

ZAMYATIN'S *WE* AND THE IDEA OF THE DYSTOPIC

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One of the more uncomfortable cultural perspectives of our time forces us to realize that while the nineteenth century was one of utopian and thus comic enthusiasms, the twentieth has been the century of dystopic and ironic mechanisms. Revolutions as well as lovers find themselves among the constantly betrayed. In Western literature this condition is reflected in the fact that, although the utopian novel makes an occasional appearance after 1919, the literary expression of belief in a realizable utopian goal has been virtually replaced in the twentieth century by the dystopic novel. Indeed, to the modern reader all political novels seem dystopic. But such categorizing, however born out of whatever despair, can be misleading and some attempt needs to be made to sketch out the limits of the idea of the dystopic.

Such an exercise here focuses on Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, generally considered the prototypical dystopic novel.¹ In fact, *We* is not a dystopic novel at all, despite its attention to dystopian societies. The terms *dystopic* and *dystopia* are properly literary rather than political, a dystopic novel being a type of satirical novel which shows life in a dysfunctional utopia and a dystopia the literary characterization of a dysfunctional utopia. Although dystopias are not limited in their occurrence to the dystopic novel, they exist only in the literary works which frame them and have no actual identity in the phenomenal world of people and governments. In general, the portrayal of a dystopia is carried forward by the satirization of elements of the imagined society which the author intends to be seen as *manifestations* of its dysfunction rather than as sources of it. Specifically in dystopic novels, the characterization is enhanced by

the counterpositioning to the dysfunctional society of a more desirable and manifestly more humane society which represents a morally acceptable world to the reader.

In fact, these conditions do not appear in *We*. As close reading and analysis will show, a multiplicity of comic texts permeated with irony and informed by romance combine to make *We* more than a simple indictment of a political or social philosophy. Attention to the actual nature of the texts will give a fuller sense of the complexities of Zamyatin's work and a clearer sense of the dimensions and limitations of the dystopic novel.

In brief, the book appears to be a journal kept by mathematician-engineer D-503, whose rocket ship, the *Integral*, is to carry the gospel of the One State to the stars. D's journal is to be part of that gospel and he promises his extraterrestrial readers to be faithfully honest to his experience of life in a rational, collective society. As D brings the *Integral* close to completion, however, the journal records his personal disintegration. Some atavistic appetite for emotional freedom is aroused in him by the woman I-330, who is a secret agent for a revolutionary group known as the Mephi. D falls "madly"—there is no other word for it—and possessively in love with her, and she appears to manipulate this illegal passion for the revolutionary aims of her group, which rest on her plan to capture the spaceship. Following the failure of the plot, D is manipulated by the Benefactor, head of the One State, into betraying I-330 and her comrades. After her execution, D lives on, lobotomized by the state in its attempt to control the chaos generated by the aborted rebellion.

These events are set within the contrasting worlds of the One State (the Glass World) and the Green World, which exists beyond the wall enclosing the One State. The man-made Glass World operates by the application of rationality to human social interaction, while the natural Green World celebrates sensation and emotion. The One State is governed by an intricate system which determines virtually all of the conduct of its citizens and is concerned only with extending existing controls. In contrast, the social and political lives of the denizens of the Green World are anarchistic and unstructured.

The developing conflict between these two worlds becomes the matter of D's journal and its narrative comprises the surface text of the novel. However, beneath the surface text are two subtexts which scrutinize an equally crucial conflict, that between the personal and ideological demands of reason and emotion. By placing these oppositions in the experience of one character, the multiple texts of the

novel not only find their dramatic center but reveal the complexity of the classic-romantic dialogue to which the twentieth century has fallen heir and out of which the utopian-dystopian dichotomy has risen.

These conflicts and their consequence, the failure to achieve personal, social or ideological integrity, dictate the formal nature of the novel. The impulses toward resolution are set in a New Comedy framework with a rather traditional pattern of comic conflict for surface and subtext: two disparate elements need integration but are blocked by some absurd condition or law and enlist the aid of a tricky servant figure to find ways through or around the absurd condition. However, the comic resolution is stopped short on every level of *We*, with the ironic distance from integration differing for each level. The multiple texts are best described as conflict patterns expressed as ironic comedy informed by themes of romance.

In the surface text, D-503's desire for the integration of his illicit love for I-330 with his social identity as a citizen of the One State, and his efforts to achieve that goal, make up the world of valued action for the comedy; the attempted movement is, as usual, from an absurd society to the desired world of love and harmony. In *We*, however, as in all ironic comedy, this movement is initiated but the grotesque world prevails and the desired world of the lovers is never realized. The irony is intensified by the general tendency of such comedy to throw its main emphasis onto blocking forces and the futile struggle to identify them, rather than forward, as in romantic comedy, onto scenes of reconciliation and union.

In *We* this tendency is expressed in variations of traditional New Comedy roles and devices which involve the portrayal of I-330 as the nominal but demonic heroine, of the figure of the Benefactor as no mere bumbling, rigid *senex iratus* but as the "projection of a human will to tyranny,"² and of the concierge of D's domicile as a tricky servant whose manipulations lead to the arrest and destruction of the "lovers." The *cognitio*, or scene of comic recognition, becomes the agony of I-330's torture under the mindless gaze of the lobotomized D-503; and the festive ritual, formalizing the accession of the lovers to the center of the new order, becomes the ritual execution of I-330 and her followers in the aftermath of their failed rebellion against the old order. Thus the absurd world is maintained—and revealed as not only absurd, but demonic.

This reading of the surface text as ironic comedy does not account for the total complexity of the novel, nor for the failure of the comic purpose toward which D-503 and I-330 seem to have been

driving. Other texts extend the meaning of this narrative, exploring the psychological and ideological implications of its actions, again within the structures of ironic comedy.

The first of these comic texts delineates D-503's struggle to recognize and integrate the irrational and emotional part of his psyche with his rational, collective self. In this internalized comic process, the two sides of D's personality represent the separated lovers, and the absurd condition preventing their union is the endorsement of reason by the One State as the sole foundation for personal and civic life. Initially, the definitive nexus for D is his rational self and the state, but through the catalytic presence of I-330 as some tricky servant of the psyche, a competing nexus, one between D's reason and imagination, is adumbrated. This potential integration, which would betoken the successful comic resolution of this subtext, the victory of the "I" over the "we," is frustrated as I-330 imposes yet a third nexus—between D's emerging self and her dominant personality.

As the novel opens, the unquestioned and complete dominion of reason in D's mind makes him the perfect product, and subject, of the state. In all phases of his life, D relies on the exactitudes of reason—time pieces, probabilities, "ethics based on subtraction, addition, division, and multiplication."³ His conscious mind having been harnessed by the state, it is the unconscious and the non-reasoning part of D which awakens, prodded by I-330, and which becomes the other half of the comic equation in this subtext. Using state jargon, D identifies this "new" part of himself, which intrudes in the form of dreams, fantasies and irrational impulses, as the "imagination" or "soul," in the state's eyes an illness to be diagnosed and then extirpated.

However, only through acknowledging this buried self can D-503 achieve autonomy. This becomes clear during a brief sojourn in the Green World, a locale which nurtures precisely those aspects of the psyche suppressed by the state. Enthusiastically endorsing "madness" at the Mephi's rock altar, he can see himself for the moment differentiated from the vast regiment of numbers on whom he usually relies for self-definition. But such insights have no cumulative effect despite their recurrence and he cannot act upon them. Their impact is registered only on the reader who, answering D's unanswered questions and completing his ellipses, recognizes the projected termini of his growth—integration and autonomy—without D himself having such awareness.

The early promise of psychic integration for D, and its ultimate failure, are both effected by I-330, who in this subtext plays the role of tricky servant as she entices D beyond the boundaries of state dogma and value.⁴ The illegality of their love offers him a release from the "unfreedom" of thought and action promulgated by the One State and allows him to approach his individuality. Yet his love, potentially such a creative force for him, ultimately produces one of those "innumerable stupid tragedies" from which the "ancients" were thought to have suffered.

In traditional comic processes, love is the organizing principle on which the emergent society establishes itself. Exemplified in the relationship between the hero and heroine, this love generally includes reciprocity, respect for human dignity, and forgiveness; it replaces the lust, power or psychopathology on which the absurd society has been based. However, love itself is essentially powerless to act in its own behalf while the absurd society holds sway. It is, rather, manipulation of that society which obviates obstacles—a manipulation which is usually directed by the subversive genius of the tricky servant figure. In comedy, love does not conquer all; chicanery does.

In the ironic subtext of D's psychic struggle, however, "love" itself becomes a manipulative device in the hands of the tricky servant. I-330 encourages in D a love that is irrational, possessive and personally demeaning. It does not follow the pattern of egalitarian reciprocity celebrated in Shakespeare's romantic comedies. Rather, echoing the tradition of Courtly Love, I-330 requires of D-503 his total submission, a demand which he embraces: "She used the ancient, long-forgotten 'thou'—the 'thou' of the master to the slave. . . . Yes I was a slave, and this, too, was necessary, was good" (64). D's fledgling ego, even as it is nurtured by I-330, undergoes a marked attenuation: "I was dissolved, I was infinitely small, I was a point . . ." (129). This process is accompanied by the equally traditional symptoms of sensitivity and jealousy, products of the uncertainty which I-330 builds into the structure of their relationship. Thus while love catalyzes the emergence of D's buried self, ultimately it destroys rather than affirms personality because it demands not an autonomous, fully integrated person but a submissive Courtly Lover.

This submission, masked as a love tied completely to the "soul" or "imagination" of his atavistic self and keyed automatically to the appearance of I-330 in all of her roles or guises, cannot be a part of any comic resolution involving the integration of D's emotions and

rationality. Such a resolution must entail "an awakening to self-knowledge, which is typically a release from humor or a mechanical form of repetitive behavior." The absurd humor is not obliterated, but "transformed into an inner source of coherence."⁵ The reverse happens in this ironic comedy; manipulating the humor of excessive rationality which promotes D-503's loyal citizenship in the One State, I-330 solicits from him an equally mechanical submission to her will. His humor, so far from being transformed into an "inner source of coherence," is the very stimulus to his eventual betrayal of his own humanity. Torn between the mutually exclusive demands of reason (the Benefactor) and imagination (I-330), D-503 eventually seeks to obliterate all consciousness through the Operation, ending as a "humanoid tractor" possessing neither reason nor imagination.

Although the events that signal the end of this comic subtext coincide with those of the surface text, they must be read somewhat differently. Here, the torture and death of I-330 are not those that obliterate the heroine from a comic equation as in the ironic close of the surface text. They are, rather, the ultimate punishment of the failed tricky servant. In most New Comedy, there is antagonism between the *senex iratus* and the tricky servant who seeks to gull him for the sake of the young lovers, but the *senex* is never allowed to make good on his blustery threats of pain and annihilation. However, in the ironic world of this subtext, I-330 is a demonic variant of the tricky servant who is betrayed to the equally demonic Benefactor by the "lovers" she has pretended to serve. D-503's betrayal of I-330 intensifies the irony, because it has been stimulated by the jealousy accompanying the total submission to her personality which she has fostered in him.

In the subtext we have just discussed, the illusion that I-330 facilitates D's growth is systematically discredited by the destructive effects of the love she demands. Her function slides from that of some demonic tricky servant to that of a shadowy blocking humor; finally she is not a facilitator but, like the Benefactor himself, a tyrant.

The implications of her role transformation become clear in a discussion of a second comic subtext, one in which D-503 is the figure whose manipulation of the absurd world is necessary to effect a resolution of antagonistic forces and bring about a new society. That he fails to do so as a consequence of his inability to integrate reason and emotion is the linchpin of cause and effect that links those two subtexts of ironic bondage.

In the second subtext of *We*, the comic equation changes. The

fundamental problem is the desire of the Green World to subsume the Glass World. The two worlds are, in effect, the isolated "lovers," separated physically by the Green Wall and ideologically by their mutually exclusive dependencies on reason and emotion. Although D-503 is one of the separated "lovers" of the surface text, and he contains both lovers in the psychomachia of the subtext we have just discussed, it is his role as engineer of the *Integral* which fixes him here as tricky servant. He is, as we have seen, truly enslaved to both worlds, through passion on one hand and socialization on the other. And he alone can manipulate the physical world in order to shatter the exclusivity of the ideologies which divide it.

This subtext is propelled by the conventions of romance. The myth of the victory of summer over winter, the delineation of the world of innocence rather than experience and the rhythm of movement from a "real" to a "green" world and back again are all present. But they function so ironically that their near-demonic perspective makes futile the struggle toward the wedding of two worlds.

In traditional myths of the defeat of winter, summer is represented as a fecund female. But in *We*, summer's *imago* is the sharp-visaged, sharp-toothed presence of I-330 as *vagina dentata*, not earth mother. Nor is hers a world of innocence, but one of decadence, characterized by the Ancient House, rank growth at the foot of the Green Wall, mad masses in the dark forest and secret passages in the bowels of the city.

D-503 comes to this "romantic" world in a demonic parody of the rhythms of romantic comedy in which no conversion takes place; this is no faerie world of a midsummer night's dream. At the meeting of the Mephi in the forest outside the wall, he embraces madness but remains oblivious to its implications. He experiences a singular sense of self, but on return to the "real" world of the One State forgets his pledge to act for the Mephi. When I-330 comes to him with a program for revolution, D is shattered at the betrayal of the One State which his role entails. He can only think of escaping with I-330, back to the Green World beyond the Wall. He cannot see that she seeks no haven there; it is the city, and its destruction, that she wants.

That he can be blind to this truth about her suggests the key to his failure as tricky servant in this subtext. His commitment to action is grounded in his passion for her and not in the idea of freedom against tyranny. In fact, he cannot respond to concepts of "freedom" from beyond the Wall in any fundamental manner as long as she circumscribes his emotional development with a demand for submission as

strong as that of the One State. And if D cannot attain true self-knowledge and thence true love, the Mephi must fail, for in a struggle for D's submissive soul, I-330 must lose to the One State. Convinced by the Benefactor of I-330's exploitation of his love, D-503 confesses to the Guardians, at once killing the self that loved I-330, submitting to that competing force, the One State, and assuring failure of the revolution. Thus D's inability to achieve personal integration, evident in the first subtext, prevents him from fulfilling the revolutionary aims of the Mephi, which would have completed the comic action of this subtext.

The foregoing discussion of surface and subtexts in *We* exposes the many levels of defeat on which the novel ends. The suggestion in the first subtext that the alternative which I-330 offers D is not freedom from enslavement but one tyranny in place of another raises questions about the novel's thematic juxtapositions—questions which are not allayed by the fact that in the second subtext the comic plot again seems to promise less a victory over than an exchange of tyrannies. Light can be cast on these apparent contradictions when we examine some basic assumptions about the nature of the dystopic novel.

The dystopic novel, we have already argued, is a form of satiric novel, the object of whose attack is the dystopia or dysfunctional utopia. The specific targets of the dystopic novel's satire are elements of the dystopia that manifest its dysfunction rather than explain its origins, and the general nature of its dysfunctions is put into high relief by the presence of alternative, and clearly preferable, modes of action and/or systems of belief or organization.

Although *We* contains satiric elements and an obvious dystopia, it is significantly different from true dystopic novels, those which, as true satires, contain recognizable and accessible moral norms.⁶ *Brave New World* and *1984* are generally cited as examples of this type. In *Brave New World* the norm is objectified in the characterization of the Savage, John, and in *1984* in the atavistic concerns of Winston Smith. But there are no analogous values in the systemic subtext of *We*, where the dystopic Glass World is opposed by the forces operating out of the Green World. If the moral norms of satire ought to be relatively clear so that standards for measure are available to the reader, what and where are those norms in this book? Are they found in democracy or capitalism? These ideas reside outside the satire—indeed, outside the novel. And what of the Green World? While in this context it is Nature, the rebels it houses seem demonic and

their leader as much an alazon, as much an imposter, as the Benefactor.⁷

We, instead of fitting the model of a dystopic novel by presenting a dysfunctional utopia and using the revolutionary and romantic forces of the Green World as counterpoints to totalitarianism, actually presents two dysfunctional utopian systems in conflict. One of these, the One State of the Glass World, is partially based on a Marxian view of history and is the subject of the overt satire of the book. The other, that rudimentary world for which the Mephi and the Green World stand, is non-ideological and romantic, and although it could be mistaken for the normative world of value, it is itself undermined through the ironic and demonic nature of its depiction.

The importance of the portrayal of the Glass World lies not so much in the specificity of its satire—petroleum-based food, rampant Taylorism, machine music, governmental sophistry, terror, torture, and the absence of personal freedom—as in its “recording” of the experiential failure of a Marxian view of history. This view presupposes an early homogeneous organization of human experience, a “pre-contract” society which has given way to a heterogeneous “contract” society marked by a complex division of labor and by human alienation. This will in turn give way to a technologically advanced but spiritually reintegrated society, a telotic future that uses the phenomenology of the “present” to aid in the restitution of the spiritual homogeneity of the ancient, pre-contract society.⁸ In the Marxian version of the telotic world, the state, an agency called into being by one class, usually a minority, to enable it to dominate the majority, will eventually “wither away” as class distinctions vanish into the classless society.

However, the future Zamyatin presents in *We* has not followed Marxian rules. A collective, classless society has existed for one thousand years, as D-503 lets us see by reproducing in his journal a proclamation from the *One State Gazette*. Yet the very existence of the *Gazette* presents us with the paradox: the state has not withered away; it has increasingly dominated the lives of its citizens through the application of scientific principles. The story D tells us is, in part, that of the struggle between the entropic One State, which stands for one failed utopian vision, and the Mephi of the Green World and their natural processes, which represent yet another.

This latter vision describes an alternate world to that of the collective state, one presumed valuable for its submission to natural processes rather than to design. The romantically conceived Green

World is itself a utopian vision, but one that directs its attention *contra* the vision of other literary utopias of the modern period. Christopher Collins has suggested that the rebels against the One State look back to the romantically-oriented utopias favored in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that Zamyatin be considered one of the first writers to direct twentieth-century Western utopian thought to these models. However, there is a significant difference between their characterization by Collins as “small, self-sufficient, economically primitive communities, where the individual, free from the inevitably corrupting influence of institutions and civilization, might realize his natural goodness and kindness,” and the world desired by I-330 and her Mephi.⁹

That world is not so much natural as it is mad, not as individualistic as it is primitively anarchic, and if the examples of I-330 and her followers, whose collective name is a contraction of Mephistopheles, are to be taken as object lessons, it harbors not kindness or goodness but violence and deceit. Nor does D-503 get arguments for economic or personal autonomy from I-330. The world of the rebels is not political or social, any more than Romanticism is politically or socially specific.

On a more fundamental level, the Mephi represent a vision of history that is in conflict with the concept of the irrevocable material progress of history as expressed in Marxian thought and exemplified in its dysfunctional form as the One State. The utopian vision which guides I-330 and her fellow conspirators looks to the past, to a Golden Age that can be regained phenomenologically as well as spiritually through revolution. Once the revolution has been recreated, I-330 argues, the energy which represents its value immediately begins to disappear into an increasingly entropic future and more revolution becomes necessary. But her fetishistic use of the symbols of the past and her arguments for the dismantling of the Glass World bespeak the desire to recapture the essence of the past by returning to its physical reality, to react against the present in search of a perfect past, rather than to act with it in pursuit of a telotic future.

Thus *We* does not depict one dystopic society that by rights should be replaced by a normative world of value on which we as readers can agree. Rather the novel presents two unacceptable organizations of experience. One, some failed collectivist vision that has led to a tyranny of acquiescence, is opposed by a reactionary impulse toward a natural anarchy that suggests a vision, attenuated by its own anti-historical bias, of a previous Golden Age of limited but free societies.

One offers order but no freedom; the other offers freedom as the denial of order.

The use of the mechanisms of comedy to portray this conflict precludes any reading of the texts as merely satiric or dystopic. By following comic convention, particularly the rhythmic movements of romantic comedy, the novel places a world of formless energy in opposition to a structured society. The One State must be replaced, if the Mephi are to have their way, with the universal forces of change. These forces promote no real social structure, not only because they are the elements of a romantic vision of universal principles, but because in comedy rigidity and definition belong to the usurpers and blocking humors who want predictable activity. In *We*, those humors are the principles of the Glass World. Thus D's "conversion" scene in the Green World assembly produces no political vision in part because romantic comedy has no component to match the structures of the "real" world. Casting a counter-utopia in the structure of romantic comedy and giving that utopian vision no social component makes a dialectical solution apparently unrealizable, since comedy seems to abhor the presence of mutually exclusive stances.¹⁰ The ability of the tricky servant to function as manipulator and mediator depends upon the potentiality of the absurd law to be altered, of the blocking humor to bend, even to disappear.

The novel does offer two very partial resolutions which, though suggestive, leave untouched its central dialectical problems wherein two dystopian visions appear, one emerging in response to the existential fact of the other. There is a comic resolution of sorts which comes not through the alteration of the absurd world but through its transcendence, in the portrayal of 0-90, D's other lover. Her criticism of One State excesses suggests her independence from its dogmas, and her leitmotifs, the love of flowers, the expanding womb, connect her with the Green World—not with its revolutionary energies but with its natural processes. Her portrayal evokes the fecund female *imago* which has been missing in the depiction of the Green World. This theme culminates in her abandonment of the Glass World to bear and raise her child in the Green World—the one successful act of defiance in the novel. 0-09's instinctive determination to live by the values of familial and generational love offers the novel's only response to both its absurd worlds. But the structural antitheses which lie at its center remain untouched by her portrayal.

A more significant resolution occurs in the fact of the journal itself. Through his daily entries, D-503, in the Romantic role of the

artist/maker as mediator, attempts to create order out of increasing disarray and suffuses the two worlds he describes with his own sensibility. As if he were also the most modern of novelists, he makes the story of his growth and development as an “artist” the story of his paradoxical worlds as well. In this narrative, these worlds are held in the most delicate balance by the mediating power of his language.

D-503’s use of language offers the reader a synthesis denied in character and plot. From the opening entry, in which he constructs a metaphor for his diarist’s task out of the fundamental experience of pregnancy, his reliance on figurative language becomes a compelling mediator between the seemingly implacable oppositions of reason and emotion, Glass World and Green World. His evocations of the World of Reason gain their vividness—indeed their power for the reader—through this figurative language, where frequently organic and geometric metaphors slice across each other, conveying on the rhetorical level a synthesis denied elsewhere. D’s syntax, punctuated as it is by ellipses and interrogatives, insistently directs the reader to the very synthesis which eludes him. Finally, permeating such rhetorical devices is the tone of the journal. By relying on a vocabulary laden with affective connotations, D’s journal becomes, *in toto*, his emotional response to the complicated pressures of his life and his world. Such a preoccupation ignores ideology and transcends obdurate dichotomies.

The distinctiveness of D’s style proclaims a powerful individuality which forces the reader to care about what happens to its creator. Even as he chronicles his happy submission to the Glass World and his tortured submission to I-330—in fact in the very act of recording these willful diminutions for his readers—he asserts the primacy of the self through a style which insists on the very individuation he elsewhere denies.

It is significant, then, that D’s language changes abruptly after he undergoes the Operation. The last entry, as he himself observes, contains “No delirium, no absurd metaphors, no feeling: nothing but facts” (p. 231). The linguistic flatness, even linearity of this entry reflects the defeat attending his narrative and underscores his own descent into stasis. Nevertheless, neither the narrative’s end nor its tone brings similar defeat to the reader. For in addition to the ironies previously discussed, we as audience are left with the last irony, that the very distinctions available to us but inaccessible to the protagonists allow us our own syntheses. This affective resolution suggests at once the limitations of the dystopic novel and some of the strengths of *We*.

We know what is wrong in both the worlds of *We*, or we can know if we look closely at the conflicts as the novel presents them. But if we accept too readily the simplicities of categorization, we risk losing sight of the novel's complexity. With its multiple layers of irony and its seemingly romantic opposition to the entropic tendencies of systematic thought, *We* offers us, as no dystopic novel can, the central contradiction of the modern experience, the failure of order to sustain life and the failure of energy to sustain purpose. For as a form of satire, the dystopic novel is limited in what it may say to us; it may show us what could happen to our civic lives and suggest what ought to be. But works like *We*, that seek out the deeper contradictions of our fundamental drives for order or for chaos, for passion or for love, are not simply satiric and only appear to be dystopic. These works draw on the full range of mythic and ethical structures imbedded within our common experience to produce intimations of what is, rather than premonitions of what ought to be.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Gordon Browning, "Zamyatin's *We*: An Anti-Utopian Classic," *Cithara*, 7, No. 2 (1968), 13-20, and "Toward a Set of Standards for Everlasting Anti-Utopian Fiction," *Cithara*, 10, No. 1 (1970), 18-32; D. J. Richards, *Zamyatin: A Soviet Heretic* (New York: Hillary House, 1962), p. 68; Jürgen Rühle, *Literature and Revolution: A Study of the Writer and Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. and ed. Jean Steinburg (New York: Praeger, 1969), pp. 37-38; Marc Slonim, "Evgeny Zamyatin: The Ironic Dissident," *Soviet Russian Literature: Writers and Problems* (New York: Oxford, 1964), pp. 80-89; and George Woodcock, "Utopias in Negative," *Sewanee Review*, 64 (1956), 81-97.
2. Northrop Frye, "The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism," in *The Stubborn Structure* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 203.
3. Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, trans. Mirra Ginsburg (1923; rpt. New York: Viking, 1972), p. 14. All references to the text will be taken from this edition.
4. Because we see I-330 only through the eyes of the smitten D, and because significant portions of her life seem to occur just out of his purview, she remains an elusive figure, especially concerning her feelings for D. For a negative view of her see Christopher Collins, "Zamyatin's *We* as Myth," *SEEJ*, 10 (1966), 125-33; a positive interpretation is Richards', p. 61. See also Owen Ulph, "I-330: Reconsiderations on the Sex of Satan," *RLT*, 9 (1974), 262-75.

5. Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York: Harcourt, 1965), pp. 118, 127.

6. For discussions of *We* as a dystopic novel, see Edward J. Brown, *Russian Literature Since the Revolution* (New York: Collier Books, 1969), pp. 75, 82; Irving Howe, "The Fiction of Anti-Utopia," *New Republic*, 146, No. 17 (1962), 13–16; Juan López-Morillas, "Utopia and Anti-Utopia: From 'Dreams of Reason' to 'Dreams of Unreason,'" *Survey*, 82, No. 1 (1972), 57–61; Alex M. Shane, *The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamyatin* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), p. 141; Boris Thomson, *The Premature Revolution: Russian Literature and Society, 1917–1946* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 17; Woodcock, p. 90.

7. Even seen in the light of scientific enthusiasms contemporary to the period of *We*'s composition, the Green World offers no counter-utopia to the Glass World. In the ten years following the Russian revolution, Soviet scientists attempted to reconcile the provisions of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity to the philosophy of science they were forming out of the premises of dialectical materialism. The Special Theory seemed to argue successfully for the application of the already recognized laws of the relativity of physical motion to energy as well as to matter. Thus the physical world had, at least operationally, to include both.

When one applies the principles of dialectics to this universe, new possibilities of order arise. Matter and energy constitute a thesis-antithesis opposition, different stages of existence of the same material. In *We*, the world of fixed matter is clearly the immutable Glass World, a post-entropic state in which all energy has reached equilibrium and stasis grips life. The Green World, on the other hand, is portrayed as the world of energy. It is volatile and filled with potential for change and exchange.

The novel allows only two options for the disposition of this dichotomy: the absorption of all energy by the One State or the obliteration of stasis by Nature. However, the principle of the dialectic would provide the philosopher of Zamyatin's Russia with a third solution not available in the novel: the appearance of a synthesis, a "new" world, matter transformed and revitalized by energy, "Nature nurtured" by reason. Thus, although the novel recognizes the new conceptual universe of the Einsteinian age, it rejects both synthesis and the Special Theory.

8. Frye, *Stubborn Structure*, pp. 34, 109.

9. *Evgenij Zamyatin: An Interpretive Study* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), p. 49.

10. For discussion of the dialectical aspects of *We*, see D. J. Richards, p. 59; Thomson, p. 17; Alex Shane, "Introduction: Zamyatin the Critic," pp. xv-xvi and Zamyatin's essay, "Tomorrow," pp. 51–52, in *A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, ed. and trans. Mirra Ginsburg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).