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ORWELL'S WARNINGS

A STUDY OF

GEORGE ORWELL'S PURPOSE IN WRITING

A THESIS

PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

BY

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UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

AUGUST 1962

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Approved for

The English Department and

The Graduate School

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CHAPTER I. BRIEF OUTLINE OF ORWELL'S LIFE

Although George Orwell requested that no books be written about him, it is not difficult to glean a considerable amount of autobiographical material from his novels. His autobiographical works and several essays shed much light on his life and personality.

He was born in Motihari, Bengal, in 1903, of Scottish parents and christened Eric Blair. His father was a minor official in the Indian Civil Service and retired to England before his only son was eight years old.

At the age of eight, Orwell received a scholarship to study at a preparatory school, St. Cyprian's, on the south coast of England. It was an expensive school, and his family could not have afforded to send him without the scholarship. His experiences during this period are found in his essay "Such, Such Were the Joys," published posthumously in 1950. The title is cryptic as there are few "joys" described in the essay. One section is concerned with the punishment for bedwetting, a common occurrence among young newcomers; another section describes the snobbish attitude of the school director, favoritism toward the very rich boys; "I doubt whether Sim ever caned any boy whose father's income was much above 2,000 /pounds/ a year. . . ."[1]

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[1] "Such, Such Were the Joys," in A Collection of Essays (New York, 1954), p. 15.

and there are sections discussing the cramming classes for the scholarship boys and the canings. "It is a mistake to think that such methods /of physical punishment/ do not work. . . . The boys themselves believed in its efficacy."[2]

Orwell discusses some of his few pleasant recollections at the school, such as butterfly hunting with one of his favorite teachers and leaving for the holidays. In spite of the physical discomfort he must have endured, he looked back on his schooldays objectively and with an understanding of the workings of a child's mind and recognized that incidents which occurred during this time had shaped his life and way of thinking for many years. "It has been said that /Orwell/ had an unhappy childhood. I don't think that this was in the least true, although he did give out that impression himself when he was grown-up."[3]

As a result of the cramming, he resolved, on entering Eton, to slack off. This resolve was so fully carried out that between the ages of "thirteen and twenty-two or -three, I hardly ever did a stroke of avoidable work." He did just that and managed to keep a fair position in his classes, but, when he completed his program there, his tutor suggested that he take a job rather than continue his education.

Orwell was only about seventeen when he joined the Indian Imperial Police. He is said to have been a very normal young officer.

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[2] Ibid., p. 18.

[3] Avril Dunn, "My Brother, George Orwell," Twentieth Century, March, 1961, p. 256.

He probably did very well, but he felt the profession unsuitable, and the weather did not help his generally only fair health. He despised exploiting the natives and "serving an imperialism which /he/ had come to regard as very largely a racket."[4] In his examination of the virtues of socialism written several years later, Orwell condemed the imperialism which made the English wealthy at the expense of the colonies. "The high standard of life we enjoy in England depends upon our keeping a tight hold on the Empire, particularly the tropical portions of it such as India and Africa."[5]

> In order that England may live in comparative confort, a hundred million Indians must live on the verge of starvation--an evil state of affairs, but you acquiensce in it every time you step into a taxi or eat a plate of strawberries and cream. The alternative is to throw the Empire overboard and reduce England to a cold and unimportant little island where we should all have to work very hard and live mainly on herrings and potatoes. That is the very last thing that any left-winger wants. Yet the left-winger continues to feel that he has no moral responsibility for imperialism. He is perfectly ready to accept the products of Empire and save his soul by sneering at the people who hold the Empire together.[6]

Orwell decided, when he was only eleven or twelve, that he wanted to be a writer. He left his position in Burma in 1927 and was determined to start writing.

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[4] Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycroft, editors, Twentieth Century Authors (New York, 1942), p. 1058.

[5] George Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier (New York, 1961), p. 136.

[6] Ibid., p. 136.

He returned to England with little money, few social connections, and no special trade and found that unemployment there was already a problem. For a short while his leave probably paid him enough to live in Paris and write there. From that time to 1940, he wrote several books, but none sold well. During this time he took the name George Orwell. It was reported that he disliked his own name because it was associated with the Scotland he had no knowledge of except through the reports of his rich schoolmates. "George" is a decidedly British name, and "Orwell" is the name of an English river near which he once lived.

The pseudonym seemed to give Orwell a paradoxical personality and appearance. An acquaintance felt that there was a contrast between his uncompromising political views and his mild home manners and reasonableness.

> Perhaps the creation of George Orwell, this not quite real personality, which differed from Eric Blair, gave him special strength as a writer [by freeing] him from the complications of his own personality, so that he was uniquely receptive to political trends and every intellectual wind of the time could blow through him to be sniffed, tested, and rejected. . . . A real appreciation of his personality. . . can be obtained only from an understanding of the subtle relationship between this public and private self.[7]

Down and Out in Paris and London is a carefully arranged description of his experiences among the poorest classes. Probably it is biographical and partly because it was her brother's first pub-

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[7] T. R. Fyvel, "A Case for George Orwell?" Twentieth Century, September 1956, pp. 255-256.

lication, Avril Dunn mentions only this book in her article.

> When Down and Out in Paris and London was published, the family, of course, read it with great interest, but were really, in a way, rather surprised at the outspokenness of the language; not in any way shocked, because my parents weren't easily shockable, although my father was Victorian.[8]

Not all of Orwell's critics agreed that his down and outing was a sincere penance for his taking part in an oppressive government. John Mortimer believed, in fact, that it was an insult to the poor, but like so many of the men Orwell was personally acquainted with, Mortimer found him a courageous man.

> He may be suspect, doing penance in the kitchens of Paris restaurants or on the road to Wigan Pier. He may even be slightly absurd, looking for deep social significance in the adventures of Billy Bunter or in the lewd postcards in Brighton tobacconists' shops. He may in the end, in the shallow negation of 1984, return to the tedious emptiness of his monastic cell. But he was not afraid to be thought unfashionable or unsympathetic or reactionary if he felt he had to tell the truth. It was a rare courage.[9]

Between 1930 and 1940, Orwell attempted to become a serious writer. He contributed to The Adelphi, taught in small, private schools, tutored, and clerked in a small bookshop. He married Eileen O'Shaughnessy and moved to the country, where he and his wife ran a village pub and general store. He estimated that

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[8] Dunn, p. 258

[9] John Mortimer, "Prophet in a Hair Shirt," Spectator, June 2, 1961, p. 803.

his income never averaged more than three pounds per week.

Before his marriage, Orwell shared rooms with two younger men, one of whom was Rayner Heppenstall. Orwell was about ten years older than the other two, and they regarded him as an "eccentric old boy."[10] Heppenstall and Orwell had a serious misunderstanding one night when Heppenstall came home during the small hours of the morning roaring drunk. Orwell told him to be quiet and go to his room. When Heppenstall refused to do so, Orwell threatened to strike him with a cane. Although Heppenstall moved out of the apartment the next day, and stated that Orwell had a sadistic streak in his personality, they remained good friends.[11]

Shortly after his marriage, Orwell spent four months in the north of England to find material for the book, The Road to Wigan Pier, which is a discussion of the need for socialism to combat the terrible poverty of the unemployed mine workers in Lancashire and Yorkshire. The book also includes Orwell's criticism of English socialism, and in it Orwell takes the point of view of the "devil's advocate." Orwell was becoming increasingly sympathetic with socialist ideologies, but he recognized that there were many phases of the ideology that needed rectifying.

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[10] Rayner Happenstall, "The Shooting Stick," Twentieth Century, April 1955, p. 368.

[11] Ibid., p. 369

> I am making out a case for the sort of person who is in sympathy with the fundamental aims of Socialism, who has the brains to see that Socialism would "work," but who in practice always takes to flight when Socialism is mentioned. . . .
>
> The first thing that must strike any outside observer is that Socialism in its developed form is a theory confined entirely to the middle class. The typical Socialist is not, as tremulous old ladies imagine, a ferocious-looking working man with greasy overalls and a raucous voice. He is either a youthful snob-Bolshevic who in five years' time will quite probably have made a wealthy marriage and been converted to Roman Catholicism; or, still more typically, a prim little man with a white-collar job, usually a secret teetotaller and often with vegetarian leanings, with a history of Nonconfirmity behind him, and above all, with a social position which he has no intention of forfeiting. . . .[12]

In 1936, Orwell left for Spain to participate in the Spanish Civil War, and it was there that he discovered Communism at first hand and for the first time. The four months in Spain were a turning point in his life.

> After the fighting--more particularly after the slinging-match in the newspapers--it was difficult to think about this war in quite the same naively idealistic manner as before. I suppose there is no one who spent more than a few weeks in Spain without being in some degree disillusioned. My mind went back to the newspaper correspondent whom I had met my first day in Barcelona, and

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[12] The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 146.

> who said to me: "This war is a racket the same as any other." The remark had shocked me deeply, and at that time . . . I do not believe it was true; it was not true even now, [four months later]; but it was becoming truer. The fact is that every war suffers a kind of progressive degradation with every month that it continues, because such things as individual liberty and a truthful press are simply not compatible with military efficiency.[13]

Aside from his disillusionment, Orwell discovered that he had courage and ability as a leader and overcame the self-doubt he had acquired in school. The book sold very few copies and did not reach the audience for which it was written. Lionel Trilling describes the book as one of the "important documents of our. . . time a testimony to the nature of modern political life."[14]

Coming Up For Air (1939) prophesied the advent of war, and when it broke out, Orwell wanted to join the army. He was, however, refused because of his poor health, and so he joined the Home Guard. He also turned to broadcasting and gave important service to the Indian Section of the British Broadcasting Company. After 1940, he wrote only two fictional works, Animal Farm and 1984. His published writing during the decade until his death consisted primarily of serious literary and political essays, as well as comments on English comic books, and on the development of the English murder story.

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13 Homage to Catalonia (New York, 1952), p. 180

14 Lionel Trilling, "Introduction," Homage to Catalonia, p. v.

Animal Farm, written in 1946 and published just before the war ended, brought Orwell fame. A family friend believed that Mrs. Orwell helped a great deal with this book: "Her logic, her feeling for accuracy in the use of words influenced him, perhaps without his being aware of it, in improving his style of writing. . . ."[15] Mrs. Orwell was a well-educated person who had had a promising career in psychology before her marriage. Her wit, love of life, and effervescent nature may well have caused the gaiety which made Animal Farm unique and the most popular of his books. She died just before the book was published, in 1945.

Orwell's doctor warned him to be careful of his health; so after his wife's death, he went to Jura, a small island off the Scottish coast, where he lived with his sister and started writing 1984. He became progressively worse and later admitted that his poor health caused much of the gloomy atmosphere in 1984. He moved back to London and entered a nursing home. In 1949 he married again, and he and his wife shared plans to turn from political writing to the study of human relationships. They made plans to go to Switzerland, where Orwell could recuperate, but just a few days before they were to leave, Orwell died of a hemorrhage and was buried, as he had wished, in an English village churchyard.

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[15] Elisaveta Fen, "George Orwell's First Wife," Twentieth Century, August 1960, p. 119.

Orwell's gifts included an inspired common sense and a power for steady thought. If he lacked understanding of human relationships, he had much sympathy for humanity in general. He was a lonely man, and as far as this writer can tell, he had no very close friends. Even his first wife knew that, to Orwell, his writing came before his wife. The central characters in all of his books are "loners": Flory, Dorothy Hare, Gordon Comstock, George Bowling, and Winston Smith. Tom Hopkinson feels that Orwell saw the world as a "succession of money rackets" because he had "from childhood . . . been hampered by lack of money."[16] It is too easy to take isolated facts and try to make them fit into a set theory. This is especially the case with Orwell. He had requested that no books be written about him, but his friends and acquaintances wrote about him, his attitudes towards people, money, politics, and writing. Whether they liked him personally or not, all those who have written about Orwell can not help expressing their enthusiasm about his writing.

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[16] Tom Hopkinson, George Orwell (London, 1953), p. 8.

II. ORWELL'S EXPERIENCES IN BURMA

Until 1937 Burma was a part of British India, having been acquired during 1826, 1852, and 1886. Until 1923 the major positions of responsibility were in British hands, and Burmans had a monopoly over the junior services, except the professional positions, which were filled by Indians.[1]

The Burmese people are easy-going, attractive, in harmony with their surroundings, and they understand the meaning of "the joy of living." The terms "Burmese" and "Burman" include all people, whatever their origin, who speak the Burmese language.

The Burman has been called both "nature's gentleman" and "a lazy rotter"; visitors to the country use the former, and the Burman's employer uses the latter. If an employer wants a steady worker, he hires an Indian coolie--these coolies are referred to as "natives"--who will work longer hours and for less wages than the Burman, and who will keep to assigned tasks and not demand holidays. If a Burman wants a holiday, nothing will prevent him from taking one. The Burmese women, on the other hand, have more responsibilities and are often the family breadwinners. Generally, their virtues and vices are primitive. Frank courtesy is an innate characteristic; the Burmese are capable of fits of passion, and running amok is common among them. On the whole, they are high-spirited and joyful.[2]

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[1] "Burma," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1960, IV, 428.

[2] R. Grant Brown, Burma As I Saw It (New York, 1925), passim.

The British had discovered considerable riches in the country in the form of rubies, jade, rubber, tin, iron ore, oil, and timber, and they and other outside companies quickly moved to control them.[3] Many books were written about Burma in the early twentieth century, and the majority are travelogues--interesting descriptions and amusing anecdotes--but there was no personal concern for the Burmese people or their problems. One of the travelogues is a book written by a visiting artist who was primarily concerned with his work and only once expressed an opinion of what he found in Burma.[4]

> And I should feel still more bitter if I happened to be one of those Burmans who, believing in the good faith of the Britisher and ignorant of the true value of my oil well, had sold it for a miserable 100 rupees or so to a "business man" who was better in the know than myself. This happened often enough in the early days.[5]

The Europeans whose interests kept them away from the larger cities led very lonely lives. Their homes were usually roomy, comfortable, and well built, but often they were separated from other white men by distances of at least twenty or thirty miles. If the planters were not married, they generally made friends with a bottle; however, they were not necessarily habitual drunkards, nor did they allow their drinking to interfere with their work and responsibilities. A vivid picture of life in a community of European tin miners is described by one author as follows:

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[3] William J. Grant, _The New Burma_ (London, 1942), _passim_.

[4] Paul Edmonds, _Peacocks and Pagodas_ (New York, 1925), pp. 110ff.

[5] _Ibid_., p. 110.

> They do their best for themselves and their company, but it is a dour life. They mine tin with skill and maintain the rudiments of a social life. Scattered bungalows are visited and wives struggle with primitive housekeeping facilities. There is a club where men play games and exchange the news from home. Dancing, cards, and the elevating influence of billiards are indulged in. Yet there is the eternal solitude. Bachelors seldom leave the clothes they work in, excepting to go to bed, from Monday to Saturday; the mail from home is the salient joy of the week, conversation is a withered wreck tethered to an island of tin; the news that a tiger has killed a cow in the next village is a welcome refreshment of the terrifying ordinary.[6]

Ever since the early kingdoms, the Burmans had a distrust for any authority higher than the village headman. Local officials, instead of suppressing crime, fattened on it. Governors of districts and magistrates were quite often in league with robbers and shared in the plunder. The Burmans had a characteristic proverb: "Fire, war, storms, robbers, rulers, these are the five great evils."[7]

In "Shooting an Elephant," Orwell describes a situation which, from the interplay of the crowd of Burmans and the English policeman, shows the feelings of both peoples toward each other. On hearing that a rampaging elephant had killed a coolie, an English policeman set for a rifle and went in pursuit of the elephant.

> As I started forward, practically the whole population of the quarter followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. . . . It was a bit of fun for them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. . . . I marched down the hill, looking and

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[6] Grant, p. 26.

[7] Brown, p. 66.

> feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels.[8]

By the time the policeman and the crowd found him the elephant had recovered from his fit and was grazing peacefully while he waited for his master to come for him. The policeman turned to leave and looked into the faces of about two thousand Burmans waiting for him to kill the animal. Recognizing the value of the elephant, he hesitated but finally went on with what was expected of him. "I perceived at this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. . . . He has got to do what the natives expect of him. . . . I had got to shoot the elephant."[9] His superiors agreed later that it was best, but the younger Europeans thought it a shame to kill an elephant simply because it had killed a coolie, "because an elephant was worth more than any damn coolie."[10]

In "The Hanging" Orwell describes another scene which shows his dislike of the imperialist system. This essay concerns the execution of an Indian prisoner, the first execution the author had witnessed. While walking to the gallows, the prisoner sidestepped a puddle of water. "It was curious, but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man."[11] Orwell was only in his early twenties at this time, and one can be sure that such an experience

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[8] "Shooting an Elephant," in A Collection of Essays (New York, 1954), pp. 157-158.

[9] Ibid., p. 159.

[10] Ibid., p. 162.

[11] "The Hanging," in Shooting an Elephant and other essays (New York, 1950), p. 15.

troubled him. The faces of this man and other convicts continued to haunt him after he left Burma.

> Our criminal law. . . is a horrible thing. It needs very insensitive people to administer it. The wretched prisoners squatting in the reeking cages of the lock-ups, the gray cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos, the women and children howling when their menfolk were led away under arrest--things like these are beyond bearing when you are in any way directly responsible for them. I watched a man hanged once; it seemed to me worse than a thousand murders. . . . But the feeling that punishment is evil arises inescapably in those who have to administer it. . . . In Burma, it was a double oppression that we were committing. Not only were we hanging people and putting them in jail and so forth; we were doing it in the capacity of unwanted foreign invaders. The Burmese themselves never really recognised our jurisdiction. The thief whom we put in prison did not think of himself as a criminal justly punished, he thought of himself as the victim of a foreign conqueror. The thing that was done to him was merely a wanton meaningless cruelty. His face, behind the stout teak bars of the lock-up and the iron bars of the jail said so clearly. And unfortunately I had not trained myself to be indifferent to the expression of the human face.[12]

Orwell wrote the full-length novel Burmese Days several years after he left Burma, and in it he attacked imperialism bitterly. British rule was officially regarded as benevolent and in the interest of the occupied peoples. To Orwell this was not at all true. He felt that the British cared little for the people they governed, that they exploited the nations they ruled, inflicted injustice on natives, and in general considered themselves a higher order than the people they ruled.

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[12] The Road to Wigan Pier (New York, 1961), pp. 126-127.

The central character in Burmese Days, Flory, is a young minor English official who is as physically unattractive as any of Orwell's central characters. In the orthodox British society, Flory becomes a heretic, or a "Bolshie," when he takes an interest in the native population and makes friends with an Indian doctor. When the deputy commisioner of the district decides that a native member should be nominated for membership in the British club, Flory things that his friend, the doctor, should be nominated. However, another of the club's members, expressing the opinion of the majority of the other members, states that he will not consider the possibility.

> Here's that old fool. . . wanting to bring a nigger into this Club for no reason whatever, and you all sit down under it without a word. Good God! what are we supposed to be doing in this country? If we aren't going to rule, why the devil don't we get out. Here we are, supposed to be governing a set of damn black swine who've been slaves since the beginning of history, and instead of ruling them in the only way they understand, we go and treat them as equals.[13]

The speaker is quite the most unpleasant person Orwell ever depicted. As a matter of fact, in this book there are no likable persons. The book is sprinkled with remarks similar to the one just quoted. The same person is very offended when the club's native butler dares to speak good English. "'I find it very difficult!' Have you swallowed a dictionary? 'Please master, can't keeping ice cool'--that's how you ought to talk. . . . I can't stick servants who talk English."[14]

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[13] Burmese Days (New York, 1958), p. 22.

[14] Ibid., p. 23.

The primary topics of conversation among the British were the insolence of the natives, the increasing laxity of the government, and the good old days when British government was more forceful. Orwell admitted that "living and working among Orientals would try the temper of a saint. . . . In comfortless camps, in sweltering offices, in gloomy. . . bungalows smelling of dust and earth-oil, [the Anglo-Indian officials] earn, perhaps, the right to be a little disagreeable."[15]

This is about the only instance in which Orwell excuses the Anglo-Indian officials. Most of the time he is speaking through Flory, especially in the conversations with the Indian, Dr. Veraswami. It shocks the doctor, who is more loyal than any Englishman to England, when Flory refers to the stink of the club and the tired old jokes.

> _I'm_ not seditious. I don't want the Burmans to drive us out of this country. God forbid. I'm here to make money, like everyone else. All I object to is the slimy white man's burden humbug. The pukka sahib pose. It's so boring. Even those bloody fools at the club might be better company if we weren't all of us living a lie the whole time.
>
> But, my dear friend, what lie are you living?
>
> Why, of course, the lie that we're here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them. . . . It's at the bottom of half our beastliness to the natives. . . .[16]

The plot of the book concerns the machinations of a corrupt Burman magistrate to be elected to the club by discrediting the doctor

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[15] _Ibid._, p. 31.

[16] _Ibid._, p. 35.

and accusing him of anti-British sentiments. The fact that the doctor is more loyal than the magistrate and even than some of the British does not count. It is here that Orwell points out one of the greatest weaknesses of the Empire: the British never knew their friends and too frequently honored their enemies.[17]

Elizabeth, the niece of one of the English officials, is a caricature of the English girls who went to India to find husbands. She is too young and ignorant to have any understanding of or sympathy for the natives, but Flory falls in love with her. To him she is cultivated and poised, and marrying her would be the perfect solution to his lonely life. A rival shows up before Flory can persuade Elizabeth to marry him, but the rival jilts her, and Elizabeth decides that Flory is acceptable. All would have ended happily had not the scheming magistrate bribed Flory's former mistress to make a dreadful scene during a church service. Like the other British people in the community, Elizabeth has no compassion for weak, ugly, and unfortunate people, and the scene in the church turns her completely against Flory. Faced with the prospect of a long and lonely future like his past, Flory decides that he can not endure to return to his life of books, drinking, gardening, shooting, and conversing with the doctor. He commits suicide.

Consequently, the doctor loses all hope of being elected to the club. The magistrate is elected and honored by the government; however, he dies of apoplexy three days after the ceremony honoring him, before he could accomplish a single act of expiation to his gods for the evil he had done.

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[17] Laurence Brander, George Orwell (London, 1954), p. 80.

In this book, none of the characters are likable. One can not feel any liking for Flory, except perhaps sympathy, and certainly none for any of the other characters. Two of Orwell's contemporaries called him a misanthrope and compared him to Swift.[18] Another accused him of lacking understanding of human relationships and sympathy for individual human beings.[19] They may have had this book in mind. Orwell admitted that he had to write it in order to escape his guilt of "our beastliness to the natives" which so haunted him when he returned to England. He felt he had to "escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man."[20]

Although Orwell had little liking for Rudyard Kipling and accused him of disliking the lower classes, idealizing officers, and depicting private soldiers as comics, it should be noted that he believed Kipling's accounts of nineteenth century India "not only the best but almost the only literary picture we have."[21]

In this connection, one can not help comparing E. M. Forster's _A Passage to India_. It is, like _Burmese Days_, an attempt to explain oriental civilizations to people of the West, but Forster was more sympathetic with both the Indians and the British while he noted their

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[18] Anthony West, "Hidden Damage," _Newsweek_, September 19, 1955, p. 126, and W. D. Smith, "George Orwell," _Contemporary Review_, May, 1956, p. 283.

[19] Hopkinson, p. 6.

[20] _The Road to Wigan Pier_, p. 128.

[21] "Rudyard Kipling," _A Collection of Essays_, p. 132.

shortcomings. Burmese Days was Orwell's first novel, and A Passage to India was Forster's last. The latter has the polish of a mature mind, and the former is the catharsis of a young man who had been deeply affected by his experiences in a system in which he did not believe.

CHAPTER III. ORWZLL IN ENGLAND - TO 1940

The British middle class rose to prominence and wealth during the reign of Queen Victoria. It was divided into a number of sub-classes. For the upper middle class, the early twentieth century was a comfortable time; life ran smoothly and with little effort; there were plenty of goods to be bought, trained servants to be hired. Travel was easy and therefore frequent. Social life was gracious, active, and well regulated. The lady who was a lady never did anything herself but told others what to do and how to do it. The servants had professional pride in their work and loyalty toward the families they served. The middle-class suburbia reached its height at this time. The wilderness of brick semi-detached houses separated the center of a city from the surrounding green fields. Each house had a patch of garden in front of it and a small back lawn. A conscious sense of congeniality united the people in the suburbs, and local tennis, music, and theatre clubs flourished.

The lower middle class was more self-contained and more socially self-conscious because of its anxiety to remain apart from the working class. The clerks, teachers, and white-collar workers which made up the class were threatened with social reforms which would deprive them of their precarious status and place them more on the level of a lower class.

Orwell placed himself and his family between these two sub-classes in what he called the lower-upper-middle class. As he saw it, the upper class consisted of those people whose incomes ranged

between about three hundred and two thousand pounds annually. His family's income was nearer three hundred pounds.[1]

Money was not the only criterion by which the classes were divided; social pretensions, tradition, and ability also counted; but, if a person did not have sufficient income, his world was divided. Theoretically, he knew how to tip servants, order dinner, wear proper clothes, ride, and hunt. In practice, he could not afford to keep servants, tailors, or horses or to visit restaurants.

The way of life in Orwell's family was like that of the upper-middle class. Orwell's education was the very best that the class could offer, but he could not have gotten it had he not earned scholarships to both preparatory school and Eton.

Parents used to tell their sons who were going away to school for the first time that the experience would be the happiest time of their lives. Later, parents told their sons that they would not be happy until they were adults. In spite of the conflict, the young boys generally did not know whether they were happy or not as they had nothing to compare with; but if they found that they were not happy, they found, too, that they had company. The boys never could tell their parents the complete truth about their lives at school; they would not have known how.

> It will have been seen that my own main trouble was an utter lack of any sense of proportion or probability. This led me to accept outrages and believe absurdities, and to suffer torments over things which

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[1] Charles Furth, Life Since 1900 (New York, 1956), pp. 11-22, passim.

> were in fact of no importance. It is not enough to say that I was "silly" and "ought to have known better.". . . The weakness of the child is that it starts with a blank sheet. It neither understands nor questions the society in which it lives. . . .[2]

The parents thought the boys looked happy running around in their little uniforms, but they had no idea of the life led by their sons.[3]

When Orwell graduated from St. Cyprian's, he won a scholarship to Eton. After the struggle he had been through to prove a worthy scholarship student at preparatory school, he decided that he would not work so hard. Orwell did not write about his life at Eton as he did about his experiences at St. Cyprian's; he only mentions it in passing. "I did no work [at Eton] and learned very little, and I don't feel that Eton has been much of a formative influence in my life."[4] Details can be filled in from the accounts of a contemporary and from a friend who attended St. Cyprian's with him.

Maurice Baring remembered the faults of Eton as he thought of the popular derision directed toward the school. He believed that the derision and patronage indicated an approval of the school; the fact that Eton had survived the laughter and abuse showed its strength. Mr. Baring did not pretend to be an objective judge of the school and stated that he would have been delighted to relive the years he spent there.[5]

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[2] "Such, Such Were the Joys," p. 54.

[3] Maurice Baring, "Private School," in Lost Lectures (New York, 1932), pp. 3-16.

[4] Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, editors, Twentieth Century Authors (New York, 1942), p. 1058.

[5] Baring, "Eton," p. 17.

Cyril Connelly was a classmate of Orwell's at St. Cyprian's and at Eton. In his school reminiscences, Orwell's name appears quite often, and Connelly recalls Orwell's precocious maturity in several instances. Orwell was a true rebel, whereas he, Connelly, was a "stage rebel."

> Tall, pale, with his flaccid cheeks, and a matter-of-fact voice, he was one of those boys who seem born old. . . .[6]
>
> The remarkable thing about Orwell was that he alone among the boys was an intellectual, and not a parrot, for he thought for hemself, read Shaw and Samuel Butler, and rejected not only /St. Cyprian's/ but the war, the Empire, Kipling, Sussex, and Character. I remember a moment under a fig-tree in one of the inland boulevards of the seaside town, Orwell striding beside me, and saying in his flat, ageless voice: "You know, Connolly, there's only one remedy for all diseases." I felt the usual guilty tremor when sex was mentioned and hazarded, "You mean going to the lavatory?" "No--I mean Death!" He was not a romantic, he had no use for the blandishments of the drill sergeant who made us feel character was identical with boxing, nor for the threats of the chaplain with his grizzled cheektufts, and his gospel of a Jesus of character, who detested immorality and swearing as much as he loved the Allies. "Of course, you realize, Connelly," said Orwell, "that whoever wins this war, we shall emerge a second-rate nation."[7]

Orwell and Connelly did not see as much of each other at Eton as they had previously. Connelly states only that his parents thought Orwell was a bad influence on their son and was in some way responsible for his poor marks.

One can imagine what Orwell thought about "the huge stale elms,

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[6] Cyril Connelly, Enemies of Promise (New York, 1942), p. 211.

[7] Ibid., p. 212.

the boys in their many-coloured caps and blazers, the top hats, the strawberries and cream, the smell of wisteria. . . the foppish drawl, [and the] boys with their hats on the back of their heads."[8] All of this seemed the height of elegance to Connelly.

In school, Orwell learned the code of behavior for the upper-middle-class man--the gentlemanliness which was thought to be the distinguishing mark of the class.

> This mystical conception of the gentleman as one who acts honorably and behaves on all occasions with courtesy was a very confusing factor in the three-class system, which might otherwise seem to be a fairly simple matter of grading society according to a combination of economic status and birth.[9]

The lower-upper-middle class was attracted to positions in the Imperial Service, which took them to remote places where there was an abundance of native servants and it was much easier to pretend to be one of the gentlefolk.

> She tasted the agreeable atmosphere of Clubs, with punkahs flapping and barefooted white-turbaned boys reverently salaaming; and maidans where bronzed Englishmen with little clipped moustaches galloped to and fro, whacking polo balls. It was almost as nice as being really rich, the way people lived in India.[10]

This class was, like the lower-middle class, not secure in its position and was more aware of poverty than were poorer members of the working

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[8] Ibid., p. 226.

[9] Sir Richard Rees, George Orwell, Fugitive From the Camp of Victory (Carbondale, Illinois, 1962), p. 17.

[10] Burmese Days, p. 85.

class. Keeping up an air of gentility was important, as that was all they had, and the lack of money made it difficult. Children became aware of these class distinctions very early when their parents would not allow them to play with working-class children as they might pick up the wrong accents and habits.

Orwell admitted that he was an adult before he discovered that the lower classes do not necessarily smell. This, to him, was the reason any bourgeois man, even one who considered himself to be a communist, could not consider the working man his equal. But he explained that "everyone who has grown up. . . in a house with a bathroom and one servant is likely to have grown up with these feelings."[11] He argued further that when dust-bins and public lavatories were generally a fifty-yard walk from the house, as in the case of the unemployed miners in Wigan, people could hardly be expected to have the same degree of cleanliness as persons to whom indoor plumbing was a matter of course.[12]

Still, Orwell was greatly preoccupied with dirt and unpleasant odors. In A Clergyman's Daughter, he describes the no-longer-young daughter of a country rector who, at communion, shudders at the thought of having to drink from the same cup as her fellow-communicant, old Miss Mayfill.

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[11] The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 113.

[12] Ibid., p. 59.

> In her ancient, bloodless face her mouth was surprisingly large, loose and wet. The underlip, pendulous with age, slobbered forward, exposing a strip of gum and a row of false teeth as yellow as the keys of an old piano. On the upper lip was a fringe of dark, dewy moustache. It was not an appetising mouth; not the kind of mouth that you would like to see drinking out of your cup.[13]

Living among the lowest workers in Paris and London gave Orwell the opportunity to observe differences between the classes. He decided that economically there were only two classes: the rich and the poor. The existing multitude of divisions were caused by manners and traditions learned during childhood. Therefore, the paradox appears in which the millionaires drop their "aitches," door-to-door salesmen are graduates of the great public schools (which were private and very exclusive), and men who govern the colonies are graduates of board-schools (which were public). The public-schoolman would not start speaking Cockney when his income dropped below a certain level; on the contrary, he becomes even more attached to the memories and traditions of his school than he had been previously.

> It is in fact very difficult to escape, culturally, from the class into which you have been born. . . . Here am I, for instance, with a bourgeois upbringing and a working-class income. What class do I belong to? Economically I belong to the working class, but it is almost impossible for me to think of myself as anything but a member of the bourgeoisie.[14]

When he resigned from his work in Burma, Orwell went to Paris

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[13] A Clergyman's Daughter (New York, n.d.), p. 11.

[14] The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 186.

to start his writing career. "Quarrels, and the desolate cries of street hawkers, and the shouts of children chasing orange peel over the cobbles, and at night loud singing and the reek of the refuse carts, made up the atmosphere of the street" where Orwell had a room. Down and Out in Paris and London is largely autobiographical, but not entirely so. Events are rearranged, but the descriptions must be factual.

The first experience of poverty is finding out what it is to be hungry.

> With bread and margarine in your belly, you go out and look into the shopwindows. Everywhere there is food insulting you in huge, wasteful piles; whole dead pigs, baskets of hot loaves, great yellow blocks of butter, strings of sausages, mountains of potatoes, vast Gruyère cheeses like grindstones. A sniveling self-pity comes over you at the sight of so much food.[15]

The second discovery for Orwell was the boredom of poverty, the lack of energy to do anything but lie on a bed all day long and perhaps read. Hunger deprived him of any interest in going to look for a job. "You discover that a man who has gone even a week on bread and margarine is not a man any longer, only a belly with a few accessory organs."[16]

During his stay in Paris, Orwell caught pneumonia and had to spend several weeks in a hospital. This experience is omitted from Down and Out in Paris and London and is the subject of an essay entitled

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[15] Down and Out in Paris and London (New York, 1961), p. 21.

[16] Ibid.

"How the Poor Die." Orwell was kept at the receiving desk for about twenty minutes answering questions, although he had a temperature of, he judged, 103 degrees Fahrenheit. Being destitute, he was placed in a charity ward.

> During my first hour in the Hôpital X, I had had a whole series of different and contradictory treatments, but this was misleading for in general you got very little treatment at all, either good or bad, unless you were ill in some interesting and instructive way.[17]

The experience of enduring old-fashioned cupping and mustard plaster, of seeing patients die of diseases which seemed to affect only the very poor, and of being examined by groups of student doctors was grim, and Orwell left as soon as he could walk out. It reminded him of the nineteenth century hospitals which were regarded as the same as prisons, places of filth, torture, and death.

> From the nineteenth century you could collect a large horror-literature connected with doctors and hospitals. . . . Even the names given to doctors . . . in English fiction, Slasher, Carver, Sawyer, Fillgrave, and so on, and the generic nickname "sawbones" are about as grim as they are comic.[18]

In A Clergyman's Daughter, the case of the family with gentility and no money is treated from another point of view. The Reverend Charles Hare is rector of a church which is ancient, too large for its continually diminishing congregation and in a ruinous state of repair. The roof sags, and the belfry is so rotten that the unused

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[17] "How the Poor Die," in Shooting an Elephant, p. 21.

[18] Ibid., p. 29.

bells threaten to fall through the floor.

The rector is the "younger son of a younger son of a baronet, and had gone into the Church for the outmoded reason that the Church is the traditional profession for younger sons."[19] He is unable to afford an assistant; so the parish's dirty work is done by his wife until her death and then by his daughter, Dorothy.

It is Dorothy who has to make ends meet financially, who has to visit the sick and poor, who has to organize church groups and festivals. The townspeople suppose she would even have to preach the sermons if that were possible. Whenever she asks for money to pay bills, her father slips "into an imaginary golden past in which such vulgar things as butchers' bills simply did not exist."[20]

Under the tension, Dorothy temporarily loses consciousness and finds herself in London, but she can not remember who she is. She joins a group of hop pickers and is so busy that she has no time to try to remember her identity. When she happens to read a newspaper account of her disappearance, her memory returns, and she writes her father to let him know of her whereabouts. Receiving no reply from him, Dorothy decides she can not return home and tries to find a job in London before her money runs out. Having been asked to do so by the rector, a cousin finds Dorothy and secures a teaching position for her. It is in a squalid little private school such as Orwell had

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[19] A Clergyman's Daughter, p. 17.

[20] Ibid., p. 26.

taught in. Dorothy is bullied by the headmistress; she has no teaching experience and no college training; but her stage fright lasts only until she finds that her students know "as nearly as possible [nothing] at all."[21] Dorothy starts several innovations and spends her own money for newer text books and a map, which are not condemned until parents complain that their daughters should not be allowed to read "stage-plays" by Shakespeare, who was quite an "immoral" writer, especially when, in Macbeth, he described the method whereby one character was born. Since the parents' words are law, Dorothy is eventually dismissed, and her students go back to learning nothing by rote.

Dorothy returns home to resume her duties as her father's assistant, but she has lost her faith. "It was like when you're a child, and one day, for no particular reason, you stop believing in fairies."[22]

She is confronted with the same old problems of finances, church clubs, Sunday School attendance, and visits and so slips into her old habits easily. Her father does not really believe she ever lost her memory and lets her know it whenever he is in a bad mood. She is not optimistic about her future and foresaw about ten years as her father's unpaid curate. She knows that when he dies she will return to teaching and become one of the "Old Maids of Old England."[23]

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[21] Ibid., p. 157.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 219.

Gordon Comstock, in Keep the Aspidistra Flying, has been described as Orwell and as a parody of Orwell. The latter would seem to be more accurate for, although Orwell described some of his own experiences in this book, he managed his affairs better than did Gordon. Gordon comes from a middle-middle class family, a class which, in Orwell's opinion, is doomed to a shabby, dismal, and ineffectual life. Gordon has a job as copy writer in an advertising firm, but the slogans horrify him; he rebels against the power of money by quitting the position to become a clerk in a cheap book store and by attempting to write poetry. However, "the flow of renunciation never lasts. Life on two quid a week ceases to be a heroic gesture and becomes a dingy habit."[24]

No one would buy his poetry; the boarding houses become progressively darker and dingier; his meals become more and more meager. After his girl friend tells him she is pregnant, he realizes that he is not a poet, returns to his old job, marries the girl, and settles down to an ordinary, relatively secure life, symbolized by the ever-present aspidistra.

This was not the way Orwell himself managed; after all, his own venture into poverty was by his own choice. In his case, also there was no apparent "heroic gesture;" and he was able to return to a more normal life whenever he wished.

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[24] Keep the Aspidistra Flying (New York, 1956), p. 57.

Gordon is the vehicle by which Orwell satirizes the class--Gordon prefers to live in the gutter rather than lead a normal life in a comfortable apartment. This shows him to be a fool in Orwell's opinion. One of Orwell's favorite sayings was that half a loaf was better than none at all, but it is not until late in the last chapters of the book that Gordon discovers this. Gordon seems basically a rebel for the sake of rebellion, or poetry, and he illustrates a type, a member of a class of society on the wane.

The fourth book in the group Orwell wrote in London before the second world war is Coming Up for Air. This is quite different from his previous work, and in it Orwell examines the small-town middle class. In it, too, Orwell takes much of the action to the English countryside which he preferred to London. There are few if any auto-biographical references, and George Bowling is as unlike Orwell and his other central characters as an Englishman could be. He represents a different type and one who Orwell thought would prosper under socialism, although Bowling would not have agreed with Orwell.

George Bowling was born and brought up in the peaceful atmosphere of a small town near London, where his father kept a grain store. On the other hand, his wife was the daughter of a career Army officer, and she grew up in still another segment of the middle class which possessed more gentility than money. It is she who worries about petty disasters: the rising costs of butter, gas, children's shoes, and the next installments. This was the same sort of worry she had grown up with; in contrast, when Bowling looked back on his childhood years,

he always thought of them in summertime, and remembered the long dusty walks with the baby sitter and with his older brother, the excursions to the stream or pond nearby to fish with bread paste or beetles, the smell of the grain in his father's shop, and the sight of his mother's arms covered from flour. His father was by no means rich, but the family lived comfortably.

In describing his present home in a development in London, George Bowling sees it as one in "long, long rows of little semi-detached houses . . . as much alike as council houses and generally uglier."

> The stucco front, the creosoted gate, the privet hedge, the green front door . . . a line of semi-detached torture chambers where poor little five-to-ten-pound-a-weekers quake and shiver. . . . We don't own our houses, even when we've finished paying for them. They're not freehold, only leasehold.[25]

In an effort to regain the peacefulness of his childhood, he returned to his home town only to find that it had become an unrecognizable suburb of London, where no one remembered him. Landmarks, people, habits were all changed. Even his secret fishing hole had been drained and was serving as the garbage dump for the nearby asylum. Orwell was disturbed by the carelessness and commercialism which were fast ruining the beauty of the English countryside.

> And they'd filled my pool up with tin cans. . . . Say what you like--call it silly, childish, anything--but doesn't it make you puke sometimes to see what they're doing to England, with their bird baths and their plaster gnomes, and their pixies and tin cans, where the beechwoods used to be?[26]

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25 Coming Up for Air (New York, 1950), pp. 11-14.

26 Ibid., p. 257.

The final blow to George's search for peace comes when a bomb is accidentally dropped into the village by a plane on a training mission. He realizes the futility of his dream and realizes also that the nation is on the verge of war. As he drives homeward, he can visualize a life of hate and fighting.

> Think of the enormous stretches of land you pass over when you cross a corner of a single English county. /You can see/ fields and beech-spinneys and farmhouses and churches, and the fillages with their little grocers' shops and the parish hall and the ducks walking across the green. Surely it's too big to be changed? Bound to remain more or less the same. . . . And beyond it London stretching on and on, streets, squares, back-alleys, tenements, blocks of flats, pubs, fried-fish shops, picture-houses, and on and on for twenty miles. . . . The bombs aren't made that could smash it out of existence.[27]

The development from this picture to the grimness of 1984 would seem to be simple. Orwell had served in the anti-fascist ranks in Spain and had realized that force was not the way to put forward the socialist ideology, but toward the end of Coming Up for Air, he knew that there were many people who thought force was the only way to achieve socialism, and it was his duty to try to show them otherwise.

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27 Ibid., p. 268.

CHAPTER IV. ORWELL AND SOCIALISM

In 1920, when Orwell was about seventeen years old and at Eton, he and many of the boys of his generation had a great deal more sympathy for a liberal political party than there had been previously among middle-class school boys. This was caused to a great extent by the recent Russian revolution and by the increase in unemployment and insecurity among the poorer classes in England.

The public-school boys who had been too young to fight in World War I considered themselves to be enlightened creatures. They rebelled against their school traditions and derided political orthodoxy, the Christian religion, the Royal Family, and even compulsory games. Orwell gave an example of this attitude at Eton, where one of his teachers asked his class of students to list ten men whom they considered to be the greatest living at that time. Of the sixteen boys in the class, fifteen included Lenin.[1]

In the schools it was quite fashionable to be called a "Bolshie." The term referred to anyone who thought and acted contrary to the accepted manner. Flory, in Burmese Days, was called a "Bolshie" by the other white people at the European Club because he made friends with the native doctor and seemed to be interested in the welfare of the native population. By doing so, he was not acting according to the accepted

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[1] The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 121

relationship between rulers and ruled.

The decade of the 1920's saw a number of strange fads. Among those most often discussed were pacifism, free love, atheism, vegetarianism, and nudism. Also, at this time, English women were granted the right to vote. During the war, women left their homes and took over the jobs of men who left to fight, and they discovered a freedom and independence which they would not relinquish when the men returned. The suffrage movement was filled with violence, particularly in the large cities, and the women stopped at nothing to win their rights.

Even as early as this Orwell considered himself a socialist, although he later admitted that he had not really known at the time what it meant.

> I had not much grasp of what socialism meant, and no notion that the working class were human beings. At a distance, and through the medium of books. . . I could agonise over their sufferings, but I still hated them and despised them when I came anywhere near them. I was still revolted by their accents and infuriated by their habitual rudeness.[2]

Important factors which caused changes in British life between 1910 and 1935 were the great strides made in communications, the mechanical changes, and the improvement and growth of industry. More goods were being made and demanded, and the people who lived in the cities were discovering the joy and peace of traveling and vacationing

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[2] Ibid., pp. 121-122.

in the country.[3]

By the end of World War I, there were two distinct groups in England aside from the old distinction of the governing and the governed. For a time the old class restrictions were put aside, and the distinction was between the fighting forces--those directly involved in the war, and the people who had stayed home. When the soldiers came home, they and the majority of the British did not want to build a new world to live in; they preferred to clean up the one to which they were accustomed.[4]

There was tremendous activity in the workers" unions and government. In November 1919, there had been 353,000 unemployed ex-soldiers; by March 1921, the number of registered unemployed reached 1,664,000. After the miners struck in May 1921, the number rose to a high of 2,500,000. Until 1939 it rarely fell below one million, and it is commonly said that only the dole saved Britain from revolution in the winter of 1921-1922.

The Labour Government elected in 1924 lasted only a few months, and its achievements were not what had been hoped for; nor did it bring socialism any closer to reality. Its major achievement was to prove that a Labour party was able to govern.[5]

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[3] Sir Ernest Barker, "The Movement of National Life: 1910-1935," in, _Making of English History_, edited by Robert L. Schuyler and Herman Ausubel (New York, 1952), pp. 622-630, _passim_.

[4] Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, _The Long Week End, A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939_ (New York, 1941), _passim_.

[5] G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, _The English People_, 1746-1946 (New York, 1957, pp. 457-484, _passim_.

The history of Britain between 1931 and 1939 presented to a lesser degree most of the features of the history of the continental countries which fell victims to Fascism during the decade. In Britain there were disputes over communism between the liberal and conservative groups, and these disputes disturbed working-class organizations. The fascist groups in Britain was small and manageable, but there were cases of their suppression of criticism, raids on left-wing socialist and communist organizations, and of their causing a steady invasion of civil liberties. For a while they even formed an army of black-shirted followers who distributed propaganda, but this action was quickly stopped by law.

The invasion of civil liberties, especially, was a change in the current of British history; for more than a century, progress had been made to increase civil and personal liberties; then the trend reversed, and the liberties were cautiously and continually diminished.[6]

When Orwell returned to England from Burma, he had lost his schoolboy impressions of socialism and had developed the theory, also erroneous, that "the oppressed are always right and the oppressors are always wrong." He felt that this opinion was a natural result of being an oppressor in a system of which he did not approve.

> Innumerable remembered faces--faces of prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my

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6 Ibid., p. 514.

> fist in moments of rage. . . haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had to expiate.[7]

Therefore, when he returned to England, he felt he had to become one of the oppressed, to join them against their tyrants. He found in England cases of exploitation and bullying which were as bad as and worse than those he had seen in Burma. At the time, he realized that he had no real knowledge or interest in socialism or any other economic theory. He thought of poverty as starvation and the plight of the lowest of the low: criminals, beggars and tramps. Orwell then disguised himself as a tramp and went on the road.

> And down there in the squalid and, as a matter of fact, horribly boring subworld of the tramp, I had a feeling of release, of adventure, which seems absurd when I look back, but which was sufficiently vivid at the time.[8]

These experiences are described in Down and Out in Paris and London, but Orwell realized that making friends with a tramp or a pickpocket would not solve the class problem, as they were not as typical of their class as the manual laborers were. "Nothing is easier than to be bosom pals with a pickpocket, if you know where to look for him; but it is very difficult to be bosom pals with a bricklayer."[9] Later Orwell was to live, eat, share rooms, drink beer, play darts, and talk with miners for The Road to Wigan Pier, and it was here that he realized,

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[7] The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 128.

[8] Ibid., p. 131.

[9] Ibid., p. 132.

and the miners realized, that they were different enough to make real intimacy impossible. Orwell liked the miners he met and sincerely hoped they liked him, but he was still a foreigner to them. He described this phenomenon of the difficulty of communication between men of different classes as being like the glass wall of an aquarium; any conscious effort to break down the barriers would result in a serious mistake.

Socialism, Orwell believed, was the only system which would insure security and enough food for everyone. He had come to this conclusion by 1936 when he visited the miners in northern England. The development of his concern with socialism and his increasing interest in politics can be traced in The Clergyman's Daughter and in Keep the Aspidistra Flying.

Orwell was commissioned by the Left Book Club to study economic conditions among the miners. This Club was founded in May 1936 on the model of the American "Book of the Month Club." For an annual subscription, members received each month a book which had been commissioned by the committee in charge of selections. This committee was composed of three well-known socialists: Professor Harold J. Laski; John Strachey, a classmate of Orwell's at Eton and a disillusioned former member of the British fascist organization; and Victor Gollancz. The Club appealed to the left-leaning intelligentsia, and most young university students were members. Books were commissioned on every conceivable topic on which it was possible to

give a left-wing opinion.[10]

The first half of The Road to Wigan Pier is devoted to setting down in writing the living conditions of the unemployed, as well as of the employed, miners. In the opinion of a number of his contemporaries, Orwell did this is an excellent example of journalistic writing. The difficult conditions under which thousands of English working families lived when they received regular wages from their work, and the misery in which they lived when unemployed were examples to Orwell of the necessity of socialism. Since Orwell had spent time among tramps and unemployed migrants, he was probably the only writer in England who had a first-hand understanding of the problems involved in being unemployed. However, he found the conditions and attitudes of the miners quite different. For example, a tramp had no one to support but himself; when he needed money, he could take to the roads and find some work. A miner had a family to support; when he was out of work, there was nothing he could do. Orwell learned that the miners' situation was far more serious than he, and other socialists, had imagined. Some remedy, whether it was socialism or not, was far more urgent than even the most zealous theorists realized.

Orwell described,without elaborating, the slum areas, the houses, the living conditions, the dirt and the overcrowding.

> To begin with, the smell, the dominant and essential thing, is indescribable. But the squalor and the confusion! A tub full of filthy water here, a basin

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10 Graves and Hodge, p. 324.

> full of unwashed crocks there, more crocks piled in any odd corner, torn newspaper littered everywhere, and in the middle always the same dreadful table covered with sticky oil cloth and crowded with cooking pots and irons and half-darned stockings and pieces of stale bread and bits of cheese wrapped round with greasy newspaper.[11]

Orwell was generally objective in describing what he saw, but he occasionally included a personal reaction to his surroundings, as in the case of one of the boarding houses in which he lived.

> The place was beginning to depress me. It was not only the dirt, the smells and the vile food, but the feeling of stagnant meaningless decay, of having got down into some subterranean place where people go creeping round and round, just like blackbeetles, in an endless muddle of slovened jobs and mean grievances.[12]

By living so close to the miners, Orwell gained an insight into the psychological conditions and knew what this,too, indicated the need for improvement of their living conditions. He realized that they were not adapted to their environment and that they were not indifferent to the dirt, the hard work, and the hopelessness of their lives. From a train window, Orwell observed a girl in a slum through which his train was passing and was able to see more than would meet the eye of a casual, though sympathetic, observer.

> At the back of one of the houses a young woman was kneeling on the stones, poking a stick up the leaden waste-pipe which ran from the sink inside and which I supposed was blocked. . . . She had a round pale

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11 The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 60.

12 Ibid.,p. 28.

> face, the usual exhausted face of the slum girl who is twenty-five and looks forty, thanks to miscarriages and drudgery; and it wore, for the second in which I saw it, the most desolate, hopeless expression I have ever seen. It struck me then that we are mistaken when we say that 'it isn't the same for them as it would be for us.'. . . For what I saw was not the ignorant suffering of an animal. . . . She understood as well as I how dreadful a destiny it was to be kneeling there in the bitter cold, on the slimy stones of a slum backyard, poking a stick up a foul drain-pipe.[13]

Orwell argued also that under such circumstances and because public lavatories and dust-bins were generally a fifty-yard walk from the house, these people could hardly be expected to have the same degree of cleanliness as persons to whom indoor plumbing was a matter of course. "It is equally certain that their circumstances would not encourage self-respect."[14]

It is difficult to select a passage from The Road to Wigan Pier which adequately represents the living conditions of the unemployed miners. The houses were falling to pieces, floors tilted, walls damp and peeling; and when the houses were undermined by old mine shafts, the ground constantly shifted and slid the houses sideways.

> In Wigan you pass whole rows of houses which have slid to startling angles, their windows being ten or twenty degrees out of the horizontal. Sometimes the front wall bellies outward till it looks as though the house were seven months gone in pregnancy. . . . When a house sinks at all suddenly

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[13] Ibid., p. 29.

[14] Ibid., p. 61.

> its windows are jammed for ever and the door has to be refitted. . . . The story of the miner who comes home from work and finds that he can only get indoors by smashing down the front door with an axe is considered humorous.[15]

Orwell described families of eight or ten people living in three-room houses and tried to make the reader imagine what it would be like to have so many people trying to sleep, for instance, in two tiny bedrooms. When government agencies tried to evict them from overcrowded houses, they failed because there were no vacant houses to move into. "And the congestion in a tiny room where getting from one side to the other is a complicated voyage between pieces of furniture, with a line of damp washing getting you in the face every time you move and the children as thick underfoot as toadstools!"[16]

The housing shortage in the mining towns seemed to be the worst problem, but even the dreadful squalor of the ramshackle, over-crowded, decrepit houses was better than the caravan-dwellings. These Orwell call the "effects of the housing shortage at their very worst."[17] Out of a population of about eighty-five thousand persons in Wigan, about one thousand lived in caravans. Each family had to pay as much rent for an average of two hundred square feet of space as they would have had to pay for a house, if one had been available.

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

> But the work 'caravan' is very misleading. It calls up a picture of a cosy gypsy-encampment (in fine weather, of course) with wood fires crackling and children picking blackberries and many-coloured washing fluttering on the lines. The caravan-colonies in Wigan and Sheffield are not like that. I had a look at several of them, I inspected those in Wigan with considerable care, and I have never seen comparable squalor except in the Far East. Indeed when I saw them I was immediately reminded of the filthy kennels in which I have seen Indian coolies living in Burma. But, as a matter of fact, nothing in the East could ever be quite as bad, for in the East you haven't got clammy, penetrating cold to contend with, and the sun is a disinfectant. . . .
>
> The majority are old single-decker buses. . . . Some are simply wagons with semi-circular slats on top, over which canvas is stretched, so that the people inside have nothing but canvas between them and the outer air. . . . One, for instance, measuring fourteen feet long, had seven people in it.[18]

Orwell believed that socialism was the only method by which the increasing unemployment could be curbed in England, but he had a violent disgust for the sham and artificialty which characterized a large number of the socialist party members. His book caused a sensation, the first part for its candor, and the second part because of its examination of the English socialist organization. Orwell was not a political theorist; and when he stated that socialism was the only remedy for the poverty and squalor of the working classes, he had in mind an economic socialism, one which would be "indentified solely with state ownership of industry."[19]

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[18] Ibid., pp. 62-63

[19] Geoffrey Crowther, "British Socialism on Trial," in British Socialism Today, compiled by Julia E. Johnson (New York, 1950), p. 144.

In the second part of the book, Orwell examines socialists as a whole and finds them to be insincere. He quotes the general opinion of many people who said, "I don't object to Socialism, but I do object to Socialists."[20] The people who feel this way are those who are really interested in the ideology and who sympathize with its central aims. They are the people who believe it would alleviate the poverty of the poorer classes but who "always take to flight when Socialism is mentioned."[21]

In his foreword to the original edition of The Road to Wigan Pier, Victor Gollancz states that Orwell found socialists "a stupid, offensive, and insincere lot,"[22] and a majority of them cranks. But Orwell did not say that socialists were cranks, only that cranks were drawn to socialism. "One sometimes gets the impression that the mere words "Socialism" and Communism" draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist, and feminist in England."[23]

Most socialists were members of the middle class who clung to their social prestige although they theoretically wanted a classless society. It was these people whom Orwell blamed as being responsible

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[20] The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 146

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. x.

[23] Ibid., p. 147

for the lack of appeal in socialism. In 1936 socialism was less widely accepted than it had been during the previous decade. As Orwell put it, "The average thinking person is not merely not a Socialist, he is actively hostile to Socialism."[24] This was because there were a number of intellectual, book-trained socialists who were ready to discard the present civilization completely, the good elements along with the bad: the "foaming denouncers of the bourgeoisie, and the more-water-in-your-beer reformers, . . the astute young social-literary climbers who are Communists now, as they will be Fascists five years hence, because it is all the go."[25] Those in sympathy with the essential aims of socialism felt there was no room for them among this type of socialists.

In the British general election of 1945, the Labour Party received the majority of votes and returned to power for the first time since 1924. A Gallup poll on the most important political issues of the election showed these results: forty-one percent believed housing the major issue, thirteen percent said full employment, seven percent said social security, and six percent said nationalization. As many persons voted for the Labour Party as voted for the Conservative and Liberal Parties combined.[26]

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[24] Ibid., p. 145.

[25] Ibid., p. 153.

[26] William T. Morgan, "The British General Election of 1945," in Making of English History, p. 653.

Orwell, in an article written in 1948, stated that the fact that half the electorate voted for Labour did not mean that they were voting for socialism. They were voting for full employment, bigger old-age pensions, the raising of the school-leaving age, more social and economic equality, and more democracy all round. They voted for nationalization of industries as a way of bringing these things about.[27] In the popular view, the Labour Party stood for shorter working hours, a free health service, day nurseries, free milk for school children, rather than for socialism.

The British Labour Party had been built upon a faith in democratic socialism derived primarily from ethical, humanitarian, religious, trade union, and radical-liberal roots, and was little affected by Marxist doctrine. "It does not proceed with nationalization for its own sake. Its purpose is to vest in the nation through Parliament the ownership and control of those factors in production which are vital to the national life, and to compensate the displaced owners."[28]

The socialists and communists shared the belief that means of production should be publicly owned, but the communists differed in their belief that the change from private to public control of industry would meet with violent opposition and could be achieved only by use of force. In Lenin's view, the favorable time to seize power was when

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[27] Article by George Orwell, in British Socialism Today, p. 131.

[28] Harold J. Laski, "It's Socialism, Not Communism," in British Socialism Today, p. 24.

(1) the machinery of government was broken down; (2) the loyalty of the army and the general public was doubtful; (3) there was hostility by the government by the masses, as could be demonstrated by strikes; and (4) when it was obvious that the government had lost faith in itself and could not maintain order.

Professor Laski stated that this formula could never work in Britain because the country was used to political democracy, had a literate and well-organized working class, and had faith in freedom. Moreover, the Labour Party had not included communists within its ranks because of their allegiance to Moscow and because of their dual morality.[29]

Another writer explained the difference succinctly: "What divides us from the Soviets is not their views on the matters I have been discussing, but their views on my right to discuss them."[30]

Orwell believed that any socialist revolution in England would be bloodless because of the character of the English people. He believed that a sort of revolution was already in progress. There is a gentleness and sense of decency in the English which is illustrated by the good-tempered bus drivers and the fact that English policemen do not carry pistols. The people do not like to fight; they would much prefer to mind their own business. "No politician could rise to

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29 _Ibid._, _passim_.

30 Crowther, p. 144.

power by promising them conquests or military 'glory,' no Hymn of Hate has ever made any appeal to them. . . . Their war-songs are humorous."[31] English literature has its share of battle-poems, but the most famous concern disasters and lost battles. Orwell points out that there are no popular poems about Waterloo or Trafalgar.

The English have a dislike of standing armies and would never tolerate a military class of swaggering officers with jingling spurs and heavy boots. "A military parade is really a kind of ritual dance, something like a ballet, expressing a certain philosophy of life. The goose-step, for instance, is one of the most horrible sights in the world, far more terrifying than a dive-bomber."

> It is simply an affirmation of naked power; contained in it, quite consciously and intentionally, is the vision of a boot crashing down on a face. . . . Why is the goose-step not used in England? There are, heaven knows, plenty of army officers who would be only too glad to introduce some such thing. It is not used because the people in the street would laugh. . . . In the British army the drill is rigid and complicated, full of memories of the eighteenth century, but without definite swagger; the march is merely a formalised walk. It belongs to a society which is ruled by the sword, no doubt, but a sword which must never be taken out of the scabbard.[32]

Orwell felt that the English would work for the establishment of a democratic socialism when they realized how necessary and urgent it was to do so. The English have always had a deep-seated respect

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[31] "England Your England," in A Collection of Essays, p. 262.

[32] Ibid., pp. 263-264.

for law and order. To them, the law is incorruptible in spite of its anachronisms and occasional barbarity, and changes will come about peacefully. Change is already on its way; the upper, conservative ruling class is losing its ability to rule, and the middle class is expanding. To an increasing degree, the rich and the poor are reading the same books, enjoying similar goods, seeing the same films, and hearing the same radio programs. This has resulted in a general softening of manners, and the middle and working classes are drawing closer together. There are only a few of "the old-style 'proletarian' --collarless, unshaven and with muscles warped by heavy labour"[33] still in existence, and they were only in the sections of northern England in the areas of heavy industry.

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[33] Ibid., p. 282

CHAPTER V. ORWELL'S WARNINGS

After the Russian Revolution and following World War I, there were groups of people in England who were sympathetic with the Russian way of life. Many people believed that Russian socialism was lifting Russian peasants out of the poverty which they had endured during the centuries of Czarist rule. These people decided that socialism was necessary in England to better the lives of their own working classes.

There was a decrease in sympathy for and growing disillusionment about communism during the 1930's, but the English people again became sympathetic to the Russian way of life during the last years of World War II. They had forgotten the Russian-German alliance of 1939--the alliance had been short-lived--and remembered only that Russia had absorbed much of Germany's strength in the later years of the war. Therefore, many English were so blinded by gratitude for Russia's actions that they ceased to be able to take an objective stand on Russian aims.

> During the way, pressure was brought upon our Press and Radio not to utter any criticism which might upset our Soviet'ally's delicate temper. Books critical of the Stalin Regime were withdrawn from publishers' lists; any mention of the fact that it was a dictatorship, any reference to Russia being communistic, wanting international revolution or abandoning international revolution, had to be carefully avoided. The Press, led by Lord Beaverbrook, built up the myth of jovial "Uncle Joe" whose pipe outrivalled in popularity even Churchill's cigar and Roosevelt's cigarett holder.[1]

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[1] Arthur Koestler, "A Way to Fight Suspicion," in <u>Trail of the Dinosaur</u> (New York, 1955), p. 17.

Arthur Koestler migrated to England during the war. He had been a communist, but he was disillusioned and felt, subsequently, the urgency of revealing the truth about communism. He tried to warn the English that Russians did not feel any friendship for them, because they did not know anything about their British allies except what they were allowed to know. "As it passed through the filter of the Soviet censorship and through the controlled channels of the Tass Agency, the gentle cooing of the Western voices became transformed into the barking of mad imperialist dogs."[2]

Koestler knew that as long as Russians received communications from the rest of the world through channels controlled by Soviet agencies, they would never receive the truth of the matter. "A former comrade of my communist days asked me recently with an ironic smile what would be done to members of the communist party if I had my say. I told him that I would condemn them all to one year of forced reading."[3]

Another Englishman who recognized the dangers inherent in communism was Bertrand Russell. He saw the world moving in the direction of succumbing to a socialist totalitarianism.

> Only those who remember the world before 1914 can adequately realize how much has already been lost. In that happy age, one could travel without a passport, everywhere except in Russia. One could freely express any political opinion, except in

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[2] Ibid.

[3] "The Candles of Truth," in Trail of the Dinosaur, p. 44.

> Russia. Press censorship was unknown, except in Russia. . . . The limitations of freedom in Czarist Russia were regarded with horror throughout the rest of the civilized world, and the power of the Russian Secret Police was regarded as an abomination. Russia is still worse than the Western World, not because the Western World has preserved its liberties, but because, while it has been losing them, Russia has marched farther in the direction of tyranny than any Czar ever thought of going.[4]

Bertrand Russell streses that there had been a gulf between pre-revolutionary Russia and the West and that this gulf remains as wide as ever because, although Russia has grown worse, the West has lost much of its freedom.[5]

Orwell believed that if all people could be happy as a normal state, there would be no problem in trying to form a truly democratic government. He was aware of the sympathetic attitude toward Russia and knew that if he were to try to correct it through satire, his attempt would have to be fairly obvious. It was not the time to indulge in subtle propaganda, nor would it be satisfactory to write an obviously didactic novel.

Animal Farm was his first book in which he consciously united art and politics. Orwell believed that political purpose was one of the four motivational forces of writers of prose, and he defined it as the "desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive

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[4] Bertrand Russell, "Symptons of Orwell's 1984," in Portraits From Memory (New York, 1956), p. 221.

[5] Ibid., p. 222.

after. . . . No book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is in itself a political attitude."[6]

The approach taken in Animal Farm was necessary because of the popular feeling that Stalinism should not be criticized openly, but people had to be reminded that the methods of the Soviets would not bring about universal happiness. Orwell insisted that a socialist government could be democratic. He was a rampant enemy of totalitarian power of any kind, whether imperialist or communist, and he believed that decency of action in human relationships was the basic force by which world-wide happiness could be achieved.

In an article about the modern phenomenon of "anti-utopianism," Eugene Weber explains why five modern authors suggested that utopian governments should be prevented rather than created. The authors were George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, Arthur Koestler, and George Orwell. These men believed that mankind had to reject a centrally controlled republic, such as the one Plato described, because there was no room for individuality in such a system.

These five writers were, or have been, socialists to some degree. Arthur Koestler represented pessimism reaching an extremity in the rejection of man. The anti-utopian shows a distortion of progress and the development of man, and the tragedy of the central

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[6] "Why I Write," in A Collection of Essays, p. 316.

[7] Eugene Weber, "The Anti-Utopia of the Twentieth Century," South Atlantic Quarterly, Summer 1959, p. 441.

character in Darkness at Noon, for example, was his defeat by the over-development of social and political organizations. Personal freedom was crushed in Brave New World and in 1984. This, all five authors agreed, was the principal danger of totalitarianism, and in these two books, the fight against uniformity was defeated. There was little chance for success to begin with, as the concept of progress had been distorted.

The anti-utopian, like the utopian, writers reflected the controversy of reconciling organization and freedom--free enterprise in a planned society. The development of anti-utopianism was not surprising as the age during which it was created was becoming disillusioned with the increasing omnipotence of the human mind. This type of literature was wholly skeptical and demonstrated that dreams could lead either to nightmares or to frustrated waking. Mankind had finally awakened, after centuries of utopian fantasies, to the fact that it was humanly impossible to design an ideal society.

The anti-utopianists realized that nothing else could be expected from the fanciful dreams of perfect governments. These elements and emotions were not to be found in earlier utopias, which expressed either approval or disapproval of the existing state of affairs but never feared the direction in which they might develop.

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[8] Ibid., pp. 442-444, passim.

[9] G. Woodcock, "Five Who Fear the Future," New Republic, April 16, 1956, p. 17.

There were three things Orwell wanted to say in Animal Farm and in 1984. First of all, he knew that the socialism in England contained the seeds of totalitarianism. People's thoughts were gradually molded into unified ideas as their needs were taken care of by a central power. From this point, it was not difficult to dictate their pleasures and then their whole lives. Secondly, it had to be made clear that the worst aspect of totalitarianism was that it would not hesitate to destroy the innermost recesses of the mind. Finally, the method of thinking adopted and enforced by totalitarian governments threatened the populace with total moral corruption. Animal Farm and, to a greater degree, 1984 were both projections into an existence which contained Stalinism following an immediate past that had witnessed the height of Nazism.

Orwell's strongest criticism of communism was its failure to interpret human motives. Religion, moral codes, patriotism, and similar values were discarded by communists as being a hypocritical cover for the pursuit of economic interests by capitalists.

In 1944, Orwell expressed the opinion that, although English writers had recently turned out a great deal of political literature, they had produced little of either aesthetic or historic value and that none of these writers had witnessed totalitarianism from the inside.[10]

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10 "Arthur Koestler," in Dickens, Dali and Others (New York, 1946), pp. 185ff.

The story told in Animal Farm progresses gaily although the reader never loses sight of the purpose. It tells how animals capture Manor Farm from the drunk and incompetent farmer, change the name to Animal Farm, and establish a model community in which all animals are equal. It tells how two pigs, Snowball and Napoleon, gain control of the revolt and fight each other to determine mastery. The animal characters fit their human counterparts cleverly, and there is mocking similarity between what the pigs preach and what contemporary politicians were urging.

The book was popular as soon as it appeard. It was a short story about animals. Its satire was directed primarily against Russia, but it was also directed against revolutions of all types, even against human government in general.

Animal Farm, unintentionally and, at first, surprisingly, was more popular than Orwell's more ambitious works. It was not written in his usual manner, but was the most effective in promoting the ideas to which he was dedicated. He loved what he was writing, and he had not written seriously for several years.

The tradition of the animal fable is as old as Aesop in Western literature and had been used in England since the middle ages. Each animal has a corresponding human type, no matter how many animals are included. Orwell restates the tradition at the beginning by calling an assembly of the animals. As they convene, Orwell briefly gives a characteristic trait of each. There is Major, the majestic old pig who started the idea of revolt. He "was twelve years old and

had lately grown rather stout. . . . The two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover, came in together, walking very slowly and setting down their vast hairy hoofs with great care lest there should be some small animals concealed in the straw."[11]

> Benjamin, the donkey. . . was the oldest animal on the farm, and the worst tempered. . . . He seldom talked. . . and never laughed. . . . Mollie, the foolish, pretty white mare who drew [the farmer's] trap, came mincing daintily in chewing at a lump of sugar. . . and began flirting her white mane. Last of all came the cat, who looked around, as usual, for the warmest place, and finally squeezed herself in between Boxer and Clover; there she purred contentedly throughout Major's speech without listening to a word of what he was saying.[12]

The reader delights to see each animal behave in a manner typical of its nature, and the animal kingdom becomes a parody of the successful meeting of the political opposition: the leaders of the opposition use bait to attract the people, turn on an orator, in this case Squealer, to confuse them, and then send them home full of happy ideas of revolt.

Although Orwell's ability as a descriptive writer is acknowledged, his ability as a story teller is one of the popular features of the book. The structure, as well as the story, is tightly woven--the beginning is echoed at the end to finish the fable neatly. The various levels are similarly rounded out so that the story and all its implications move in complete revolutions on their planes.[13]

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[13] Brander, p. 172.

A few days after the assembly, old Major dies, and the two younger boars take over. Napoleon and Snowball are the Stalin and Lenin of the story. Napoleon is "not much of a talker, but. . . has a reputation for getting his way."[14] Snowball is intellectually quicker, but he is "not considered to have the same depth of character."[15] It is Snowball who paints the commandments on the barn wall and summarizes them with the motto: All animals are equal; who prepares the animals for Farmer Jones attempt to recover his property; who leads them in the attack and who is wounded. Napoleon is not mentioned once during the attack.

As the situation on the farm develops, Snowball organizes numerous groups and committees: The Egg Production Committee for the hens, The Clean Tail League for the cows, and The Whiter Wool Movement for the sheep. Napoleon is not interested in this action and, realizing that education of the young is more important than that of adults, he eventually gains his ambition for power by educating a litter of young hounds to be his police force. Three dogs, at Napoleon's orders, chase away Snowball at the very height of his altruistic efforts in behalf of the other animals: he had recognized that the living conditions of the animals were no better than they had been during Farmer Jones' time and suggested that a windmill be built in order to give warmth, food, and comfort to all of the animals.

The Snowball theme is the denigration of the fallen hero, and

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[14] Animal Farm, pp. 25-26.

[13] Ibid.

Napoleon's aide, Squealer, works hard to reverse the accepted concept held by the animals about Snowball. Napoleon claims that the windmill idea was his own and that Snowball tried to take credit for it. Snowball becomes the scape-goat, the source of all evil and misfortune, and Napoleon is built up as the leader who thought of all the improvements and who is the father of the farm. Snowball is blamed not only when the windmill blows over in a storm, but also for trampling the gardens, breaking eggs, contaminating the water supply, and spoiling the grain. He is accused of trying to undermind Napoleon's programs and plans; he is even denounced as having spied for the neighboring human farmers from the very beginning of the revolt.

Boxer is the symbol of the person who has great physical strength and kindness but who is too naive to be safe. When the hounds are set upon him for some obscure reason, he fights them off and frees one trapped under his huge hoof only when Napoleon orders it. He still can not think evil of anyone: everything and everyone's actions are for the best. Nor can he comprehend that his innocent questions and statements that he does not think Snowball was a traitor are dangerous. He never really knows why the dogs were set upon him. Boxer is the expression of Orwell's liberal belief in people, and he believes that the masses of people like Boxer would gradually awaken and struggle against the rulers and their propaganda.

When Napoleon encounters opposition to his plans and his government, he deals with it harshly. Four young pigs oppose the abolition of Sunday meetings; several hens feel that Napoleon's selling

their eggs is unfair so lay them on the rafters and let them roll off and smash on the floor. The pigs and hens are murdered by the hounds as are several other animals, but not before they confess to collaborating with Snowball. The rest of the animals are forced to watch the proceedings, and when it is over, they are shocked.

> In the old days there had often been scenes of bloodshed equally terrible, but it seemed to all of them that it was far worse now that it was happening among themselves. . . .
>
> These scenes of terror and slaughter were not what they had looked forward to on that night when old Major first stirred them to rebellion. If /Clover/ herself had had any picture of the future, it had been of a society of animals set free from hunger and the whip, all equal, each working according to his capacity, the strong protecting the weak, as she had protected the lost brood of ducklingswwith her foreleg on the night of Major's speech. Instead --she did not know why--they had come to a time when no one dared speak his mind, when you had to watch your comrades torn to pieces after confessing to shocking crimes. . . . It was not for this that she and all the other animals had hoped and toiled.[16]

The character of Squealer, as his name implies, is that of the modern propagandist whose business it is to explin away the worst facts and situations with the best of hypocritical reasons. He represents a familiar type with "very round cheeks, twinkling eyes, nimble movements, and a shrill voice. He /is/ a brilliant talker. . . . The others said of Squealer that he could turn black into white."[17]

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[16] Ibid., pp. 83-85.

[17] Ibid., p. 26.

One of Squealer's duties is to justify Napoleon's increasingly human characteristics. When Napoleon announces one morning that he will occupy the farmer's home and sleep on a bed, the animals remember that one of Snowball's rules states that no animal shall lie on a bed. When they go to the barn wall to see what is written there, they find the wording has been amended to read that no animal shall sleep in a bed between sheets. Squealer disguises the ambitious Napoleon's elbowing his way into power by talking about democracy, liberty, equality, fraternity, classless societies, and other ideals. He keeps reminding the animals that their living conditions have improved, although in fact they have not! The organized prevarication is a basic factor in totalitarianism: it keeps the masses quiet, satisfied, and happy by making them less conscious of and curious about what is going on outside their own limited world.

Napoleon gradually acquires human traits and the habits which the animals had revolted against in the beginning. The end of the story finds Napoleon so changed that the other animals can not distinguish him from the human beings. For the sake of the less intelligent animals the commandments had been summarized as: "Two legs bad, four legs good," but in the meantime, Napoleon had learned to walk on two legs. Therefore, the motto is changed to read: "Four legs good, two legs better." The animals also found that the commandments had been erased from the barn wall and had been replaced by the legend: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."[18]

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

This gives Napoleon the superiority and power he had so carefully nurtured.

1984 was written three years after Animal Farm at a time when Orwell was very ill and refused to allow himself opportunity to recuperate. He refused also to be lionized following the success of Animal Farm and preferred to retire to a lonely, inconvenient, and, for him, unhealthy island off the coast of Scotland. The book is usually thought to be a prediction of what Orwell thought the world would be in the year 1984 should current ideologies and policies continue to develop along present lines. However, it seems to be more a commentary on the contemporary world-wide situation drawing to a logical conclusion. The author denied that the situation was inevitable or permanent; he felt that it was possible, but that slavery could never be a stable basis for society.

The world of 1984 is divided into three great superstates: Britain, renamed Airstrip One, is part of Oceania, as are the North and South American continents and South Africa. This superstate is constantly at war with one and allied with the other of the other two states, Eurasia and Eastasia. These two states comprise the remainder of the world excpet for a strip of territory from the Mediterranean Sea east to and including India over which the three superstates fight and which acts as the battlefield for the never-ending wars. The inhabitants of Oceania are never quite aware of which of the other states they are battling, nor do they really care as they care as they are never actively involved in it.

The society which Orwell created most perfectly expressed freedom by governing without laws; although, strictly speaking, nothing was illegal, there were certain acts for which a person could be severely punished because they were against the better interests of mankind.

The city of London has been reduced to an economic state certainly no better than it was during the worst years of World War IIaand probably much worse. It is completely dilapidated, and there are rows of rotting houses with falling plaster, leaking roofs, broken windowpanes patched with cardboard, and sagging fences. This may well have been an ordinary sight in sections of wartime London; in fact, Orwell has been criticized for his lack of imagination in this description of the future, but his purpose may have been to present a more or less familiar background which would very effectively shorten the distance between the present and the future, the real and the imaginary. Only the people have changed, and the difference is considerably sharpened in this way; they are all informers, cowards, and spies.

It was characteristic of Orwell that the hero of 1984, Winston Smith, was completely unheroic. He was a frail man nearing middle age, and he had a varicose ulcer on his right ankle. His work in the Ministry of Truth consisted of altering old news items to conform to newer facts, so that no one could ever know or prove that the Party line had been changed or that a historical fact had been

rectified. He disliked the job and what it stood for, and tried to make contact with a revolutionary secret brotherhood which he had heard existed.

In his desperate desire to rebel in some way, Winston started to keep a personal diary. The book was an old-fashioned remnant of a past age, and Winston bought it at an antique shop. The very act of creative writing had so completely disappeared that indulging in such an activity was extremely suspicious. Books written for art's sake did not exist; at least they were not available to members of the Party. In order to remain hidden from the ever-watching telescreen while he wrote, Winston had to set in an alcove beyond its scope. He knew there would be no use in his trying to hide the book; so whenever he left the room, he placed a speck of dust on the cover, placed the book in a drawer, and hoped he would be able to tell if someone had seen the book.

The diary itself was a failure. Winston, in trying to write what he remembered factually about the past, became confused, and his writing was simply an expression of his frustration. It is symbolic, however, of his struggling individuality, as is his love of old bric-a-brac and vaguely remembered nursery rhymes.

It would be interesting to quote at this point a passage from an article entitled "Confession of a Chinese College Student," which appeared in the communist Liberation Daily during 1949.

> Not quite two weeks after I had entered the Corps a squad leader . . . told the members . . . that he had the right to examine on behalf of the

> organization all our letters and diaries. Our opposition to this was very strong, and we went to headquarters to complain. There we were told: "Have you not joined the revolution? Is not your intention to serve the people? There can be nothing in your mind or possession which cannot be made fully public. In your letters and diaries are your true thoughts, and if you are true revolutionaries you need not be afraid of these thoughts."[19]

The youth then went on to say that he went home, opened his diary and was horrified to find written there on the title page his "true thoughts": "'Respect your prestige! Do not peep!' I stared at those words, then resolutely picked up a pen and scratched them off." The next time he made an entry into the diary, he wrote about the necessity of sacrificing all individuality and freedom in order to be able to "join the group wholeheartedly."[20]

The parallel between this diary incident and Winston's wish to start a diary to preserve his individuality is so close that one might wonder if Orwell read the article.

The contact made with Julia and the affair that follows was against all the dictates of the Party and the Anti-Sex League, but for Winston it was only another act of political defiance until he discovered the meaning of loyalty to another individual. The Party insisted on chastity because the hysteria which resulted from it was more easily controlled than the private feelings between individuals.

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[19] Quoted by Robert F. Gleckner, "1984 or 1948?" <u>College English</u>, November 1956, pp. 97-98.

[20] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 98.

Julia's reasons for indulging were no more noble at the beginning than were Winston's. She was a cunning girl who insisted on getting what she wanted, and she had an instinct for the little hypocrisies needed to carry on her own method of rebellion.

> I do voluntary work three evenings a week for the Junior Anti-Sex League. Hours and hours I've spent pasting their bloody rot all over London. I always carry one end of a banner in the processions. I always look cheerful and I never shirk anything. Always yell with the crowd, that's what I say. It's the only way to be safe.[21]

It was Julia who arranged the clandestine meetings to evade the telescreens, hidden microphones, and heliocopters used for spying by the Thought Police.

Their whole affair is very similar to that of Gordon Comstock and Rosemary in _Keep the Aspidistra Flying_. There is the same meeting in the office corridor, the girl slipping the note into the man's hand, and the ensuing holiday in the country. Winston and Gordon are very similar in looks and personality. The girl takes the initiative in both stories. Winston was afraid of Julia because he thought that she was a member of the Thought Police and that her glances and attention were caused by suspicion. Until he had a chance to read the note, he thought she was a person who was spying on his activities. For Gordon, only self-consciousness had prevented him from taking the first step.

Winston's search for truth through a personal rebellion, his attempts to remember the past, his investigation of the heretical Goldstein book on the _Theory and Practice of Collective Oligarchy_ make up

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21 _1984_ (New York, 1961), p. 101.

the first part of the book. Everything about him is depressingly average and ordinary, except his rebelliousness which shows itself at the very beginning. Old pictures recall vaguely remembered scenes, but he is confused in his memory of his own family because there is no stimulus to bring to his conscious mind anything but old misery and his childhood selfishness.

Unexpectedly, Winston does find the truth he is searching for, but it lasts no longer than a minute or two. The Goldstein book does not tell him much except how the Party functions; it does not tell him why. During one of his meetings with Julia in their hidden room, he realizes, while casually watching a proletarian woman singing in her yard, that all people under the sky are the same whether they are in Eastasia, Eurasia, or Oceania. They are unaware of each other's existence, and the walls of hatred, prejudice, lies, and propaganda which separate them can be removed only by the masses of proletarian people because they are the only ones who are not subjected to the propaganda of the Party.[22]

However, because they are kept satisfied with food and cheap entertainment by the Party, they are not concerned with trying to improve their lot. It would take a long time, indeed there would have to be a miraculous change, for their revolt to take place. But, Winston learned, all hope lay in them as they were the only ones

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[22] Ibid., p. 181.

who knew the feeling of loyalty towards each other instead of towards a party, country, or even an idea. This one glimpse is all Winston has of the truth, and it is as close to the truth as he ever comes.

> If there was hope, it lay in the proles! Without having read to the end of the book, he knew that that must be Goldstein's final message. The future belonged to the proles. And could he be sure that whey their time came, the world they constructed would not be just as alien to him, Winston Smith, as the world of the Party? Yes, because at the least it would be a world of sanity.[23]

At this point, he and Julia are captured by the Thought Police, who had witnessed their rebellion for a long time, and the process of re-education, or brainwashing, begins. Winston barely has time to realize that his relationship with Julia has been known for a long time and that he had long been suspected for treasonable ideas and practices.

Winston's educator, O'Brien, is a man who Winston had thought was a fellow rebel. It is O'Brien who lends him the Goldstein book, but in reality, he is a fanatical member of the Inner Party engaged in torturing the minds and spirits of his victims. It is he who, learning of Winston's dissatisfaction with and curiosity about the Party, encourages him by pretending to sympathize with his desire for individual freedom. He is the equivalent of the sadistic zealot of the Inquisition. Winston's long drawn-out torture illustrates the climax of Orwell's document on the destruction of the human spirit by

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[23] Ibid., p. 181.

the totalitarian state. By the time his education is complete, Winston has been degraded to a physical and mental wreck. One of the first things he had written in his diary was "freedom is the freedom wo say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."[24] By the time his education is finished, Winston will say that two plus two will make anything the Party wants it to make.

He and Julia had believed that the innermost mind, or the soul, were inviolable, "'They can't get inside you,' she had said. But they could get inside you. "What happens to you here is _forever_,' O'Brien had said. That was a true word. There were things, your own acts, from which you could not recover. Something was killed in your breast; burnt out, cauterized out."[25] Winston is allowed to wander around "free" to show the general populace how a man can be saved from his own treacerous thoughts. He realized, nevertheless, that in a short time he would be completely removed from the scene; he would cease to exist.

In his study of _1984_, Robert F. Gleckner stated that Orwell's purpose was neither to prophesy nor merely to attack the Soviet system. The book was a warning of what could happen if socialism became a political system by means of which a small minority became a powerful totalitarian government.[26]

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[24] _Ibid_., p. 69.

[25] _Ibid_., p. 239.

[26] Gleckner, p. 96.

Erich Fromm agreed with this opinion saying that "unless the course of history changes, men all over the world will lose their most human qualities, will become soulless automatons, and will not even be aware of it."[27]

Stalin said, on the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution:

> A revolution in the past generally ended by the replacement at the seat of administration of one group of exploiters by another group of exploiters. The exploiters were changed, the exploitation remained. So it was at the time of the movement for the liberation of slaves. So it was at the period of the peasant risings. So it was in the period of the well-known "great" revolutions in England, in France, in Germany. . . . The October revolution is different in principle from these revolutions. It sets as its goad not the replacement of one form of exploitation by another . . . but the annihilation of every form of exploiting group, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the establishment of the power of the most revolutionary class of all, the hitherto existing oppressed classes, and the organization of a new classless socialist society.[28]

Orwell had believed that the exploitation would cease when a socialist government came into power, but he had been disillusioned in Spain, and he wrote: "In each great revolutionary struggle, the masses are led on by vague dreams of human brotherhood, and then, when the new ruling class is well established in power, they are thrust back into servitude."[29] But his fear lay also in the eventual elimination

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[27] Erich Fromm, "Afterword," 1984, p. 257.

[28] Quoted in Francis Williams, Socialist Britain (New York, 1949), pp. 198-199.

[29] "Second Thoughts on James Burnham," in Shooting an Elephant, p. 123.

of objective truth in all countries. "And he saw this coming about not only through force, but because of the moral and intellectual obliquity of the average man."[30]

The horror of 1984 is direct and seems close to home because "the police-state and conspicuous-production kind of dictatorship" is not unknown.[31] The Inner Party definition of power was that power was an end and not a means to an end; power existed for its own sake and enabled those who possesses it to inflict whatever horror they wished on those who did not have it.

Koestler stated that no other work since Kafka's "In a Penal Settlement" contained such horror.

> I believe that future historians of literature will regard Orwell as a kind of missing link between Kafka and Swift. For . . . it may well be true that "it is closing time in the gardens of the West, and from now on an artist will be judged only by the resonance of his solitude or the quality of his despair.[32]

However, Koestler differentiates between Orwell's despair and Kafka's. Orwell was constructive, and he never lost faith in "the knobby-faced yahoos with their bad teeth."[33] His life had been devoted to fighting for human justice and decency and defending the underdog.

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[30] Gleckner, p. 98.

[31] Martin Kessler, "Power and the Perfect State," Political Science Quarterly, December 1957, p. 570.

[32] Arthur Koestler, "A Rebel's Death," in Trail of the Dinosaur, p. 104.

[33] Ibid., p. 105.

The world is now moving toward the realization of Orwell's nightmare--one need only to read the front page of a newspaper--and because the movement is so gradual, people have yet to realize how far they have progressed in the direction.

> The dangers are real--they are indeed greater than at any previous time in human history--but yielding to hysteria increases them. It is our clear duty in this difficult time, not only to know the dangers, but to view them calmly and rationally, in spite of knowledge of their magnitude. Orwell's world of 1984, if we allow it to exist, will not exist long. It will only be the prelude to universal death.[34]

Orwell professed no religion,[35] but all through his works are exhibited a basic humility, compassion, and self-mortification which allowed him to reject compromising between his fight for individuality and freedom of expression and his fight for his life. Had he retired to the sheltered atmosphere of a sanatorium, he would probably have lived longer, but he could not have written his warnings.

> Had he proposed an epitaph for himself, my guess is that he would have chosen these lines from old Major's revolutionary anthem, to be sunt to a stirring tune, something between "Clementine" and "La Cucuracha":
>
> Rings shall vanish from our noses,
> And the harness from our backs. . . .
>
> For that day we all must labor,
> Though we die before it break;
> Cows and horses, geese and turkeys,
> All must toil for freedom's sake.[36]

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[34] Russell, p. 228.

[35] "Such, Such Were The Joys," p. 44.

[36] Koestler, p. 105.

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the essay of that name but not the two extracts from *The Road to Wigan Pier*.)

Orwell also contributed to *The Betrayal of the Left* (1941) and *Victory or Vested Interest?* (1942). He wrote prefaces for Jack London's *Love of Life* (1946), Reginald Reynolds' *British Pamphleteers* (1948), and for the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm* (1947). Selections from his notebooks appeared in *World Review* (June 1950). Five of his poems were published in the *Adelphi* between 1933 and 1935. He contributed reviews and articles to a number of journals, some of which have not been reprinted, and between 1942 and 1946 made a number of broadcasts.

VITA

The author was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in May, 1936, and has lived in that country for about half of her life. While in the United States, she lived in Virginia, where she received most of her elementary education. She attended high school at the American Community School in Beirut and came to Virginia to attend the College of William and Mary for one year. She completed her undergraduate training in Beirut and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature from the American University of Beirut in 1956.

After graduating, she taught English and worked in journalism for two years. In 1958 she entered the University of Richmond to study for a Master of Arts degree in English literature. She and Elie S. Nuwayser were married in 1959, and they are now the parents of a two-year-old son. The requirements for the degree were completed during the summer of 1962.