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Nature as an uncontrolled space in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

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Abstract

This paper suggests that dystopian fiction should receive more attention within the environmental advocacy space. Despite the genre's ability to provoke the reader, it is rarely interpreted in an environmental context. This paper aims to fill this research gap through an ecocritical analysis of two of the most famous dystopian novels: George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. It explores and highlights that environmental themes are an underappreciated part of the novels' interrogation of modernity and human individuality. The rulers in both novels view 'nature' as separate from humanity, and consequently externalise and subjugate it. However, manifestations of 'nature' provide a lens through which the reader can see that that suppression of 'nature' can lead to the eradication of humanity. As such, 'nature' becomes a central force of resistance against sovereignty. The novels depict a second-wave ecocritical approach, showing the interconnectedness of humanity and 'nature', thus urging a greater acceptance of their inherent interdependence. Ultimately, this paper seeks to enrich our understanding of ecocriticism. This is done by using ecocriticism as a new and illuminating way to interpret non-environmentalist texts and by exemplifying how ecocriticism can reveal a deeper level of understanding of the relationship between different societies and the natural world in dystopian fiction.

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Introduction

Nature, in its various cultural and historical iterations, is central to how we understand agency, relationships, and humanity's place in the world. And literature has long been fundamental to how we conceive of nature and our relationship to it. (Remien and Slovic 5)

A general dystopian narrative is based on criticism of specific political developments and reflects on current social anxieties. The dystopian genre first emerged as a response to the utopian ideals of the nineteenth century, which felt less relevant with the progressions of the early twentieth century. Dystopian writers often aim to make the reader "understand the present as historical, not as some inevitable nowness" (Storey 27). The political power of dystopian fiction lies in the utopian contrast that occurs within the reader when the present is compared with a fictionalised future. Dystopian writers use this psychological 'culture shock' through projecting real issues into a fantasy, to make the reader critical of what the future might bring if current trends are to be continued (Storey 27). As such, dystopian literature can be viewed as a type of social advocacy. With this in consideration, it is odd that dystopian literature is rarely interpreted in relation to environmental advocacy that shares the same approach.

This paper aims to fill this research gap by exploring the interfaces between dystopian literature and environmental aspects through an ecocritical approach. In short, ecocriticism investigates how 'nature' and the natural world are portrayed in all areas of cultural production (Buell 7). When it emerged, its focus was "to reconnect the study of literature with the living earth" through taking an earth-centred approach to literary studies (Gladwin). A central tenet is that literature has a unique ability to illustrate the relationship between humankind and 'nature' (Remien and Slovic 5). Ecocritics claim that people's perception of 'nature' is, to a certain extent, "historically and culturally dependent". For example, the growth of industrialisation, and the subsequent loss of wild places, has generated views of wilderness as "fountains of life", functioning as "a sort of antidote for industrial modernity", which stands in contrast earlier views of wilderness as foreboding and frightening (Hiltner 15). Thus, ecocriticism proclaims a two-way street: literature's influence on real-life and real-life's influence on literature. This interplay makes ecocriticism especially relevant to the study of dystopian fiction, which ultimately aims to influence real-life. I want to emphasise that dystopian fiction's unique ability

to influence the reader could play an important role in bringing awareness of climate change and therefore environmental aspects in dystopian literature should receive more attention in literary analysis.

My approach uses ecocriticism as a critical tool designed to discover and reveal a literary text's orientation to the world. This means that texts can contain influential environmental aspects without necessarily being environmentalist. I believe that ecocriticism becomes reductive if it is exclusively applied to pronounced environmentalist texts. Like Kern says, "ecocriticism becomes most interesting and useful ... when it aims to recover the environmental character or orientation of works whose conscious or foregrounded interests lie elsewhere" (11). Therefore, I shall maintain that an ecocritical perspective is a valuable contribution to previous research that will enrich our understanding of both dystopian fiction and the field of ecocriticism.

I argue that environmental aspects are an underappreciated part of two of the most famous dystopian novels: George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), which both criticise the social and political developments of the early twentieth century. Although the novels are not overtly environmentally focused, there are nevertheless literary manifestations of 'nature' that are vital to the rudimentary plot and their social critique, which this paper aims to reveal. I will analyse specific parts in the novels that I believe are most representative of how environmental aspects permeate the regimes that the novels depict.

Due to their acclaimed status and thought-provoking content, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-four* have been thoroughly analysed by literary scholars. However, a comparative analysis is opposed by a few scholars, such as Bernard Crick, who proclaims that the plots are 'as chalk to cheese' and that 'it is foolish to read [*Nineteen Eighty-four*] in the mental strait jacket of a course on utopian and anti-utopian literature' (149). Indeed, the novels are disparate in terms of their central themes, but most scholars agree that they share certain aspects. Bülent Diken suggests that sovereignty is the main connecting point, as he argues that sovereignty is arbitrary and can be enforced through both fear and reward. Diken claims that a restrictive aspect is evident in *Brave New World's* society despite being modelled around the granting of freedoms. Therefore, the novel "cannot be structurally separated from, but contains within itself its own, 1984" (157). Despite their differences, this paper aims to demonstrate that the novels'

respective portrayal of 'nature' is an additional and important connecting point, adding a new dynamic, layer and perspective to previous comparisons.

Both Orwell and Huxley had personal connections with 'nature'. Huxley had ties to the environmentalist movement through his social circle, especially his brother Julian Huxley, and it is claimed that *Brave New World* ridicules some of these friends (Fredriksson 2). Orwell frequently touches upon the natural world and the pastoral tradition is a common theme in his works, for example *Animal Farm* (1945), *Coming Up For Air* (1939), *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936). The literary manifestation of the pastoral in *Nineteen Eighty-four* is essentially a duplicate of the countryside landscapes found in these novels (Stock 9).

Furthermore, both novels can be said to be linked to Yevgeny Zamyatin's dystopian novel *We* (1924), which has environmentalist themes (Slagel 8). Orwell writes in "a review of *We* by E.I Zamyatin" that Huxley's *Brave New World* "must partly be derived from it" as they both "deal with the rebellion of the primitive human spirit against a rationalised, mechanised, painless world". Although Huxley denied having read *We*, his writing does have a striking resemblance to *We* and Huxley has even been accused of plagiarism (Lohnes). A similar accusation has been made about *Nineteen Eighty-four* (Owen). Plagiarism or not, the similarities are perhaps best explained by Zamyatin himself: "these ideas are in the air we breathe" (qtd. in Nicol 44). I believe his words indicate that literature has the ability to capture ideas, including environmentalist, unrecognised by the author. Most importantly, this emphasises the need to reveal undisclosed environmentalist ideas in literature, as they lay the foundation of the establishment of literary studies as a part of environmental advocacy.

My key argument is that *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* externalise and subjugate 'nature', thus producing a dichotomy between humanity and nature. This impaired connection with 'nature' plays an important role in the authors' social critique and I shall explore how 'nature' functions as a space of resistance against sovereignty. I will divide the analysis in two parts: spatiality and humanity. This approach is based on Winston's statement in *Nineteen Eighty-four*: "The terrible thing that the Party had done was to persuade that mere impulses, mere feeling, were of no account, while at the same time robbing you of all power over the material world" (Orwell 190). Firstly, I will examine spatial constellations and topological opposition that are related to 'nature' and analyse what values that are loaded onto these spaces.

Secondly, I will focus on two ecocritical literary manifestations of ‘nature’: pastoral ecology and wilderness. Thirdly, I will explore the relationship between ‘nature’ and humanity using a comparative analysis of the Savages and the civilised in *Brave New World* and the Proles and the Party members in *Nineteen Eighty-four*. I refer to the people living in the Reserve as ‘savages’ because that is the terminology used by Huxley in the novel and is the widely used term amongst other critics as well.

Theoretical framework

Ecocriticism is primarily a literary and cultural theory, although it intersects with other fields (Gladwin). The term ‘ecocriticism’ was coined in the 1970s, and the relatively modern theory formally/fully emerged during the 1980s and 1990s in response to the looming environmental crisis (Heise 505) (Clark 4). In 1992, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was founded (Clark 4). As it is shaped by disparate practitioners and concurrent socio-political forces, it is difficult to draw a definite map of ecocriticism’s emergence. Therefore, I agree with Buell’s conclusion that ecocriticism is “a project in motion and likely to remain so for a long time to come” (Buell 9).

It is important to note that the ecocritical movement is increasingly heterogeneous and far from united. As Slagel concludes, “all that is agreed is that not much is agreed upon” (2). There is no universal definition of the movement and critics even disagree on the title ‘ecocriticism’, arguing for alternatives such as literary eco theory, environmental criticism etc (Buell 12). Heise suggests that ecocriticism is unified “more by virtue of common political project than on the basis of shared theoretical and methodological assumption” (506). Buell emphasises that the environmental turn in literary criticism has mostly been issue-driven rather than method-driven (11). This can be explained by the historical context of its emergence. In the early 1990s, when ecocriticism became more widespread, the theoretical panorama in literary studies became less dictated by dominant theoretical framework; antitheoretical approach paved the way for a field of diverse methodologies and specialties (Heise 505). Hajer summarises its emergence as a “discourse-coalition” comprised of multiple storylines that each encapsulates “complex disciplinary debates” (65).

Ecocriticism is manifested in two waves. First-wave critics focus more on texts that romanticise nature and depict an improbable past and tend to direct themselves to writers such as Thoreau and Wordsworth. Second-wave critics view this kind of nature-writing as “inadequate, sentimental or anachronistic”, arguing that there is no such untouched ‘nature’ left (Clark 6). Instead, they focus on environmental devastation and direct their criticism to present environmental issues. This shift gives ecocriticism more significant cultural and political relevance (Hiltner 131)

This distinction, however, does not imply a definite succession and Buell suggests that palimpsest might be a more suitable metaphor than waves, as many second-wave critics still implement and elaborate on first-wave interests” (17). However, Hiltner remarks that critics are aware of the implications of implementing first-wave interests. (131). I will combine both first- and second wave interests because the novels romanticise ‘nature’, thus adhering to first-wave interests, while still directing some attention to environmental issues, which is more a feature of second wave. I choose this approach since the juxtaposition of the romanticisation of nature with the exploration of environmental issues is a technique that both Orwell and Huxley use within their writing.

Given the broad interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism, ecocritics need to design their own approach and, as Buell underlines, to “become increasingly aware of speaking from some position within or around the movement rather than “for” it” (8). For the purposes of this thesis, I do not intend to take a stance or aim to resolve any discussions under the ecocritical umbrella, but rather to seek an overall understanding through analysis. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of the theoretical diversity and internal critique because I do not claim my understanding to be the universal understanding of ‘ecocriticism’. There are certain tenets that characterise ecocriticism and outline my understanding. These are neatly captured through Heise’s set of questions:

In what ways do highly evolved and self-aware beings relate to nature? What roles do language, literature, and art play in this relation? How have modernization and globalization processes transformed it? Is it possible to return to more ecologically attuned ways of inhabiting nature, and what would be the prerequisites for such a change?
(504)

Based on this, ecocriticism today mainly revolves around the imposed values of modernity and aims to redefine the relation between humans and ‘nature’. Heise emphasises that ecocriticism is intimately connected with modernity and even argues that ecocritics’ “search for a more authentic relation to nature is itself a product of modernisation” (508). This interpretation is especially relevant to the novels as they explicitly deal with modern issues such as industrialisation and technological advancements and describe the impact on the characters’ relation to ‘nature’.

Additionally, I should briefly defend my choice of terminology. Firstly, I refer to the movement as ‘ecocriticism’ because it is the most comprehensive term. Buell remarks that ‘ecocriticism’ is less indicative than, for example, ‘environmental criticism’ and is less cumbersome (12). This aligns more appropriately with my research purpose to reveal an existence of general environmental aspects. Secondly, will focus on the concept of ‘nature’ which, according to Raymond Williams, is “perhaps the most complex word in the [English] language” and is nearly impossible to define (qtd. In Remien and Slovic 5). O’Keefe and Smith describe it as “a unified concept that refers to a bifurcated reality” (30). However, I maintain that its ambiguity could be an advantage, following Remien and Slovic’s premise that “nature’s potency as a concept lies precisely in its expansiveness – its protean ability to assume different forms and evolve to thrive in different cultural and historical situations” (6). In my case, the ambiguity allows a juxtaposition of ‘nature’ and humanity, which is essential for my thesis argument that dystopian fiction externalises ‘nature’ and thus produces a dichotomy between humanity and nature. To emphasise that I refer to a broad concept, which should still be taken into consideration, I put ‘nature’ within quotation marks.

‘Nature’ as an external realm

Spatiality is the main structuring principle of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*. Spatial constellations and topological constructions outline the central ideas of the dystopian societies, functioning as natural dividers of the plots. I will investigate what values ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ spaces are invested with. Firstly, I will treat ‘natural’ spaces in opposition to ‘unnatural’ spatial constellations. Secondly, I will examine the literary manifestations of ‘nature’ through the ecocritical approaches of ‘wilderness’ and ‘pastoral’.

Spatial oppositions

Ronja Tripp argues that the topological opposition between the Reserve and the World State in *Brave New World* “resonates in the socio-political structures of the civilised and barbaric communities” (34). Tripp remarks that Huxley emphasises vertical expansion when describing the city, which is demonstrated already in the novel’s opening sentence: “A squat grey building of only thirty-four storeys” (Huxley 1). This sentence immediately outlines the central ideas of the society suggesting its modernity and economic power by ironically describing a thirty-four-storey building as being “squat”. This stands in contrast to the natural heights of the Reserve marked by “depth of canyons” and “table-topped mesa” (Huxley 90). Tripp maintains that this topological opposition is a way for the rulers to assert their dominance.

However, I shall argue that this opposition actually reveals the strength of the natural world. ‘Nature’ has the ability to make humans feel inferior which is revealed in Lenina’s comment when hiking around the natural world of the Reserve: “I hate walking. And you feel so small when you’re on the ground at the bottom of a hill” (Huxley 93). The rulers attempt to escape this feeling by elevating themselves above all that is natural. Throughout the novel, the sky is generally given more emphasis than the ground and the characters usually meet on roof-tops and go on helicopter rides. In this way, topological opposition also indicates that nature is inherently powerful.

In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, the spatial opposition is between the decaying streets of London and the grand Ministries of the Party. London is a “decaying, dingy... vast and ruinous, city of a million dustbins” (Orwell 85). The Ministries are “startlingly different from any other object” and they “dwarf the surrounding architecture”, towering “vast and white above the grimy landscape (Orwell 5-6). This contrast makes the Party’s dominance palpable. Similar to *Brave New World*, vertical expansion is emphasised and also suggests modernity and economic power. The Ministry of Truth, for example, goes up “terrace after terrace, three hundred metres into the air” (Orwell 6). However, I conclude that the aims of the novels differ. In *Brave New World*, the aim is to elevate all civilised humans through externalising ‘nature’ completely whereas in *Nineteen Eighty-four* the aim is to dignify the Party through subjugating the ‘natural’ streets of

London. The Party needs ‘nature’ to incite intimidation and assert themselves above the citizens who live down in the ‘natural’ decay.

Pastoral ecology

Pastoral ecology is an approach within ecocriticism focusing on the dichotomy between rural and urban life (Garrard 37, 38). The general pastoral narrative revolves around return and escape (Garrard 66). According to Terry Gifford, there are three states of time in pastoral ecology: elegiac, idyllic and utopian. Pastoral elegy is characterised as a retreat from the city where ‘nature’ provides comfort and a space for reflection. The pastoral idyll depicts ‘nature’ as bountiful and celebrates the present, whereas the utopian pastoral dreams of ‘nature’ in a redeemed future (57). However, critics have for long questioned the pastoral’s ability to provide a realistic portrayal of ‘nature’. For example, Raymond Williams argues that the dichotomy between rural and urban is “an unreflecting celebration of mastery - ... man’s mastery of nature (37). On the one hand, it is important to recognize that romanticisation of ‘nature’ partially disregards reality. On the other, regarding dystopian fiction, the ensuing exaggerated opposition between rural and urban is central to the novels’ message about humans’ dissociation with nature. As outlined in my introduction, dystopian writers’ often aim to provoke the reader and it could be said that the oversimplified and deceiving portrayals of ‘nature’ play an important role in this.

The manifestation of the pastoral in *Nineteen Eighty-four* is referred to, by Winston, as the ‘Golden Country’. Within the novel’s overall structure, there are three key scenes involving this space: Winston’s prophetic dream early in the novel, Winston’s and Julia’s first official meeting location out in the countryside and the moment when Winston reveals his love for Julia in his prison cell. Piers H. G Stephens has examined the ‘Golden Country’ in his article “Nature and Human Liberty” where he suggests that these three scenes represent the inspiration, initiation, and final moment of Winston’s rebellion. Stephens argues that “the imagery of nature is called upon as the touchstone of liberty, sincerity and spontaneity” in these scenes (84). My analysis will elaborate on the first two scenes, as the third one is simply a brief outcry from Winston as he comes to realise his love for Julia.

Our first encounter with the ‘Golden Country’ is in Winston’s prophetic dream. Importantly, this dream occurs directly after Winston’s reminiscence of his lost mother and sister. This

contrast foreshadows that the lost values of love and privacy will be reincarnated in the pastoral landscape and in the woman that appears in the dream. Here, the 'Golden Country' is a pastoral idyll, as the landscape is depicted to be bountiful and unconstrained. It is an "old, rabbit-bitten pasture" near a "clear, slow-moving stream where dace [swim] in the pools under the willow trees" (Orwell 36). Moreover, the opening sentence with its description of "short springy turf, on a summer evening when the slanting rays of the sun gilded the ground" invokes an atmosphere of harmony and calm (Orwell 36).

This essence of 'nature' as calm and unconstrained is then extended to a woman (whom we later find out is Julia) that appears in the dream. The harmonious ambience of the landscape is reflected in her gentle and elegant mannerisms that I generally associate with 'nature'. Like the elm trees "swaying very faintly in the breeze", she undresses in "what seemed a single movement" (Orwell 36). In fact, her movements fascinate Winston more than her nudity:

Her body was white and smooth, but it aroused no desire in him, indeed he barely looked at it. What overwhelmed him in that instant was admiration for the gesture with which she had thrown her clothes aside. With its grace and carelessness it seemed to annihilate a whole culture, a whole system of thought, as though Big Brother and the Party and the Thought police could all be swept into nothingness by a single splendid movement of the arm. That too was a gesture belonging to the ancient time. Winston woke up with the word "Shakespeare" on his lips. (Orwell 36).

Her connection to 'nature' is the ultimate threat against sovereignty. Her carelessness reveals an inner freedom which, given that the event occurs in the 'Golden Country', is ultimately intertwined with 'nature'. In this way, Orwell personifies the pastoral idyll's potential of being a space of resistance against sovereignty through Julia. Winston's lack of sexual desire implies that her connection to 'nature', shown by her movements, is more rebellious than her sexuality. Additionally, the fact that her gesture is treated in relation to "the ancient time" and "Shakespeare" showcases that 'nature' is as significant a space of resistance as history and literature.

Our second encounter with the 'Golden Country' is during Julia and Winston's first secret meeting in the countryside. Winston's dream is realised and looking out on the field he "underwent a curious, slow shock of recognition. He knew it by sight" (Orwell 141). The most

influential event during this encounter is the singing of a thrush, which is a pastoral elegy as it provides a space of comfort and reflection for Winston:

Winston watched it with a sort of vague reverence. For whom, for what, was that bird singing? ... By degrees the flood of music drove all speculations out of his mind. It was as though it were a kind of liquid stuff that poured all over him and got mixed up with the sunlight that filtered through the leaves. He stopped thinking and merely felt. (Orwell 142-143)

The singing enables Winston to connect with latent emotions. This shift within Winston is significant because it flags his initial step out of the Party's control. His suspicion of a bird's song demonstrates the extent to which totalitarian propaganda has affected his reasoning. The Party is based on rationality where everyone has a calculated purpose and therefore Winston struggles to comprehend that anything can be so simple and uncalculated. In this way, the thrush's song is a counterpoint to sovereignty as it challenges the Party's alignment with spontaneity and purposelessness.

The thrush song as a space of resistance is supported by its symbolic connection to Julia's and Winston's rebellious love affair. My reading of this scene aligns with Stephen's remark that "the beginning and the ending of the rebellious love affair are symbolically marked by the bookends of this thrush's song, and given this structure, one cannot help but think that Orwell meant this reference as a dramatic counterpoint" (87). This is confirmed by the fact that the party waits to arrest them until Julia realises why the thrush was singing: "He wasn't singing to us ... He was singing to please himself. Not even that. He was just singing" (Orwell 252). This shows that an understanding of natural behaviour is the ultimate threat to the Party.

In *Brave New World*, however, the pastoral is contrasted with the presence of an anti-pastoral tradition that defies the idealisation of 'nature'. The rulers treat 'nature' as something that should be kept at a distance and the citizens are taught to abhor nature. The conditioner explains that "a love of nature keeps no factories busy" and therefore they "condition the masses to hate the country" by giving them electric shocks at the sight of flowers (Huxley 18). The pastoral elegy in *Brave New World* is a stormy ocean that sets Bernard's mind free in a similar way to how the thrush song transfixed Winston. However, in this case, 'nature' does not provide comfort, as the thrush song did, but instead the discomfort of storms makes it a space of

reflection. In other words, the defied idealisation of 'nature' is what makes it a pastoral elegy. The storm entralls Bernard who insists on hovering closer to the ocean and exclaims:

"It makes me feel as though ..." he hesitated, searching for words with which to express himself, "as though I were more me, if you see what I mean. More on my own, not so completely a part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body". (Huxley 78)

The ocean particularly affects him because it manifests the one thing that the World State cannot control the weather. The World State attempts to control the perceived reality of the weather through indoctrination and the soma drug. The indoctrinating hymn "skies are blue inside of you ... the weather is always fine" seems to be playing constantly in the background and the soma drug makes the citizen view the skies as "perennial blue" (Huxley 135). When Bernard literally faces the storm, he is finally provided with the opportunity to step out of this distorted reality and contemplate the deeper meanings of life, thus making the weather, which is a part of 'nature', a space of resistance against sovereignty.

The weather as a source of resistance is reiterated later in the novel when Helmholtz concludes that the weather is the only subject that he can personally relate to that is as passionate as Shakespeare's themes of love, death or age: "I should like a thoroughly bad climate [...]. I believe one would write better if the climate were bad. If there were a lot of wind and storms, for example" (Huxley 201). Helmholtz's main critique of the World State is that it is meaningless. He loves literature and poetry but is not able to write anything meaningful because he is not allowed to experience intense emotions. The fact that he turns to the 'natural' world underlines the potency of 'nature' and its capability to inspire humans.

Wilderness

The other kind of literary manifestation of 'nature' is wilderness, which signifies "nature in a state uncontaminated by civilisation" (Garrard 66). Similar to pastoral ecology, the wilderness narrative revolves around return and escape, but the type of nature it portrays is different in what it proposes and reinforces (Garrard 66). Wilderness is instead based on the idea that "the wild world is the land of endless possibilities, the place of freedom where everything is still

possible” (Drenthen and Keulartz 1). In other words, wilderness does not necessarily idealise ‘nature’ or position it as superior, but rather presents it as an alternate human existence.

The term ‘wilderness’ has been contested and The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) provides three interpretations: Firstly, “a biological descriptor, referring to places that are mainly ecologically intact”. Secondly, “a type of protected area classification, referring to a category of protected areas that seek to maintain wilderness quality over time, while still allowing for human uses”. Thirdly, “an essential dimension of human culture”, implying “the presence of a human relationship with wild nature” (2). I shall maintain that wilderness in *Brave New World* correlates with the second and third interpretation. This part of the analysis deals with the second, whereas the next section deals with the third. I divide them because the second relates to spatiality and the third to humanity, which this paper treats as separate sources of resistance.

In *Brave New World*, wilderness is manifested in the so-called ‘Savage Reserve’, which is “a place which, owing to unfavourable climate or geological conditions, or poverty of natural resources, has not been worth the expense of civilizing (Huxley 141). The Reserve is the antithesis to civilised London, as it has not yet been introduced to the technological and scientific developments of Brave New World. The inhabitants still adhere to behaviours and customs that have long been abolished in the World State, such as giving birth, believing in God, having a family and enduring physical pain and emotional suffering. The Reserve has “no communication whatever with the civilized world”, except for occasional visits from inspectors (Huxley 89). The Warden reassures that “there is no escape from a Savage Reservation” and repeats that “those ... who are born in the Reservation are destined to die there” (Huxley 88). In this way, the Reserve corresponds to IUCN’s second interpretation of “a protected area classification”, as it maintains and protects wilderness while still allowing for human uses.

The Savages’ way of life is explicitly juxtaposed with the civilized people. This is demonstrated in the prevailing attitude of civilized people towards the Indians: one of condescension, fear and disgust. This is conceptualised in the Warden’s description of their behaviour as “repulsive”, which the huge gap between their way of life and his. Moreover, it is apparent in Lenina’s undisguised dislike of their living conditions. At the sight of dirt, dogs and flies, her face wrinkles up “into a grimace of disgust” and she exclaims with indignant incredulity ““How can they live like this?”” (Huxley 94). Her aversion to their living conditions underlines her

detachment from 'nature' seeing it simply as dirty and unsanitary. She anxiously recites the ruler's hypnopædic lesson in hygiene that "civilization is sterilization" (Huxley 94). 'Nature' is portrayed negatively as dirty and unsanitary and is something that the civilised wants to move away from. Instead, they prefer to live in a sterile world without any natural world elements such as dirt or flies.

Furthermore, the concept of wilderness can be viewed through an old-world or a new-world approach. The former believes that humans are superior to 'nature' and its only purpose is to serve human needs. Consequently, wilderness is viewed as an intimidating place of exile to be conquered and tamed. The latter, on the contrary, recognises the value of preserving wild areas so humans can experience the natural world in its raw and unmodified state, seeing wilderness as a place of sanctuary, similar to the pastoral elegy (Drenthen and Keulartz 1). Roderick Nash elaborates on this and asserts in his book *Wilderness and the American Mind* that Americans perceive wilderness in a paradoxical way, where the wild can be felt as dark and evil while simultaneously being spiritually charged and romanticized (15). This shows that an old- and new-world approach can be combined, which I argue is the case in *Brave New World*.

Huxley intentionally uses this paradox to demonstrate two points: Firstly, to establish the fact that society is disconnected from 'nature'. Secondly, to indicate that a retreat to wilderness can reconnect people by showing what they have lost. Their disconnection is evidenced by their old-world approach. They view themselves superior to the Savages who they subordinate to an animalistic level and subjugate with gas bombs to make them "perfectly tame" (Huxley 91). This view is represented by Lenina, who predominantly is a model citizen of the future and largely functions as a foil for Bernard and his unique relation to 'nature'. Lenina is dismayed by wilderness and repeatedly says "'it's awful'" and "'I don't like it'", whereas Bernard asserts himself to be fascinated by the Indians' unorthodox lifestyle. He views 'nature' as spiritually charged and romanticised, which is in line with the new-world approach. For example, Bernard sees breastfeeding as "wonderfully intimate" and feels he "may have missed something in not having had a mother, whereas Lenina sees it as indecent" (Huxley 96). Bernard hints that they have lost something fundamental that the Indians still have. In this way, exposure to wilderness induces a self-awareness in Bernard which in turn provokes a longing to reconnect with 'nature'.

Aside from disparate lifestyles, savagery is separated from and opposed to civilization through spatial constellations. The prime symbol for the separation is the electric fence that surrounds the Savage Reserve, which marches “on and on, irresistibly the straight line the geometrical symbol of triumphant human purpose” (Huxley 90). This description perfectly illustrates Huxley’s point that ‘nature’ is subjugated by humanity in the novel. Furthermore, the image of this fence has similarities to “The Green Wall” in Zamyatin’s dystopian novel *We*, which also separates the city from the natural world. In *We*, there is a call to “demolish this wall, all walls, so that a green wind may sweep all across the earth” (151). This encapsulates the sense of this fence as well – criticism of the externalisation of ‘nature’ and the desire for a reunion between humanity and ‘nature’.

Humanity vs ‘nature’

The dichotomy between humanity and ‘nature’ and whether or not they are inextricably linked is an ongoing debate within ecocriticism. First-wave ecocriticism pursues a dualist version where “nature stands as humanity’s metaphysical other”, whereas second-wave ecocriticism views nature and humanity as interconnected (Remien and Slovic 7). The debate revolves around defining humanity and ‘what it means to be human’, which has been the subject of philosophical and scientific inquiry for centuries, and a well-developed theory is yet to be established (Kaebnick 158, 168). The influential philosopher Kate Soper suggests that humanity relates to inherent characteristics that define our behaviour and interactions, including social, emotional, and biological instincts such as reason, empathy, desire etc (37). ‘Nature’, in turn, is viewed by first wave critics as an external realm that is not at all related to humankind and by second wave critics as the totality of everything that exists on earth, including humanity (Soper 37). I suggest that *Nineteen Eighty-four* and *Brave New World* reflects on this debate. The issue of ‘what it means to be human’ is manifested in the distinction between the dehumanised party members and the civilised and the humanity of the proles and the savages. My assertion is that ‘nature’ is ultimately interconnected with humanity and therefore cannot be removed completely, evidenced by the fact that it is not possible to completely dehumanise either group of people.

Dehumanisation of the party members in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the civilised citizens in *Brave New World*

There are many dehumanising aspects in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*, but I will focus on the suppression of sex which is prevalent in both novels and provides a useful lens through which we can understand how the human instinct is suppressed. Because sex creates an exclusive bond between individuals it cannot exist in a totalitarian society, which seeks to eliminate individualism. The citizens' love and devotion should be towards the state and the society as a whole, not between individuals. However, my argument is that the accompanying intense emotions and the animalistic instinct are a more significant threat to totalitarianism than the act itself. This is declared by Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-four*: "Not merely the love of one person, but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire; that was the force that would tear the Party to pieces" (Orwell 144). Therefore, "the sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion. Desire was thoughtcrime" (Orwell 78). For that reason, Winston and Julia's love affair is "a political act" (Orwell 145). In essence, human instincts have the power to create a world of their own that falls beyond any ruler's control.

Sex is governed in both novels in an attempt to control human instincts. In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, chastity is linked to political orthodoxy. Sex is referred to as a "duty to the party" and its sole purpose is procreation (Orwell 75). The Party attempts to "distort and dirty" the sexual act and conditions its members to view it as "a slightly disgusting minor operation, like having an enema", consequently eliminating any pleasure (Orwell 75). In *Brave New World*, sex is reduced to a form devoid of love and "the duality of reason and passion is explicitly out of balance, there is no emotional passion whatsoever" (Izzo and Kirkpatrick 3). The notion of promiscuity follows the motto "everyone belongs to everyone else" as monogamy is forbidden, and every citizen's body is intended for anyone's use (Huxley 57).

However, the rulers have different end-goals with their governing of sex. In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, the Party's aim is to create a world with "no emotions except fear, rage, triumph and self-abasement" (Orwell 306). In other words, it is not a complete removal of emotions in *Nineteen Eighty-four* as it is in *Brave New World* where "no pains have been spared to make [their] lives emotionally easy- to preserve [them] ... from having emotions at all" (Huxley 37). The rulers

believe in a complete removal of strong feelings so people can then be “sane, virtuous, happy”, which the “pre-moderns” were not able to experience because “they were forced to feel strongly” and were therefore “mad and wicked and miserable” (Huxley 35). Therefore, sex is made a commodity by making it devoid of emotions. Consequently, the civilised citizens are completely disconnected from their own emotions and as soon as they feel any emotions, they take the numbing soma-drug. Although the rulers have different end-goals they deploy the same approach; remove emotions and human instincts to maintain control and stability.

Humanity of the savages and the proles

A pervading motif in *Nineteen Eighty-four* is “if there is hope, it lies in the proles” (Orwell 80). Although this could be linked to Orwell’s socialist connection, which other critics argue. My argument is that the humanity of the proles essentially separates them from Party members like Winston. Therefore, it can be said that ecocritical aspects are integrated in Orwell’s social advocacy. The proles’ humanity is established by Winston:

The proles had stayed human. They had not become hardened inside. They had held on to the primitive emotions which he himself had to re-learn by conscious effort. And in thinking this he remembered, without apparent relevance, how a few weeks ago he had seen a severed hand lying on the pavement and had kicked it into the gutter as though it had been a cabbage-stalk ... ‘The proles are human beings’, he said aloud, ‘We are not human’. (Orwell 191).

The proles’ humanity is shown in contrast to the Party members’ inhumanity. However, I want to emphasise the fact that it is Winston who recognises the humanity of the proles and as such he links both sides of humanity. He does not fit in anywhere and no one completely understands him, not even Julia. Therefore, he navigates life with an open mind, actively seeking to find the meaning of life. His interest in the proles enables him to recognise his own apathy and dehumanised state. Ultimately, Winston concludes that “the birds sang, the proles sang, the Party did not sing” (Orwell 252). This connection between the proles and birds shows that they share a sense of spontaneity and freedom, due their close relation with ‘nature’.

In a similar way, John in *Brave New World* exposes the humanitarian flaws of a society revolving around social stability and happiness. His beliefs contrast to all that is abolished in the World State. For example, he is pro-monogamy and believes that suffering is valuable. To

a certain extent, he embodies the mythical notion of a ‘noble savage’; an uncivilised man, typically non-European, with an innate virtue representing goodness in humanity yet not corrupted by civilisation, as defined by Merriam-Webster. Furthermore, Bradshaw remarks on Huxley’s drawings from D.H. Lawrence’s idea that aboriginal Americans represent the “animistic soul of man”, and their fusion with ‘nature’ represents the idealised man (25). Although this is true, John is affected by civilisation because he reads Shakespeare, which lays the foundation of his values. However, I maintain that his Shakespearean worldview is essential to his rejection of the World State. His consistent naivety and simple-mindedness, which are considered character-flaws by some, in fact enables him to be candid and forthright about whatever he disagrees with, consequently bringing the dehumanisation of the World State into sharp relief.

John represents hope for humanity because he refuses to accept the norms of the World State. Although we initially expect Bernard to play this role, given his blatant criticism in the first half of the novel, we later discover that he desperately wants to be part of society, proven by his use of John’s exoticism to gain fame and acceptance. John, however, rejects societal values, prefers the past over the future, and chooses unhappiness over falsehood: “‘I’d rather be unhappy than have the sort of false, lying happiness you were having here” (Huxley 156). His critique culminates in him urging the mass to stop taking the “poison” soma-drug. He gets so overwrought that he develops “an intense overpowering hatred of these less than human monsters” and says “‘I’ll make you be free whether you want to or not”” (Huxley 186-187).

Finally, John pursues his own path to freedom by rejecting civilisation and withdraws to his abandoned lighthouse hermitage. However, guilt over how he treated his mother Linda and his sexual desire towards Lenina haunts him and compels him to revert to the savage customs of performing self-punishment, in an attempt to purify himself. His self-flagellation becomes a spectacle for the civilised. His guilt reaches its climax when he sees Lenina, who is partly the basis of his guilt. She makes him lose all self-control and he frantically starts to whip her, which develops into an orgy of violence as the spectators join in.

Significantly, John commits suicide the morning after as he feels his virtue has been irrevocably destroyed. In the French sociologist Émile Durkheim’s terms, who is known for his categories of suicide, John’s suicide would be “egotistical” demonstrating that his humanitarian morals cannot survive in this artificial society. Moreover, the final image of John’s feet hanging as

“two unhurried compass needles” highlights that if you give society the freedom to become like the World State, then any sense of a moral compass will disappear- and that is the greatest danger of all (Huxley 229).

This leads us to conclude that the humanity of the proles and the savages threatens the rulers’ own definition of humanity. The rulers create their own brand of humanity in order to prove that their way of life is more humane, stable, and peaceful. They view ‘nature’ as something externalised; something from which they are distinct. Consequently, they distance themselves from the humanity of the savages and the proles, and their intimate connection to ‘nature’. Therefore, they position them as non-human and subjugate them to an animalistic level. In *Brave New World*, Lenina describes the savages’ bodies as “asphalt tennis courts”, and their faces as being “inhuman with daubings of scarlet, black and ochre” (Huxley 93). Moreover, Linda is referred to as “the creature” because she has lived in the Reserve for so long (Huxley 102). In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, the proles are placed on a level with animals and one of the Party’s mottos is: “proles and animals are free” (Orwell 82). In addition, O’Brien repudiates Winston’s idea that the proles will overthrow the Party by emphasising the weakness derived from their connection with ‘nature’: “they are helpless, like animals. Humanity is the Party” (Orwell 309).

Nature as an omniscient

Ultimately, ‘nature’ is intertwined with humanity in the novels. Although the rulers attempt to create their own sense of humanity that is distinct from nature, as discussed earlier, there are aspects of nature that are stubbornly present in the party members and in the civilised citizens. It is not possible to remove ‘nature’ from them because, in accordance with second-wave criticism, ‘nature’ is the totality of everything that exists, including humans. For the same reason, it is not possible to completely externalise humanity from the proles and the savages. However, this is not to say that the rulers have not been successful in removing certain aspects of humanity, rather ‘nature’ has been divided between the ‘groups’ and a complete sense of humanity is only found when combining all of their natural elements.

As discussed earlier, the proles represent hope in *Nineteen Eighty-four* but cannot overthrow the Party because they are depicted as ignorant and unconscious, like animals. Consequently,

they do not represent a complete essence of humanity. Although the proles represent 85 % of the population, they are disregarded as a threat because of their ignorance. They accept being treated as second-class citizens, as long as their basic human needs are provided for and are left alone to pursue their desires. In essence, they embody the Party's slogan of "ignorance is strength" (Orwell 83). Winston concludes that, "until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious" (Orwell 81). The consciousness that the proles lack exists within Winston. Just before Winston is arrested, he realises that rebellion is possible "if he kept alive the mind as [the proles] kept alive the body" (Orwell 252). Neither Winston or the proles can overthrow the party on their own as they need each other's complementary human characteristics. Winston's weapon is his mind (though he is haunted by his loss of human instincts, such as empathy), whereas the proles' weapon is their vitality, their connection with 'nature' and their retained human instincts (but this is then mingled by their ignorance and lack of self-awareness). If both parties use whatever connection that they have left with 'nature'; successful rebellion is possible. It is important to see that hope does not only lie with the proles, but also in the remaining aspects of humanity in party members like Winston.

The same division of humanity is found in *Brave New World*. By asking 'who is actually civilised?' and 'who represents humanity?', we inevitably conclude that humanity is a mixture of different elements – the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. According to Greenblatt, *Brave New World* is the epitome of Huxley's pessimism as the novel offers no reconciliation of "the irreconcilable views of man" (101). Moreover, Huxley himself asserts that the novel's main flaw is that John is only offered the alternatives of "insanity on the one hand and lunacy on the other (Huxley 43; foreword). This supports the view that humanity, or the 'idealised' man, resides in both the civilised and the savages; the one half in the savages' connection with 'nature' and their retained human instincts (which are sullied by guilt, violence and masochism) and the other half in the sexual release of the civilised (which is mingled with dehumanisation and loneliness). This is where John has a significant role. He is caught in this conflict because he does not fit in anywhere, being neither completely savage nor completely civilised. Consequently, he is let to experiences both ways of living, neither better than the other and no one is totally civilised. John's ultimate suicide provides a critical lesson for our society today underlining the dire consequences of impairing humanity's connection with 'nature'. For society to survive and thrive, we must accept the interdependence of humans and 'nature' and

it is the very presence of 'nature' in both civilised and savage societies that ultimately provide hope for the future of humanity.

Conclusion

This paper has revealed that environmental considerations are vital to *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* and *Brave New World's* critique of modernity and interrogation of human individuality. The novels explore how the imposed values of modernity have transformed humanity's relationship with 'nature'. The rulers pursue a view of 'nature' as being separate from humanity, which generates the belief that progress equals triumph over 'nature'. Therefore, they externalise and subjugate 'nature' as a means of maintaining control, both of human sensibility and in their physical context. However, the manifestations of 'nature' expose the fundamental flaws of this approach as it damages the valuable and necessary connection between humanity and 'nature', thus advocating a second-wave ecocritical approach where the two are interconnected.

My examination of spatial oppositions between the Reserve and the World State in *Brave New World* and between the streets of London and the Ministries of the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-four* reveals that 'nature' is inherently powerful, hence the need and cause for elevating the Ministries. Moreover, the manifestations of the pastoral are spaces of resistance because the protagonists' suppressed minds are liberated by experiencing these restricted 'natural' spaces. In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, the pastoral idyll and elegy of the 'Golden Country' is called upon as a touchstone for liberty and represents the inspiration, initiation, and final moment of Winston's rebellion. In addition, by linking Julia to the 'Golden Country' her connection to 'nature' is made to be more rebellious than her sexuality. In *Brave New World*, the pastoral elegy is represented by stormy weather, which is the only thing that the rulers cannot control. It works as a space of resistance because it is uncomfortable, in a world where everything is comfortable. Furthermore, the manifestation of wilderness in the Reserve in *Brave New World* is a space of resistance because it the anti-thesis of civilisation and presents an alternate human existence where a close connection with 'nature' has been maintained. The Reserve establishes civilisation's disconnection from 'nature' and exposure to it raises the characters self-awareness, leading them to realise what they have lost. Moreover, Huxley's combination of an old- and new-world approach to wilderness unsettles the reader as it forces them to consider both philosophies.

The rulers externalise 'nature' by dehumanising their people through suppressing human instincts. This process has been explored by the essay through the lens of sex, as it is inherently intertwined with 'nature'. In contrast, the humanity of the savages and the proles is shown in opposition to the inhumanity of the Party members and the civilized. The spiritual connection that the proles and the savages have with the natural world suggests a 'correct' relationship between humans and 'nature'. However, they do not represent a perfect version of humanity either as they are equally subjugated and dehumanised. In this conflict, John from *Brave New World* and Winston from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have a significant role in revealing both sides of humanity, where both sides complement each other's characteristics. This proves that 'nature' is utterly interconnected with humanity, and despite the efforts of the rulers, aspects of both inevitably prevails albeit divided between societies. As such, 'nature' plays the ultimate role of hope – maintaining connections and providing the underlying power of resistance.

The novels contribute to the reader's environmental consciousness by highlighting what their dystopian societies have lost by externalising and subjugating 'nature'. The novels consciously romanticise 'nature' to evoke emotions in their readers and also raise awareness about the dangers of our impaired connection with 'nature'. If we are to address the climate crisis today, we need to first recognise and accept that that humanity is not separate from 'nature'; by externalising and subjugating, we simultaneously and catastrophically destroy ourselves in the process. *Nineteen Eighty-four* and *Brave New World* provide valuable contexts in which to reflect and perhaps act on current, detrimental environmental behaviours.

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