

ISSN: 1045-7097 (Print) 1930-5478 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/vpps20>

Oppressive Rhyming: George Orwell on Poetry and Totalitarianism

Joel A. Johnson

To cite this article: Joel A. Johnson (2019) Oppressive Rhyming: George Orwell on Poetry and Totalitarianism, *Perspectives on Political Science*, 48:3, 162-169, DOI: [10.1080/10457097.2018.1535212](https://doi.org/10.1080/10457097.2018.1535212)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10457097.2018.1535212>



Published online: 18 Jan 2019.



Submit your article to this journal



Article views: 62

[View related articles](#) View Crossmark data 



Oppressive Rhyming: George Orwell on Poetry and Totalitarianism

Joel A. Johnson 

Government and International Affairs, Augustana University, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, USA

ABSTRACT

In George Orwell's *1984*, the poet Ampleforth observes that "the whole history of English poetry has been determined by the fact that the English language lacks rhymes." In this article I connect Ampleforth's observation to Orwell's many other writings on language and political control and then show how Orwell's discussion of poetry's resistance to political manipulation enhances Tocqueville's and Burke's accounts of totalitarianism. Specifically, Orwell illustrates how an easily "rhyming" polity is particularly vulnerable to totalitarian politics, while a society containing considerable disorder in its language and politics can be strongly resistant to such tyranny.

Introduction

In his dystopian novel *1984* George Orwell explores how the manipulation of language can yield utter political control. Not only does the ruling party of Oceania modify the historical record, erase identities, and encourage hatred of political enemies but it also systematically reworks the English language, eliminating all words that might undermine the party's power. Even poetry is carefully rewritten to remove heterodox opinions. Only the barest traces of independent thought remain—but these traces are of great interest to us. When all else is suppressed, where are we likely to find the last glimmers of humanity?

Orwell sees the English people as being unusually resistant to modern tyranny, thanks to certain cultural peculiarities. These peculiarities begin in the English language, are apparent in cultural norms, and create a political society that, while often unjust and disorderly, nonetheless preserves liberty. Interestingly, there are strong parallels between Orwell's understanding of poetry, especially English poetry, and his understanding of the political obstacles to totalitarianism.

My starting point is a curious remark made to Winston Smith by Ampleforth, a "mild, ineffectual, dreamy creature" whose job is to rewrite prerevolutionary poems to become consistent with the teachings of Big Brother. These "definitive texts," when combined with the inane lyrics churned out by

mechanical "versificators," help keep Oceania's residents content with the status quo.¹ Ampleforth says that "the whole history of English poetry has been determined by the fact that the English language lacks rhymes." The Thought Police soon whisk Ampleforth away for execution, and Winston dismisses his observation as not "very important or interesting,"² so there is no development of this striking thought. And since the rest of the book is devoted to O'Brien's torture of Winston, the reader soon forgets this brief exchange.

I maintain, however, that Orwell inserts this line for an important reason, even though Winston ignores it. Through Ampleforth, Orwell shows us the features of language and society that are most inhospitable to totalitarianism. If we take a language's tendency to rhyme as, at some level, analogous to a culture's tendency toward consistency and conformity—which Orwell seems to imply throughout his works—we can better appreciate why some societies prove more resistant than others to tyranny. In other words, when people expect their language and politics to conform to certain rigid patterns, they stand vulnerable to the kind of administrative centralization that totalitarians crave. In contrast, when language and politics contain a significant level of disorder and disharmony—in other words, when "rhyming" is the exception, not the rule—totalitarianism can more easily be kept at bay.

CONTACT Joel A. Johnson  joel.johnson@augie.edu  Government and International Affairs, Augustana University, 2001 S. Summit Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57197.

As this article proceeds, I will show how Orwell's thoughts on poetry in 1984 fit within his broader account of language and politics and how his political thought connects to the work of two other shrewd students of totalitarianism: Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville. Read together, the three authors provide a comprehensive cultural as well as political understanding of what inhibits attempts at total control.

Ampleforth's "Definitive" Kipling

Ampleforth faces a difficult task. Not only must he bring each poem into line with the values of the regime but he must, insofar as possible, preserve the poem's original meter and rhyme structure. In the poem he discusses with Winston, Rudyard Kipling's "Loot," Ampleforth must replace the offending word "God" with something else that rhymes with "rod." After days of work, and despite his "surprising talent for juggling with rhymes and meters," he is unable to find a suitable alternate. His decision to leave "God" in the poem leads directly to his arrest by the Thought Police.³

Orwell's characters do not reflect at length about poetry in 1984, so there are no obvious clues about why Orwell gives Ampleforth the line about English rhyme or why a Kipling poem becomes Ampleforth's stumbling block. In fact, most Orwell commenters skip over this passage altogether. Those who mention it either do little else with it,⁴ or they overlook the real nature of Ampleforth's crime.⁵ This is unfortunate, since poetry figures prominently at several places in the novel. For example, as Winston begins his active rebellion against the Party, he is struck by the political significance of nonsensical nursery rhymes and the pleasant folk tunes of the proles. He realizes that the former provide a glimpse into the world as it might once have been, before the Party came to power and systematically rewrote history. The snippets of "Oranges and Lemons" that Winston hears are of this kind. (Incidentally, the Party is well aware of the power of nursery rhymes in triggering imagination—including a vivid sense of history—and it proceeds to entrap Winston with this rhyme.) The second sort of rhyme, including the song of a prole grandmother hanging out clothes to dry, reminds Winston that life goes on, through the generations, despite all efforts at social control.

Unfortunately, although poetry could help preserve the past, in Oceania the Party has largely destroyed its power. Whatever memory is preserved is fragmentary

and useless. Only bits of old rhymes are remembered, and even fewer important concepts are retained. For example, while an old man Winston questions can remember that beer was once measured in pints, not liters, he can recall nothing consequential from before the revolution.

Does the fact that poetry has lost its power in Oceania mean that Orwell inserts Ampleforth's comment as a mere aside, a remark of no real significance in the modern age? Does Orwell, in other words, agree with Winston that Ampleforth is being irrelevant? Possibly. However, any reader of Orwell's essays knows the strong opinions he propounds regarding the speaking and writing of the English language. Before one can dismiss Ampleforth, one must set him in the context of Orwell's other observations regarding politics, poetry, and the English language.

The English Language, Rhyme, and Totalitarianism

Orwell believes the English language is a mixed blessing. Its weaknesses, including disorder and imprecision, stem from its being the amalgam of centuries of folk usages and several distinct languages. Modern English writing is overloaded with jargon, cold Latinate phrases, and ready-made segments requiring little thought. As authors opt for easy words, rather than the right ones, English prose becomes vague and flaccid.⁶ Worst of all, English lends itself to euphemistic treatment of evil.⁷

However, the English language can also buttress liberty. Using English skillfully, a writer can effectively capture slight nuances and express all manner of ambiguity and paradox.⁸ The unorthodox can always find English words to challenge mainstream opinions. As Roy Harris puts it, "there is a sense in which the very variety and flexibility of English as a language seems to guarantee to its users their individual right to think and speak as they please."⁹ Orwell also argues that English has great potential for vividness, especially in its short, direct, and picturesque Saxon elements. Such words, by placing strong images in the reader's mind, resist attempts to assign them new meanings.¹⁰ When used properly, English's large, multivalent, and unregulated vocabulary can be a considerable impediment to thought control.

As for English poetry, Orwell believes it can be either exceptionally friendly to totalitarianism or exceptionally hostile to it. Certain kinds of poetry, such as patriotic hymns and heroic ballads, could be in high demand under a repressive regime. There

might even be state subsidies for regime-friendly poets.¹¹ However, poetry also offers significant resources for opposing tyranny. As controversial ideas become suppressed, problematic journalists, sociologists, historians, novelists, and critics face elimination—but since poets tend to be ignored, dismissed as fools, or praised by the regime, they would likely be among the last thoughtful people to go.¹² But there is more to Orwell's argument about poets being the last-ditch defenders of a free society. There is no room in good poetry for slovenliness; a poet cannot rely on footnotes to clarify the intent of a lazily written poem. The words chosen for a poem must be the ones most exactly representing the poet's thoughts or, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge puts it, "the *best* words in the best order."¹³ One might say that the work of poets—in particular those working within the confines of meter and rhyme—requires more careful thought per word than comparable prose writing. Because the form a poet chooses allows limited flexibility in word choice and order, the challenge of picking evocative terms is compounded.

Once drafted, poetry becomes highly resistant to modification, including rewriting for political reasons. Censors can easily bring newspapers, history books, and even novels into line with a repressive ideology. Indeed, this is Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth. Poetry, however, does not yield so easily to manipulation. Despite his considerable skill, Ampleforth cannot successfully change Kipling's poem.

Using the English language in a poem seems to make it even more resistant to reworking. In a 1948 letter to George Woodcock, Orwell writes that "the lack of rhymes in English is a very serious difficulty & gets more serious all the time, as familiar rhymes get more & more hackneyed," thus confirming Ampleforth's point about English not rhyming easily. Orwell emphasizes the troublesome consequences of having few rhymes, including the overuse of trite rhymes and so-called "imperfect" rhymes, which depend on matching a consonant or vowel sound.¹⁴ The result, presumably, is that English poems will tend either to be unimaginative, as familiar rhymes become overused, or will exhibit unusual genius, as poets must use greater creativity to overcome the restrictions on word choice. In fact, Orwell recommends that poets collaborate with manual workers to invent new words, grounded in physical reality.¹⁵ These vibrant new terms would invigorate English literature and aid English poets.

If English is resistant to rhyme, English poems are especially resilient to manipulation. What appears as a

"very serious difficulty" for the writer of a poem becomes an even greater difficulty for subsequent manipulators. Kipling's "Loot," though by Orwell's standards only as a "good bad poem,"¹⁶ not a masterwork, nonetheless is highly resistant to change—provoking Ampleforth to thoughtcrime. To be sure, the Party could simply delete Kipling's poem and all references to it. Indeed, that might be the easiest solution. However, to the extent that the Party wishes to use existing literature for its political ends, it must adapt what already exists—which means struggling against the unusual recalcitrance of English poetry.

Resistance to tinkering might be the most obvious obstacle English poetry presents to totalitarians, but there are subtler reasons why it does not fit well with social repression. (Because Orwell only hints at these, I must extrapolate somewhat from his actual writings. However, I believe the following thoughts are broadly consistent with what Orwell might say, had he the chance to expound upon the line he gave Ampleforth.) The first reason concerns the process of construction. Since poetry is usually more difficult to write than prose and *English* poetry is still more difficult to write, given the lack of good rhymes, an English poet must use every faculty at her command to produce first-rate verse.¹⁷ Put crudely, more conscious thought must be expended per word in a good English poem—particularly one in which rhyme is essential to the form—than in good poems of better-rhyming languages, all things being equal. Whereas serviceable English prose can be written fairly easily, good English *poetry* is quite another matter. Anyone can paste together a jingle, but a well-crafted poem in English, unlike a well-crafted essay, is a real feat. Those who succeed must be fully in control of their abilities and will tend to possess the intellectual strength necessary to resist the sham appeals of would-be tyrants.

The second reason why *English* poetry will tend to frustrate totalitarianism concerns how an audience receives such poetry. In a language that rhymes easily, listeners are not surprised when they hear rhymes. In highly inflected languages, for example, it is common to have large sets of words that have similar endings. Constructing a rhyming poem in such languages is relatively easy, and listeners will not find it unusual to hear rhymes therein. They will expect consistency, regularity, and uniformity—not disorder and individuality. In English, however, rhymes are the exception, not the rule.¹⁸ When they do occur, they cause the listener to pay attention—as when Shakespeare ends a scene with a couplet.

Institutional “Rhyming” and Totalitarianism

It is important, though, not to dwell too long on the literal relationship between English rhyme and totalitarianism, for Ampleforth’s comment has a larger significance. While there are certainly features of English poetry that make it, and those who appreciate it, resistant to totalitarian manipulation, it is also worthwhile to think of “rhyme” more broadly as a metaphor for order in social and political institutions. A society in which institutions are rationally ordered, and in which consistency is expected throughout the nation, might be said to rhyme easily, whereas a society built on disorder and nonsystematic complexity might be said to lack rhyme. Although Orwell does not explicitly invoke the metaphor of rhyme to describe English society, his arguments about England’s resistance to tyranny closely parallel his account of poetry and tyranny, thereby adding weight to the comparison.

Orwell believes the English people are culturally hostile to totalitarianism. For example, in “The Lion and the Unicorn,” he writes that the English abhor abstract thought and radical change, preferring to hold on to everything old, regardless of its objective value. As with their language, the result not of planning but of historical meandering, the English take a decidedly unsystematic approach to town layout, weights and measures, and even political positions. They love liberty—especially private liberty—more than rational order, and they appreciate how complexity and a quaint disorder preserves that liberty. For example, although the English value communal pursuits, they recoil from the idea of making football, drinking, or gardening an official state-sanctioned activity. Their tastes are diverse and individual, not public and uniform.¹⁹ Nor are they militaristic, despite controlling an empire. Although regular British soldiers march in step, Orwell notes, their routine is “without definite swagger.” The sword that rules English society, he argues, is one that everyone agrees “must never be taken out of the scabbard.”²⁰

The poet of this culture, according to Orwell, is Rudyard Kipling. Kipling’s middle-class audience values not only his calls for self-sacrifice and duty to others but also the self-reliance and independent spirit of his characters—all of which is at odds with modern totalitarianism. For Orwell, despite the many faults of the British Empire (which are often downplayed by Kipling and other imperialist writers), the Empire could never be as oppressive and unjust as rule by Hitler or Stalin.²¹ Here we see why Orwell likely chose Kipling as Ampleforth’s foil. The poem “Loot” evokes

thoughts of old-fashioned imperial conquest, plunder, and civil rule, not thoroughgoing social control. Instead of emphasizing unity of purpose or utopian striving, the poem celebrates private soldiers’ attempts at getting around official regulations.

Orwell worries that the English people, with all their mixed tendencies, are “in process of being numbered, labeled, conscripted, ‘co-ordinated.’” Fortunately, however, “the pull of [English] impulses is in the other direction, and the kind of regimentation that can be imposed on them will be modified in consequence.”²² So long as England maintains its culture of quaint disorder, moments of harmony will sparkle in the mind. Sameness and similarity will add to the sweetness of life so long as they are occasional and fleeting, or when they are the objects of free choice. Once uniformity is imposed, as under totalitarianism, similarity will lose its ability to trigger thought. All that will remain—as for Orwell’s Winston Smith—is a uniform gray bleakness.

Orwell’s Extension of Burke and Tocqueville

In discussing the features of English culture, including English poetry, that impede totalitarianism, Orwell adds an important layer to our understanding of the nature of modern social control. Specifically, he amplifies and extends the work of Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville, two of the shrewdest analysts of tyranny. Although Burke and Tocqueville have the French Revolution in mind, not the regimes of Hitler and Stalin, their conclusions are remarkably similar to Orwell’s. Reading Orwell in conjunction with these two thinkers not only confirms the relevance of Burke’s and Tocqueville’s ideas to the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries but also adds nuance to those earlier attempts at understanding modern political evil. In focusing on language, poetry, and other intangible elements of English culture, Orwell gives necessary depth to the more philosophical and political critiques Burke and Tocqueville offer.

In fact, Burke’s arguments against the excesses of the French Revolution are largely consistent with what Orwell believes is wrong with Nazism and Fascism. Burke points out that the French revolutionaries, in zealously combating the injustices of the Old Regime, destroyed much of value in their country, including its religion, nobility, and sense of history. While the British people appreciate how wisdom depends on time-tested ideas, the revolutionaries wish to wipe away the history of France, replacing it with utopian

schemes and even—in the case of the Republican Calendar—a new sense of time.²³

What the French revolutionaries attempt, Orwell's Inner Party perfects, systematically reworking—one might even say *eliminating*—historical understanding. The Party has learned from the failures of previous totalitarians, and it knows that people must love a tyranny for it to survive. It is not enough for Winston to remain silent, confess his crimes, or be executed. He must come, by whatever means, to *love* Big Brother. In Winston's case, excruciating torture is necessary to rectify his character. However, in most cases the Party gains adherents through propaganda and manipulation of literature, including poetry. It is quite significant, then, that English poetry resists manipulation. An oppressive regime that cannot fully control its people's emotions will eventually fail, as Burke predicted the French Revolution would.²⁴

Whereas Burke called attention to the frenzied rage and violence of the French Revolution, Orwell emphasizes how modern totalitarianism, since it controls thought more completely, has less need of overt force.²⁵ As George Woodcock puts it, "if the desire for power can be satisfied by eliminating thought through a change in linguistic patterns, then human beings become vegetables anyway" and the "horrors of Room 101" become unnecessary.²⁶ Force is a shaky foundation for an oppressive regime, since subjects can remain independent in spirit and harbor hopes for a successful rebellion. As a result, anything that prevents totalitarian rulers from moving beyond fear-based power to a subconscious love-based power is a good thing, for it will preserve a chance for individual thought and action. In its own way, then, by resisting the totalitarian impulse²⁷ toward complete control of thought, English poetry—with all its quirks—makes the most secure type of tyranny (in which all literature and thought is in a "definitive edition") less feasible.

If Burke and Orwell connect well on the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of liberty under totalitarianism, Orwell and Tocqueville have similar understandings of how civic and political institutions can preserve liberty. Despite his horror at the "astounding defects" of the English legal system, which "rende[r] the administration of justice ... obscure, complicated, slow, costly, and inconvenient," Tocqueville finds that the English nonetheless have taken "infinite pains" to give everyone "the greatest possible number of guarantees against the partiality and venality of the courts, and, above all, against that form of venality which is both the commonest and the most dangerous in democratic

times—subserviency to the supreme power."²⁸ Here Tocqueville almost perfectly anticipates Orwell's thoughts in "The Lion and the Unicorn" about how English commoners know they will get a fair hearing, regardless of the many faults of the court system.²⁹

However, the political and cultural disorder in England is more than merely tolerable. In both *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* and *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville emphasizes how administrative decentralization sustains liberty. In France, he writes, administrative centralization had begun before the Revolution, as kings extended their rule more effectively through their realm's diverse regions. Such centralization destroyed the organic relationship people had with their region and local rulers. Everyone became, in essence, interchangeable, since local peculiarities no longer had political significance. There was one law and one standard for all. In addition, since the central government handled all the business of government, individual citizens did not participate in ruling. Administrative centralization "tend[ed] to keep men apart, and thus ma[de] them easier to rule"—whether by a monarch or a revolutionary elite.³⁰

Tocqueville finds that federalism and myriad civic and political associations, by empowering local decision-making and voluntarism, help Americans resist the tendency toward administrative centralization. Decentralization creates complexity and variety, which in turn help preserve liberty by thwarting attempts at enforcing uniformity. Tocqueville worries, though, that Americans will succumb to individualism and ultimately majority tyranny. Local political and civic associations, though they could guard against this tendency, might not be enough to prevent it. Here again Orwell's subtle description of English culture becomes relevant. The English might not be a nation of joiners like Americans are, but they have, in a way, stronger cultural protection against administrative centralization, namely, the deep sense of history and tradition embedded in each region and locale. Under such circumstances, even if ordinary people were not actively participating in political life, they would nonetheless fiercely resist attempts at making all English citizens identical.³¹ Because England never distanced itself from its history like France did, Orwell implies that it has better protection from the separation of person from person that enables modern tyranny.

Conclusion

Orwell sees in the future of totalitarianism the elimination of political "non-rhyming," including local

political autonomy, strong regional variations of culture, and voices of political dissent. Even humor will perish, as doublethink proliferates.³² All the obvious barriers to totalitarianism will have disappeared.³³ In this bleak setting, only the subtlest peculiarities of culture and language will remain to threaten the totalitarian order.

Orwell never fully articulates the features of culture that would be most resistant to totalitarian conformity, but he gives us many hints. People who expect similarity and conformity and who care little for the clash of diverse interests and ideas, he implies, will be more receptive to totalitarianism. People whose culture trains them to expect and celebrate diversity of habits and opinions and to view consonance as a pleasant surprise, not a moral imperative will be less vulnerable to control. Cultures, then, that do not “rhyme” easily will, like English poetry, serve as a final line of resistance to totalitarian control. To be sure, a “non-rhyming” culture, like the majority of Kipling’s poems, can be manipulated like any other, but it will be with greater difficulty than with conformist cultures and easily rhyming poetry.

Using rhyme as a metaphor for systematic political order helps describe something of central importance, namely, the tendency of a culture to embrace totalitarian reformation. American political institutions, based on an elaborate federal structure and strong regional differences in culture, rarely “rhyme.” When they do, it tends to be either a pleasant surprise or a display of unity that then frightens—or bores—people into reemphasizing their differences. In England, the rich organicism of the British constitution and quaint cultural particularity might do an even better job at forestalling complete totalitarian victory. If Orwell is right, Ampleforth and others like him will be continually stymied and hope for liberty preserved.

Notes

1. George Orwell, 1984 (New York: Signet Classics, 1977), 42–43.
2. Orwell, 231.
3. Orwell, 42, 231.
4. Christopher Hitchens, *Why Orwell Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 138–39.
5. Roffman is slightly off when she argues that “his real crime is being a rhyming poet.” In fact, the Party values Ampleforth for his rhyming skills; his only crime is to be stymied by a particularly recalcitrant bit of subversive poetry. The durability of Kipling’s poem causes Ampleforth’s thoughtcrime, not his occupation as a poet or any lack of zeal on his part. Rosaly DeMaio Roffman, “A Monument to the Obvious: George Orwell and Poetry,” in *George Orwell*, ed. Courtney T. Wemyss and Alexej Ugrinsky (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 69.
6. George Orwell, “The English People,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 3 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 24–26.
7. George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 4 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 127–40.
8. Orwell, “The English People,” 25.
9. Roy Harris, “The Misunderstanding of Newspeak,” in *George Orwell (Modern Critical Views)*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 114.
10. Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”; see also Orwell’s discussion of ordinary English fish names in George Orwell, *Coming Up for Air* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1950), 86–87; for Orwell’s criticism of the metric system for its lack of vivid names, see George Orwell, “As I Please,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 4 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 305–6.
11. George Orwell, “The Prevention of Literature,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 4 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 67–68.
12. Orwell, 69.
13. Quoted in Frederick W. Bateson, *English Poetry and the English Language* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961), 15.
14. George Orwell, “Letter to George Woodcock, April 24, 1948,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 4 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 418–19.
15. Orwell, “The English People,” 29; George Orwell, “New Words,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 3–12.
16. George Orwell, “Rudyard Kipling,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 194.
17. See, for example, Gordon Comstock’s writing struggles in George Orwell, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1956).
18. Maria Chialant notes that George Bowling, in *Coming Up for Air*, attempts to “recal[.] . . . a language whose euphony and semantics were still coincidental.” Maria Teresa Chialant, “Past and Present in Coming up for Air and Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Comparison with Rex Warner’s *The Aerodrome*,” in *George Orwell*, eds. Courtney T. Wemyss and Alexej Ugrinsky (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 15.
19. George Orwell, “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia

- Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 56–59.
20. Orwell, 61–62; see also R. L. Patterson, “Orwell, Self-Taught Student of English History,” in *George Orwell*, eds. Courtney T. Wemyss and Alexej Ugrinsky (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 61.
 21. Orwell, “Rudyard Kipling,” 184–97. On Orwell’s ambivalence toward the British Empire, see George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 1, 4 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 235–42; Richard Rees, *George Orwell: Fugitive from the Camp of Victory* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), 27.
 22. Orwell, “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius,” 59.
 23. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, eds. Francis Canavan and Edward John Payne, vol. 2, *Select Works of Edmund Burke: A New Imprint of the Payne Edition* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 180–83, 245–46.
 24. Burke, 2:171–72, 175–76.
 25. See William Steinhoff, *George Orwell and the Origins of 1984* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1975), 160.
 26. George Woodcock, “George Orwell and the Living Word,” in *George Orwell (Modern Critical Views)*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 136.
 27. It is worth noting that at least one scholar believes that Orwell does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question of why people want such thorough power. See George Kateb, “The Road to 1984,” *Political Science Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (December 1, 1966): 579.
 28. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 284–86.
 29. See Orwell, “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius,” 62–63.
 30. Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 209.
 31. Lionel Trilling provides a delightful discussion of English “cantankerousness” in Trilling, “George Orwell and the Politics of Truth,” in *George Orwell (Modern Critical Views)*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 32.
 32. See D. G. Kehl, “The Two Most Powerful Weapons against Doublespeak,” *The English Journal* 77, no. 3 (March 1, 1988): 59, doi:10.2307/818416.
 33. For the thoroughness of this totalitarianism, see Michael Sheldon, *Orwell: The Authorized Biography* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 436–37; Patricia Rae, “Mr. Charrington’s Junk Shop: T. S. Eliot and Modernist Poetics in Nineteen Eighty-Four,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 43, no. 2 (July 1, 1997): 203, 212; Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 250; Steinhoff, *George Orwell and the Origins of 1984*, 170; Mark Connelly, *The Diminished Self: Orwell and the Loss of Freedom* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987),

chap. 3. Connelly, however, seems to turn Orwell into a fatalist (p. 24), which may not give Orwell’s optimistic side enough credit.

ORCID

Joel A. Johnson  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0974-2778>

References

- Bateson, Frederick W. *English Poetry and the English Language*. (New York, NY: Russell & Russell, 1961).
- Burke, Edmund, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *Select Works of Edmund Burke: A New Imprint of the Payne Edition*, ed. Francis Canavan and Edward John Payne, vol. 4, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999).
- Chialant, Maria Teresa, “Past and Present in Coming up for Air and Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Comparison with Rex Warner’s *The Aerodrome*,” in *George Orwell*, ed. Courtney T. Wemyss and Alexej Ugrinsky, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 11–18.
- Connelly, Mark. *The Diminished Self: Orwell and the Loss of Freedom*. (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987).
- Harris, Roy, “The Misunderstanding of Newspeak,” in *George Orwell (Modern Critical Views)*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 113–19.
- Hitchens, Christopher. *Why Orwell Matters*. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2003).
- Howe, Irving. *Politics and the Novel*. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002).
- Kateb, George, “The Road to 1984,” *Political Science Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (1966): 564–80.
- Kehl, D. G., “The Two Most Powerful Weapons against Doublespeak,” *The English Journal* 77, no. 3 (1988): 57–65. doi:10.2307/818416.
- Orwell, George. 1984. New York: Signet Classics, 1977.
- Orwell, George, “As I Please,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, 4th ed. (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 304–7.
- Orwell, George. *Coming Up for Air*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1950).
- Orwell, George. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1956).
- Orwell, George, “Letter to George Woodcock, April 24, 1948,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 4. (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 418–19.
- Orwell, George, “New Words,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 2. (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 3–12.
- Orwell, George. “Politics and the English Language,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 4. (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 127–40.

- Orwell, George, "Rudyard Kipling," in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 2. (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 184–97.
- Orwell, George, "Shooting an Elephant," in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 1. (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 235–42.
- Orwell, George. "The English People," in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 3. (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 1–38.
- Orwell, George, "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius," in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 2. (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 56–109.
- Orwell, George, "The Prevention of Literature," in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 4. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 59–72.
- Patterson, R.L., "Orwell, Self-Taught Student of English History," in *George Orwell*, ed. Courtney T. Wemyss and Alexej Ugrinsky, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 59–64.
- Rae, Patricia. "Mr. Charrington's Junk Shop: T. S. Eliot and Modernist Poetics in Nineteen Eighty-Four," *Twentieth Century Literature* 43, no. 2 (1997): 196–220.
- Rees, Richard. *George Orwell: Fugitive from the Camp of Victory*. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962).
- Roffman, Rosaly DeMaio, "'A Monument to the Obvious': George Orwell and Poetry," in *George Orwell*, ed. Courtney T. Wemyss and Alexej Ugrinsky, (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1987), 65–74.
- Sheldon, Michael. *Orwell: The Authorized Biography*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991).
- Steinhoff, William. *George Orwell and the Origins of 1984*. (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1975).
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert, (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1983).
- Trilling, "George Orwell and the Politics of Truth," in *George Orwell (Modern Critical Views)*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 29–43.
- Woodcock, George, "George Orwell and the Living Word," in *George Orwell (Modern Critical Views)*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 121–37.