-altering drugs to gain its ends. Despite the sometimes very different figurations of the rationality-irrationality opposition in these dystopian fictions, all support the view that the opposition is not a clear-cut confrontation of polar opposites but a dialogue between interdependent components that are both integral to the human condition.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Luther H. Martin, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1988) 9.

<sup>2</sup>Compare Thomas W. Cooper's suggestion relative to Orwell's book as a warning of things to come that "the deepest danger is not that *1984* is coming, but rather that it *has come* in another guise, and we are unaware of it." "Fictional *1984* and Factual 1984," *The Orwellian Moment: Hindsight and Foresight in the Post-1984 World*, ed. Robert L. Savage, James E. Combs and Dan D. Nimmo (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1989) 99-100.

<sup>3</sup>*Vineland* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990) 267.

<sup>4</sup>For an argument that Pynchon's use of entropy was influenced by Zamyatin, see Peter L. Hays, "Pynchon's 'Entropy': A Russian Connection," *Pynchon Notes* 16 (1985): 78-82.

<sup>5</sup>*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979) 228.

<sup>6</sup>This all-glass civilization, among other things, parodies Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*, in which the Crystal Palace serves as a metaphor for the potential of modern scientific reason to master nature. See Gorman Beauchamp, "Zamiatin's *We*," *No Place Else: Explorations in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*, ed. Eric S. Rabkin, Martin H. Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1983) 64. Zamyatin reinforces this parody with an extensive array of images of crystallization in *We*, all supporting his depiction of totalitarian societies as static and stagnant. See S. A. Cowan, "The Crystalline Center of Zamyatin's *We*," *Extrapolation* 29.2 (1988): 160-78.

<sup>7</sup>*We*, trans. Mirra Ginsberg (New York: Avon, 1983) 66. Note that the forces of dehumanization in the One State are so strong that people are referred to by numbers rather than names.

<sup>8</sup>For Althusser, we do not form our attitudes so much as they form us, and "the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects." "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review P, 1971) 171.

<sup>9</sup>*1984* (New York: New American Library, 1961) 6-7.

<sup>10</sup>*Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited* (New York: Harper, 1965) 171.

<sup>11</sup>*The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1986) 27.

<sup>12</sup>"Attenuated Postmodernism: Pynchon's *Vineland*," *Critique* 32.2 (1990): 71.

<sup>13</sup>For such a vision of postmodernism, see Andreas Huyssen, for whom modernism distances itself from mass culture while postmodernism breaks down the "Great Divide" between high art and low art. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986).



<sup>14</sup>For Adorno's critique of mass culture, see Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Seabury, 1972) 120-67.

<sup>15</sup>On the role of Taylor in *We*, see Carolyn H. Rhodes, "Frederick Winslow Taylor's System of Scientific Management in Zamyatin's *We*," *Journal of General Education* 28 (1976): 31-42. Zamyatin's use of Taylor prefigures Huxley's use of Ford, and suggests (as do both Huxley and Pynchon) the sinister possibilities of an errant capitalism.

<sup>16</sup>*A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, ed. and trans. Mirra Ginsberg (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970) 108.

<sup>17</sup>*The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980) 103.

<sup>18</sup>*Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961) 57.

<sup>19</sup>Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution: 1917-1932* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982) 79.

<sup>20</sup>For a critique of Foucault's project along these lines, see Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 384-95.

<sup>21</sup>Pynchon's math professor Atman may be a reinscription of Zamyatin's mathematician D-503. For example, it may or may not be coincidence that Frenesi's compatriots in 24fps, observing her sexual attraction to Atman, "thought she was into 'a number,' as they called it back then, with Weed Atman" (209). But Atman may also have other referents. Joseph W. Slade identifies Atman with French revolutionary figure and mathematician Evariste Galois: "Communication, Group Theory, and Perception in *Vineland*," *Critique* 32.2 (1990): 138-40. It is, of course, conceivable that Galois was a model for D-503 as well.

<sup>22</sup>"On *Brave New World*," *No Place Else* 94-109.

<sup>23</sup>"Who Was Saved?": Families, Snitches, and Recuperation in Pynchon's *Vineland*," *Critique* 32.2 (1990): 78.

<sup>24</sup>On the other hand, Huxley's later, more positively utopian *Island* depicts drugs known as the "Moksha medicine" that lead to mystical enlightenment and spiritual growth. As Walter H. Clark points out, *Island* was (not surprisingly) a sort of "Bible" of the sixties drug culture. See "Drugs and Utopia/Dystopia," *Utopia/Dystopia?*, ed. Peyton E. Richter (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1975) 112.

<sup>25</sup>For example, Habermas traces an irrationalist line in modern thought that "leads from Bataille via Foucault to Derrida." "Modernity versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 13.

<sup>26</sup>"The Subject and Power," *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982) 210.

<sup>27</sup>*Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1973) 211.