DOKTORI DISSZERTÁCIÓ

“Thank God I’m a man” –
the implications of masculinity in George Orwell’s life and non-fiction

Császár Ivett

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Introduction

"To insist on the limitations of Orwell's thought is only to establish the limits within which we admire him." (Conor Cruise O'Brien: *Writers and Politics*)

But for his last two works, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, Orwell would not have become part of the literary canon – there seems to be consensus about this in the literature on Orwell. Beyond his best-sellers his novels are acknowledged as mediocre by critics. He achieved a lot more in the genre of the essay and journalism: as his first biographer put it, "much critical opinion now locates his genius in his essays." (Crick, *A Life*, xv) In much of his output he discussed public issues – he was particularly obsessed with social and economic inequalities, the independence of India, or the looming danger of communism and fascism. In other words, he was more of a political writer (Bernard Crick) and intellectual hero (John Rodden) than a literary writer.

Part of my fascination for Orwell was his search for social justice, however, his categorical way of thinking, the rigid patterns of his mind and the resulting prejudices seemed to contradict, to some extent, undermine his "decency." As a feminist reader the most urging question to be examined became the issue of his thoughts on women and the underlying notion of gender in his writings. How can Orwell be an intellectual hero and not speak for half of humanity? – Rodden attributes rightly this question to feminist critics or simply to female readers of Orwell. What is most intriguing in the Orwell corpus is that his social sensitivity goes hand in hand with an intolerant attitude towards certain groups, among them women, feminists, pacifists, Jews, homosexuals, fellow left-wing intellectuals, the Irish, the Scots etc.

Orwell handed down his contradictions to his critics. Since he was a political writer very much engaged in the social and public issues of his day, the discourse on his life and work, especially the quite differing, in terms of ideology often even opposing assessments of his work raise the issue of the unity of author and work. He is established as an author who is what he writes, who lived according to the principles and ideas he put forth in his works. This belief implies that the author's name and the individual's name are one and the same, that George Orwell equals Eric Blair. The

politically and ideologically various approaches to his work are, therefore, all the more surprising: if he was what he wrote, how could one critic praise the latent religious framework of his writings and another deny the sincerity and seriousness of his left wingery, as Christopher Hollis and Wyndham Lewis did respectively. What makes such opposing approaches and conclusions possible?

It has been suggested that to some extent Orwell himself is liable for the various interpretations of his work, as he was full of seemingly contradictory ideas, for example, he was an ardent socialist but was at odds with his left-wing intellectual fellows and was always critical of Soviet communism, or, up until the Second World War he objected to England's participation in the war but upon the outbreak of the war he became an enthusiastic and rather unreflecting patriot. It is claimed that the young Orwell was more committed to the Left, whereas the mature Orwell was more conservative, looking back to the past with nostalgia and denouncing Soviet totalitarianism ruthlessly. This split in ethos might count for the split among his supporters, those on the Left emphasise his commitment to "democratic socialism", whereas those on the Right lay claim to the conservative traits of his personality and ideas. In the endless debates on his 'true' ideological conviction the author gets lost and the ideological conviction of the reader gains primacy. In this way Orwell the author is constructed according to political commitment, some texts and some traits of those texts are drawn upon whereas others are excluded to maintain theoretical coherence, i.e. the troubles are solved by selective reading.

First and foremost the Orwell discourse is a discourse on totalitarianism, especially on the effects of totalitarianism on intellectual freedom. This discourse, mainly drawing on *Nineteen-Eighty Four* and some essays, highlighted those aspects of his work and life that are connected to the anxiety about totalitarianism, like, for example, his participation in the Spanish Civil War where he had a glimpse into the methods of Soviet Communism in crushing the revolution, whereas it downplayed those aspects of the same events and writings that raise issues other than that of totalitarianism, to remain with the same example, the role of gender in participating in war as a "test of manhood" and in the glorification of war and violence. As an authority on and indirectly, through the figure of Winston Smith, as the hero of totalitarianism, Orwell's shortcomings have not been challenged and the discourse remained a coherent

discourse on totalitarianism. However, this approach to Orwell is inadequate because it cannot explain the contradictions that disrupt the oeuvre. I am arguing in this paper that examining Orwell's life and work from the aspect of gender can offer a discourse in which the Foucauldian unity of author and work is kept and the contradictions become intelligible.

In his 1968 essay Roland Barthes denounces literary criticism that seeks the explanation of a work in the author who produced it. As opposed to the man-and-his-work type of literary criticism in contemporary culture, where the work is conceived and examined as an expression of the author and criticism is "tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions," he claims that it is not a single voice, but a multiplicity of voices that speak through texts. (Barthes, 50) Consequently, the whole effort to decipher what the work expresses, i.e. the personality of the author, is a futile and misdirected one. The text is "a fabric of quotations resulting from a thousand sources of culture" and to give a text an author is "to impose a brake on it, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing." (Barthes, 53) The death of the author means, for Barthes, the birth of the reader. Since the text is made up of multiple voices and multiple writings entering into dialogue, the text's unity lies not in its origin, the author, but in its destination, the reader.

In 'What is an author?' Michel Foucault considers the unit of the author and the work as if in a dialogue with Barthes without naming him though. He acknowledges the attempt to abolish the idea of the author as the origin of the work, but argues for the impossibility of the project in the present form of culture. It is true, says Foucault, there has been a change to the old tradition of the idea of the work as providing immortality to its author, which is symbolised by Seherezade's narrative in *The Thousand and One Nights*, as an effort to keep away death from life. Defying this tradition, the work now "possesses the right to kill, to be its author's murderer," which is manifested in the effacement of the author's individual characteristics. (198) However, according to Foucault, certain notions, the idea of the work and the notion of writing, which are intended to replace the privileged position of the author, are contra-productive in the sense that they actually preserve that privilege and work against the disappearance of the author.

Foucault finds the very notion of the work problematic. Not only is the concept of work illusive outside its relation with the author – are the collection of the papers left behind by any individual to be considered as a 'work' or not – but also within that relationship, that is when an individual is established as an author. Which writings are to be regarded as part of an author's work? What shall be our criteria of inclusion and exclusion? These questions present theoretical, as well as technical problems, both epitomised by the 'laundry-list problem'. (199) According to Foucault, the lack of a theory of work prejudice the task of editors, who undertake the collection of works. Consequently, we cannot do without the writer and study the work itself, because it is the relationship, the unity of the author and work that create present-day literary discourses. In my paper Orwell's first wife's, Eileen O'Shaughnessy's recently discovered letters written to her girlfriend constitute an important source about the author, letters, which were included in the last volume (*The Lost Orwell*) of Peter Davison's huge Orwell collection, but which were written neither by, nor to the author himself. The fact that Eileen's letters to her girlfriend are published in the Orwell collection supports Foucault's standpoint on the central importance of the author. Davison's meticulous collection implies that anything that is connected to Orwell is to be published, i.e. the work becomes important through the Foucauldian author-function. In my analysis Eileen's letters will be an important contribution in painting the portrait of the author primarily from the aspect of gender, and this portrait will be contrasted with Orwell's own views on women, finding that the author and work do comply.

Foucault shows the emptiness of the statement that the author has disappeared by pointing to problems that arise from the use of the author's name. The author's name is a proper name but a specific one and distinct from ordinary proper names, it performs a specific role in the discourse of literature. It has a classificatory function, it permits the reader to group certain texts together, differentiate them from and contrast them to others. Far from the death of the author as claimed by Barthes, Foucault insists on the important role the author plays in today's literary discourse. "We now ask of each poetic or fictional text: from where does it come, who wrote it, when, under what circumstances, or beginning with what design? The meaning ascribed to it and the status or value accorded it depends upon the manner in which we answer these questions." (203) Modern literary criticism resorts to the author to provide explanation for changes,

transformations, failures, distortions, maturation, influence and even contradictions. The author is called upon as "a regulator of the fictive," an ideological figure which prevents a proliferation of meaning. The author is in this sense a functional principle by which "one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and recomposition of fiction." (209)

After contextualising Orwell's oeuvre by providing an outline of the thirties, its key political and literary concerns, the merging of the two, and not last the gendered nature of the literary scene and canon of the time, in the chapter 'The work without the author' I look at what happens to the work, in my focus to Orwell's non-fiction, if the author disappears or is made to disappear from the reading. Stripping the work of the author leads to a proliferation of meaning, to the free manipulation of the work. Disregarding the ideological figure of the author, the regulator of readings, have led to the foregrounding of the ideology of the reader, in this way Orwell has been endowed with various convictions, like conservatism, socialism, Catholicism, and even the extreme right laid claim to him.

With reference to the Foucauldian principle of the unity of author and work, I am arguing that it is the compulsory performing of heterosexual masculinity that runs like a thread through Orwell's life and work and informs much of his diverse and sometimes self-contradicting ethos. Daphne Patai has shown how androcentrism lies at the core of his fiction; I am examining how androcentrism and the urge to perform manliness explains his way of thinking as it is presented in his non-fiction – I am especially interested in his views on women and in his turn from socialism-driven commitment to peace to ardent patriotism and the link between the two. I am arguing that just as the inclination to perform masculinity and the anxiety about not doing his gender right played a significant part in his active socialism, in literally "going over" to the working class, the adherence to the traditional masculine norm (including duty, action, self-sacrifice for public affairs, self-sacrifice for the homeland, heroism) backed up his equally active patriotism and allegiance to the English nation. I propose that reading through the lens of gender makes his writings more intelligible and coherent.

Referring to Simone de Beauvoir's argument that "one is not born but becomes a woman" (and one should add "a man"), Judith Butler argues that gender is not a given and stable identity but a construction, "a performative accomplishment compelled by

social sanction and taboo." (520) The body takes on its gender through a series of acts that are historically and socially sanctioned. Because gender is constituted through a "stylized repetition of acts," it is capable of being constituted differently from the historically established norm. However, since the doing of gender is accomplished within a theatrical context, i.e. it is open to the perception of others, gender construction happens under social duress and deviation from the norm is punished.

> Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all. That this reassurance is so easily displaced by anxiety, that culture so readily punishes or marginalises those who fail to perform the illusion of gender essentialism should be sign enough that on some level there is social knowledge that the truth or falsity of gender is only socially compelled and in no sense ontologically necessitated. (Butler, 528)

Gender as a performative act is a public act and a project which has cultural survival as its end. Those who fail to comply with their gender are regularly punished by society. (Butler, 522)

Since gender is the sedimentation of acts through time, I will examine Orwell's autobiographical essay 'Such, Such Were the Joys' from the aspect of what effects his education and upbringing might have had on his gender constitution. In the all-boy school he felt himself to be the odd one out, who could not conform to the requirements of the school in sports and bravery, and who did not have the "guts and character" so essential for survival. His much resented failure had a gender aspect: by failing in bravery, in sports, in having guts and character his masculinity was being threatened. An experience in such a sense of failure is to be reckoned with when one is confronted with his anxiety about masculinity in adult life, either when one comes across contemptuous remarks on women, on feminists, on homosexuals, on pacifists, or when one sees the socialist Orwell suddenly on the "war-mongers"' side in 1940. The short sketch 'Slack-bob', written for the Eton newspaper, is examined as a parable on Butler's theory of gender performance under social pressure. That the young Orwell had an early experience in social punishment for not doing his gender right explains much of his later adherence to the masculine norm, masculinity accomplished either directly through his own emphatically masculine performance or indirectly through the ostracism of others who failed to do their gender right one way or another, for example feminists

who do not perform enough femininity or homosexuals and pacifists who do not perform enough masculinity.

Before moving on to examine his attitude to women in essays and in life, in the chapter 'The man "with a grouse"' I will look at how the "sense of failure" informed his way of thinking and writing. I am arguing that both his progressive and prejudiced way of thinking had the same roots: the anxiety about failure and the resulting frustration. In psychological terms altruistic behaviour, in this case Orwell's commitment to "going over," which manifested itself in going down and out, in visiting the miners in the northern part of the country and in taking part in the Spanish Civil War, is not only an act for the other but an act for oneself: it is a way of proving that one is a worthwhile human being. Orwell's especially, sometimes unintelligibly, strong and active commitment to the unprivileged makes sense only if one understands his personal motivations behind it. In this chapter, taking it to be the concomitant of the same phenomena, i.e. failure and frustration, I will look at his categorical way of thinking more closely, especially through examining the history of 'The Story by Five Authors,' his interesting initiative at the BBC.

Feminist consciousness has been the strongest challenge to Orwell's reputation. That he was "no comrade of women" manifested itself not only in his contemptuous and stereotypical views on women but also indirectly in his andocentric outlook. (Rodden, *Politics*, 211) Reinforcing the assumption that the public domain is men's reserve, as a political writer the implied reader of his essays and articles more often than not was male. He invited male readers into homosocial bonding even if his subject would have more readily allowed the inclusion of female readers too. Categorical statements like "one of the surest signs of [Conrad's] genius is that women dislike his books" (*CEJL*1, 227) not only stigmatize women as a homogeneous group with low artistic and intellectual abilities but also exclude any female voice from the discourse, and thereby, in Foucauldian terms, from the production of knowledge and power. Discourse is saved for male intellectuals, thereby homosociality is confirmed.

Beyond taking account of the feminist literature on Orwell, in the chapter 'Women on Paper' I am examining Orwell's journalism written in the 40s from the aspect whether the claim that there was a positive evolution of his attitude to women and women's issues is justifiable. I am arguing that both his unceasing prejudices

against women, feminism and femininity and his ambivalent relation to homosexuality, i.e. his simultaneous homophobia and homoeroticism, are to be traced back to the anxiety about gender constitution. Both feminism and homosexuality challenge traditional masculinity by blurring standard gender and sexual norms. Orwell experienced at school that not complying with the imperatives of masculinity and thereby breaking the socially sanctioned gender norms leads to excommunication and punishment. That he later on handed down the same abuses to his fellows (by labelling them pansies, by branding them effeminate etc.) is psychologically understandable, intellectually questionable.

Following the analysis of Orwell's views on women as they appear in his journalism, I turn my attention to Orwell's personal relations with women. Just like Orwell's personal experience of totalitarian practices in the Spanish Civil War is important for critics is dealing with Orwell's public preoccupation and writings on intellectual freedom, his personal relationship with women is informative about the concept of gender and sexuality that his writings reflect. Contemplations of a writer's sexual and married life tend to be rejected as unauthorised venture into the person's private life, classifying his relationships with women, especially the ones outside marriage, right away as an issue belonging to private life without reflecting on the tenability of the private/public distinction.

Whereas the dichotomy is posited as natural and commonsensical, there is no clear-cut boundary between public and private and the notions are often applied in a way to fit one's agenda. A main concern of feminism has been the deconstruction of the binaries male-female, masculine-feminine, private-public, nature-culture. By pointing out that attributes of one can be found in the other, the binary breaks down, and the opposing notions seem to stand in a reciprocal rather than in an oppositional relation to one another. The "private" matter of marriage, who can marry whom, when, under what conditions etc, or the seemingly personal decision to reproduce are to a great extent affected by and in turn have effect on what we call public. To take an example from Orwell's life, the sense of primacy of his work which his wife's letters reflect, on the one hand complies with the social expectation according to which bread-winning is traditionally men's responsibility, on the other hand resonates with the author's public diminishment of women's intellectual abilities, i.e. the public and the private mutually

affect and reinforce one another. The denial of the possibility of examining Orwell's relation with women in life on the plea of privacy perpetuates the rigid distinction between public and private and contributes indirectly to the approval of gendered inequalities, especially because Orwell's personal relationships with women embody his notion of polarised genders. Orwell himself legitimizes, even invites, a look into his "private" life with his biased remarks on women and his hypertrophied masculinity.

Critics' responsibility in pointing out the shortcomings of his ideas on gender is increased by the fact that Orwell was a political writer cherished for what he wrote rather than how he wrote. The critic who silences the discussion of his misogyny by referring, for example, to the fact that his biased remarks are only scattered and do not form a coherent ideology, or by arguing that it is anachronistic to expect feminist concerns from a writer right before the Second World War, perpetuates misogyny, because by approving the discourse that disregards and silences a popular writer's prejudices against women he legitimizes those.

In the last chapter I am examining what are the consequences of Orwell's androcentrism and how his prejudices against women work at a time of crisis, the Second World War. Drawing on theories on the interplay of masculinity and nationalism, I am arguing that Orwell's uncritical internalisation of traditional masculinity precipitated his patriotic alignment to his country during the war. At least since the creation of the nation states in the nineteenth century patriotism has been a required, if not compulsory, element of masculinity, reinforcing other attributes like courage, a strong will, self-constraint, heroism, commitment and participation in public affairs. The examined aspects of Orwell's personality and writings get an additional meaning in the patriotic essays. A key aspect of his "private" personality and "public" literary persona that I examined beforehand was the sense of failure and the fear of excommunication, both in a general and in a gendered sense. From this aspect patriotism meant a relief, it gave him the delusive reassurance of belonging to the imagined community of the nation. His andocentrism and prejudices against women, examined both in his life and in his writings, led to the marginalisation of women under the heat of newly discovered patriotism: in the essays examined women appear only as mothers and prostitutes. By propagating against birth-control and contraception with reference to the decline in birth-rate, he strips women of agency and instrumentalizes

individual female lives in the interest of the nation. I propose that Orwell's andocentric outlook has a curious resemblance with the centrality of masculinity and the resulting domestication of women in fascism. In contrast, Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* will provide an alternative way of thinking about the war and her idea about the unreal loyalty to the nation offers a delicate counterpoint of a wider intellectual horizon than Orwell's uncritical nationalism.

A decade of "destructive elements"

Social concerns

The thirties, the decade leading up to the Second World War, was a period of history immensely preoccupied with politics. The collapse of the American stock market in 1929 resulted in years of general economic depression with its unpleasant corollaries, wage reductions and mass unemployment. In England the plight of the workers and unemployed was increased by the indifference of the administrations during the crisis. It was a time of marches and protests, when the worst thing about unemployment was its permanence. The division of British society into two nations was sharper than ever: according to Julian Symons, a witness of the time, there was "one world in which it was necessary above all to be respectable, and another in which it was difficult even to remain clean." (*Angry*, 30) Working class people were living well below the subsistence level and the capitalist system could neither employ them, nor prevent them from almost starving. (Spender, *Thirties*, 22) For the unfortunate ones, these years meant the misery of slum houses, the prospect of permanent unemployment and the humiliation of the Means Test. According to Symons,

> [t]o understand the Thirties, you have to realise that then there were six people for every job, so that an employer could pick and choose among them, and that there was always somebody who would do the same work for a little less money. It is not condoning the evils of the present to say that this was an intolerable past. (*Angry,* preface)

As the decade wore on, due to the flourishing of luxury trades and rearmament, unemployment in certain parts of the country eased and the crisis got refocused on to European affairs. (Cunningham, 39) Hitler's coming to power in 1933 marked the rise of fascism, at which the old great powers stood perplexed. Their indecision and inefficient appeasement policy did not prove to be a deterrent powerful enough to the aggressive steps of Europe's new dictators against foreign countries.[1] From many

[1] Much as the appeasement policy has been denounced, Janet Montefiore throws a different light on it. She claims that the memory of the Great War's horrors and the anti-war feeling resulting from it inspired much of the peace movement of the thirties: the Peace Ballot of 1935, which was a referendum to

aspects the year 1936 was a turning point of the decade: Julian Symons calls it "the heart of the Thirties dream." (*Thirties*, 55) Considering European affairs it was on 7 March 1936 that Hitler moved his troops into the demilitarised Rhineland and proved thereby that "frontiers were a pushover to the Truly Strong Man." (Cunningham, 39) But it was also the year when the Spanish Civil War broke out, which soon expanded into an international affair and which was regarded by many as the last opportunity to halt the dark forces of history by defeating Franco's reactionary troops. Julian Symons recalls that "it seemed that the future of Europe was being drawn on the map of Spain." (*Thirties*, 107) The defeat of the Republic in 1939, however, marked the end of "the war of light against darkness" with a shameful outcome and in retrospect constituted a prelude to the Second World War. (Spender, *Thirties*, 18) As regards internal affairs 1936 was the year when the Jarrow march took place in England, which came to symbolise the most hopeless anger of the period. When a deputation of unemployed men from Jarrow, an industrial town in the North East, the eighty percent of whose population was unemployed, marched to London in protest, Walter Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, refused them governmental support with the memorable phrase: "Jarrow must work out its own salvation." (Symons, *Angry*, 93) On 4 October 1936 Sir Oswald Mosley planned a march of his Blackshirts through the Jewish parts of London, which was prevented only by Leftist enthusiasts. Mosley's fascist rallies meant that not even England was intact of extreme right-wing ideas. (Cunningham, 40) In cultural life it was in 1936 that the Surrealist Exhibition was held and spreading leftist enthusiasm in intellectual circles was signalled by such important events as the foundation of the Left Book Club and the appearance of John Lehmann's *New Writing*, which provided an audience for the politically-minded writers of the Auden group.

Literature immersed in politics

The poetry and prose of the decade is in many respects a projection of the sense of crisis and of the historical events of the time. The complex relation of literature and

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reduce armaments, the Oxford Union's resolution of 1936 asserting that "[t]his House would in no circumstances fight for its King and Country," the establishment of the Peace Pledge Union and not last it most probably enhanced acceptance of the non-intervention policy in Spain and the appeasement policy regarding Germany. (121)

society – to how much extent should literature be involved in social and political matters or should it let itself be invaded by such external issues at all – was a source of acute disagreement between the thirties' generation and its immediate predecessors, in Stephen Spender's term, the "poetic moderns" of the twenties. To reveal the essential truth of individual life, the modern "spiritualists" had created art that was centred on itself and not on anything outside it: they turned their attention to the individual's inner life and put the emphasis on the state of mind, on the stream of consciousness and on the subjective notion of time. (Spender, *Thirties*, 25) Though mostly reactionary in their politics, they were revolutionary in their art. (Spender, *Thirties*, 16) Wordsworthian isolation proved to be an untenable stance for the thirties facing rapid historical changes. Discussing modern tendencies in 'The Leaning Tower' Virginia Woolf claims that "[…] in 1930 it was impossible – if you were young, sensitive, imaginative – not to be interested in politics, not to find public causes of much more pressing interest than philosophy." (*Essays*, 169) From the midst of economical and political crisis the heroes of the moderns seemed to the thirties' generation not so much social beings as lonely, isolated creatures, taken from their context, from social reality. "The artist was conceived as leaping to and fro in a moral, political and economic void, usually in pursuit of something called 'Beauty', which was always one jump ahead," runs Orwell's dismissal. (*CEJL*1, 257) The "tragic sense of life" and lament over the fragmented universe is, nevertheless, a privilege of those living in relative comfort and security. Economic depression, the spreading of fascism and Stalinist communism and then the terrible world of the Second World War were not circumstances allowing for "writing esoteric poetry about the end of civilisation". (Spender, *Thirties*, 203) Being compelled to become engaged in public matters, thirties writers looked back on the twenties as a period of l'art pour l'art which for them became unacceptable and out-of-date. In 1936 Orwell wrote:

> The truth is that ours is not an age for mysterious romances about lunatics in ruined chateaux, because it is not an age in which one can be unaware of contemporary reality. You can't ignore Hitler, Mussolini, unemployment, aeroplanes and the radio; you can only pretend to do so, which means lopping off a large chunk of your consciousness. To turn away from everyday life and manipulate black paper silhouettes with the pretence that you are really interested in them, is a sort of game of make-believe, and therefore faintly futile, like telling ghost stories in the dark. (*CEJL*1, 248)

Cyril Connolly, a contemporary and school-mate of Orwell, in *Enemies of Promise* argues that there are periods in history when writers are more political than others, but these are not the periods of crisis or of the greatest political tension, but the transitional period preceding the crisis. (109) Before a war or a revolution, on the eve of the crisis, writers may still feel that they can influence people by their pleading, they are listened to, their words count. The thirties was undoubtedly a march towards the crisis of the Second World War, in which the writer could not afford himself not to deal with political issues:

> Today the forces of life and progress are ranging on one side, those of reaction and death on the other. We are having to choose between democracy and fascism, and fascism is the enemy of art. It is not a question of relative freedom; there are no artists in Fascist countries. We are not dealing with an Augustus who will discover his Horace and his Virgil, but with Attila or Hulaku, destroyers of European culture whose poets can contribute only to battlecries and sentimental drinking songs. (Connolly, *Enemies*, 110)

Thus, as opposed to the poetic moderns, for whom "practical politics were beneath discussion," the generation of the thirties was compelled by historical necessity to swim out "on those dirty political waters." (Spender, *Thirties*, 187-188) While the moderns tended to see and grasp life as a whole, the thirties' writers – through becoming engaged in conflicts and through taking sides therein – were likely to become partisans, supporting partial attitudes. (Spender, *Struggle*, 77) It is no wonder that seeing that the young generation "were putting the subject back into poetry" Woolf in her 'Letter to a Young Poet' (1932) protested against "sensitive and talented young Oxford and Cambridge poets echoing public matters with a public voice and not writing out of a Wordsworthian isolation, solitary among the solitary reepers." (quoted by Spender, *Thirties*, 190)

Woolf's dissatisfaction with the young ones' inclination to get involved in public matters illustrates well the essential difference between the two generations. Looking back on the characteristic features of English intellectuals as a group in different periods Tosco Fyvel in *Intellectuals Today* observes that the leading English literary intellectuals of the twenties made "something of a fashion of alienation." (33) Being aware of their special sensibility, they lived "alongside rather than within society." Having lost a seemingly stable world with the Great War, they prophesied the disintegration of bourgeois society and saw no possible alternative beyond it. 'The

Waste Land' and 'The Second Coming' are emblematic of the sense of ennui and pessimism felt by the socially alienated intelligentsia of the time. The intellectuals of the thirties, who were born around the turn of the century and who thus missed the opportunity to participate in the Great War, grew up into a world marked by economic depression and when by the second half of the decade unemployment and financial insecurity eased, they had to face the advance of fascism, rearmament and the imminent threat of a new world war. As Fyvel puts it: "The demons against which the intellectuals of the thirties felt they must fight […] were real demons." (*Intellectuals*, 40) Fascism and the danger of another world war, as external inimical factors exerted a uniting effect on society as a whole, this time not excluding the intellectuals. While the writers of the twenties were proud to keep society at a safe distance, those of the thirties searched for active contact with it. Their re-integration into society happened through left-wing commitment, but according to Fyvel, "the *fact* of this social commitment was […] more important than the pro-Communist views it often involved; […] it remains the key to understanding the literature of the thirties in its proper context, and seeing why it differed so much from what became before and after." (*Intellectuals*, 44)

The BBC during the war years offered an outstanding opportunity for British intellectuals to find their niche in society. It employed many literary intellectuals, e.g. William Empson, Louis MacNeice, Dylan Thomas, George Orwell, who were willing to serve their country at war. One departmental head, Laurence Gilliam, highlighted the way this kind of job bore on the relation of intellectuals and society:

> What was happening here was a closing of the gap between the intellectual and the community. The intellectual found himself not on a limb, not on a small magazine, writing his poems or articles or critical essays for a tiny audience, but temporarily re-united with the community as a whole and able to serve it with his special talents, without losing his poetic identity or his independence. I think most of the people found considerable fulfilment and happiness in doing this – and a regular salary too. (Fyvel, *Intellectuals*, 49)

A pre-condition of the re-integration of intellectuals into society was that they spoke more or less the same language with society at large. Therefore, in accordance with the emphasis shifting from the aesthetic and the mode of expression to the content, the language of the young generation became somewhat more accessible for the reader. While Eliot in his essay on 'The Metaphysical Poets' declared that in a civilisation of "great complexity" modern poets "must be *difficult*", Michael Roberts, an editor of the

Oxford poets' works declared that new writing has to "clear itself from the complexity and introspection, the doubt and cynicism of recent years […]." (Cunningham, 299) Needless to say, sometimes both tendencies were carried to their extremes. If the art of the Bloomsburies could ironically be characterised by the assumption that "one doesn't write *about* anything, one just *writes*" (*CEJL*1, 257), several writers of the 30s fell into the trap of making their art into political propaganda, especially into Marxist propaganda.

The unwillingness of the government to tackle unemployment and its inefficient appeasement policy toward the monstrous dictators abroad called forth a violent swing to the Left on the part of the majority of intellectuals.[2] The flirtation of many intellectuals, among them leading poets like Auden, MacNeice, Spender, with communism is in retrospect treated as a regression from modernism. It was a period of crisis, in which "the witness and the chronicler played, if not a more important, a more immediately relevant part than the philosopher or the man of imagination". (Calder, 7) Much of the thirties' writing is personal reportage and reaction to history, and was far from the ideal of impersonal poetry demanded by Eliot.[3] Woolf observed that circumstances turned thirties writers into great egotists. "When everything is rocking round one," writes Woolf in her account of the thirties, "the only person who remains comparatively stable is oneself. […] No other ten years can have produced so much autobiography as the ten years between 1930 and 1940." (*Essays*, 174) The younger generation in a certain sense regressed from the poetic aims of their predecessors but the aberration was understandable in the context of the time. It was a period in which a poem as apolitical as 'The Waste Land' took on political aspects and suddenly seemed to be politically symptomatic, offering a choice between despair and revolution. (Spender, *Thirties*, 24)

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[2] Stephen Spender recalled that the reason for the decision of the British leadership to enter a war with Hitler after much hesitation was "not so much that Hitler was evil as that he had gone too far". (*Thirties*, 85)

[3] Looking back from the distance of years Spender expressed some doubt whether the involvement of the kitchen sink realists in politics was justifiable. The reactionaries did put literature before politics. "They did not, as the anti-fascist writers did, abandon or postpone their literary tasks. For the anti-fascists allowed themselves, rightly or wrongly, to be persuaded that civilisation could only be saved by action: the logical consequence of this attitude was to put writing at the service of necessity as dictated by political leaders." (*Thirties*, 208)

An important reason for moving towards the Left in politics was a feeling of "crise de conscience" on the part of the intelligentsia, which was mainly middle-class in origin. (Spender, *Thirties*, 24) They were the beneficiaries of a system that supported their interests and let down the lower classes. According to Woolf they became conscious of the tower they dwelt, the tower of middle-class birth and expensive education, and the frustration resulting from awareness of the injustice of a society that pampered them explains the violence of their attack upon bourgeois society. (*Essays*, 172) They felt obliged to abuse a society that gave them comfort, stability and privilege, hence their prevailing emotions: discomfort, self-pity and anger at society. (*Essays*, 168) And there was also the natural drive of the anxiety of influence, to turn one's back on one's father. Spender admits that the young generation became stubborn anti-fascist as a reaction against their liberal fathers, "the old men in power," who "while talking about freedom and democracy, were not prepared to denounce Hitler or support the Spanish Republic." (*Thirties*, 195) When social conditions began to intrude on their consciousness, the intellectuals found themselves responsible for changing society: they felt compelled to preach "the creation of a society in which every one is equal and every one is free." (Woolf, *Essays*, 172) In the widespread disillusionment the socialist ideal seemed to be something worth believing in, so much so that it took on the aspects of a kind of religion replacing Christianity. Orwell found that in a time of chaos and instability communism demonstrated order and discipline to people (*CEJL*1, 515), Cecil Day Lewis also recognised this aspect of communism: "our generation, sick to death of protestant democratic liberalism and the intolerable burden of the individual conscience, are turning to the old or new champions of order and authority, the Roman Catholic Church or Communism […]." (Cunningham, 271) The progress of time and the change of ideologies is well implied by Malcolm Muggeridge's description of Kipling's burial in 1936:

> […] when Kipling's coffin arrived at Golders Green to be cremated, the crematorium was still littered with red flags and other revolutionary insignia taken there in honour of Saklatvala, a wealthy Parsee and former Communist Member of Parliament for Battersea, whose cremation had just taken place. The strains of the *Internationale* had scarcely dies away when the corpse of the inventor of the White Man's Burden was consigned to flames which had lately consumed the mortal remains of Saklatvala. (*Thirties*, 15)

Naturally, the vision of an earthly Paradise did not evoke the same degree of commitment among intellectuals of the time. Looking back on those years Richard Rees claims that they were a part of the "wave of hysterical Russia-worship" that swept through England in the 30s and that pulled many intellectuals to the Left, or even to join the Communist Party, but "they did nothing except much talk or write poems; very few sacrifices were made or dangers incurred." (47) Spender in retrospect admits that their political poetry had a "for the duration outlook" and that compared with the "incommunicable reality" of the decade, the thirties' writing was "a mockery, like a parrot imitating the screaming of a prisoner being tortured. […] To write the truth about the time one would have to enter into this cave of fire, but in doing so one would be annihilated." (*Thirties*, 17, 22) That is to say, not everyone was ready to immerse in the "destructive element." The phrase, upon a footnote in I. A. Richards' article 'A Background for Contemporary Poetry' in a 1925 issue of *The Criterion* soon became a catch-phrase cited and diffused enthusiastically by Richards' disciples. (Cunningham, 58) Richards considered Eliot's 'The Waste Land' the quintessential modern poem that expressed the post-war sense of destruction, futility and uncertainty, but at the same time showed the way out of the chaos, which was – quite paradoxically, according to Richards – the "determined acceptance of the chaos." To support his point of view Richards turned to Joseph Conrad and adopted Stein's advice in *Lord Jim* to immerse in the destructive element: "The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up." (Conrad, 207) The only way out of the chaos of the modern world was acquiescence in the horrors of that world. According to Valentine Cunningham, Richards touched exactly upon what was widely felt by the generation of young writers, namely that being born into the post-war world meant that man was an inhabitant of a world of violence, constantly threatened with destruction. (58) It was a time of demonstrations and marches, police violence against demonstrators, police protection of Mosley's fascist rallies at home, rearmament, concentration camps and frame-up trials abroad.

In the long run, however, it became obvious that bourgeois heritage and the aims of the masses could not be reconciled. Cunningham emphasises that leftist literature required an art of "transition" and bourgeois writers were often judged "according to

how they coped with the problem of transition", that is whether they managed to "go over" to the lower classes. (212) Connolly clarifies going over in the following way: "[…] a writer 'goes over' when he has a moment of conviction that his future is bound up with that of the working classes. Once he has felt this his behaviour will inevitably alter. Often it will be recognised only by external symptoms, a disinclination to wear a hat or a stiff collar, an inability to be rude to waiters or taxi-drivers […]." (*Enemies*, 115) Very often, however, this challenge resulted in a crisis of identity on behalf of the Auden group. They could not bring themselves to make the essential steps because it would have meant a kind of literary suicide for them. They could not easily ditch the old 'I', representing the egoistic individual, to 'we', the symbol of belonging to a community, and in this case, to an alien community for the bourgeois: the working class. "[…] being challenged to go over made a peculiarly serious crisis for the bourgeois, particularly in his aspect as bourgeois individual, as the privately shut-in, lonely, and egoistic individualist, the aspect of selfhood most characteristic of the writer since the Renaissance." (Cunningham, 214)

The 'smell' issue

The difficulties that lay in crossing the class border were well exposed by the life and early works of George Orwell. For reasons to which I shall return later, Orwell's commitment involved real immersion into the lower layers of society. Though with his bag always packed for the journey back, he did go slumming in London, he visited and took part in the life of the poor in Paris, he witnessed the life of the desolate mining villages in the North, worked together with hop-pickers and fought on the side of the workers in the Spanish Civil War, which was then seen by many as an essentially class war. On the one hand his identification with the oppressed and the victimised turned into enormous pride mixed with something sour and negative, the pride of a virtuous loser on the side of the downtrodden, on the other hand his experiences provided him with a viewpoint much more realistic and down-to-earth than that of those who advocated the cause of the masses only from behind the desk. Conflicting viewpoints burst out into a fierce row in connection with Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Commissioned by his publisher, Victor Gollancz, to write about the life of the

mining villages in the North, Orwell outdid what was asked of him and – whether to his publisher's content or regret has been a matter of debate – he added an autobiographical and quite personal part to his findings. In this part he gave an account of his life thereto with special regard to the negative effects of middle-class education on one's attitude to the "lower classes", he discussed the reasons why "so many normal decent people are repelled by the only remedy, namely by Socialism," and he also contemplated the inevitable difficulties in going over, among them the unsurpassable barrier caused by the awkward phenomenon hammered into middle-class children early in life, that the working classes smell. In this particular case Orwell was tactful and careful enough – which was not characteristic of him every time – to dull the force of his daring statement and modify it to shake off responsibility. "That was what we were taught – *the lower classes smell*."(*CW*5, 119, italics in the original) This is what Orwell wrote. Nevertheless, it turns out from the first part of the book that Orwell *was* disgusted by the filth and smell of some working-class homes and did see the connection between extreme poverty and filth and smell. His extremely sensitive nostrils were always on the alert for smell: at school, in the trenches, in the spike – he was obsessed with smell and squalor wherever he found them and did not conceal his physical repulsion. Nevertheless, he couldn't have been cautious enough in such a delicate issue: holding forth about this phenomenon so expressly provoked a flood of anxious criticism. According to Cunningham, "[n]othing else illuminates so well the anxiety of the thirties' bourgeois intellectuals about what going over might entail than the panic caused on the Left by Orwell's allegation." (244) Leftist bourgeois intellectuals were reluctant to accept Orwell's insistence that there were such deep, insoluble problems in going over.

After handing in the manuscript to his literary agent in December 1936, Orwell left for Spain. Shortly afterwards, the book was chosen by the three selectors of the Left Book Club – John Strachey, Harold Laski and Victor Gollancz – to be published for club members in the club's familiar limp orange cover – this decision ensured Orwell a much wider audience and also a foreword that has been interpreted diversely by posterity but even by Orwell himself. On 9 May 1937, when on leave in Barcelona from the front line, he wrote to Gollancz thanking him for his foreword: "I liked the introduction very much, though of course I could have answered some of the criticism

you made. It was the kind of discussion of what one is really talking about that one always wants & never seems to get from the professional reviewers." (*CW*5, 229) But Peter Davison points out that when discussing the affair with Sonia Orwell much later, he saw it in a different light. On the whole the foreword is a praise of the book ("it is a long time since I have read so *living* a book") with some reservations concerning, of course, the second part. The first part, says Gollancz, is really "the kind of thing that makes converts," but the second is "highly provocative," therefore the greatest part of Gollancz's discussion deals with Orwell's arguments therein. First and foremost it refutes Orwell's belief that in the opinion of the middle class in general the working class smells. But, while maintaining that Orwell is "exaggerating violently," he admits that through Orwell's honest confession of personal qualms the chapter throws light on the sombre reality of class distinctions. "I know, in fact, of no other book in which a member of the middle class exposes with such complete frankness the shameful way in which he was brought up to think of large numbers of his fellow men." (*CW*5, 219) Then it argues that when protesting against birth-control, which Orwell regards as one of the crankish issues of socialists, he contradicts himself, since in the first part he realised the connection between the misery and wretchedness of the poor and the size of families. It, furthermore, touches on Orwell's naïve assumption that the process of industrialism can or should be somehow reversed and to prove the positive aspects of "Socialist industrialism" as opposed to "capitalist industrialism" he mentions the achievements of the Soviet Union. (Gollancz was not inclined to accept the more sombre truth about the SU until about 1939.) And finally he makes it clear that the notion of freedom and liberty are too vague to base the appeal of socialism on them, the phrases of Nazi propaganda and the aims of Nazism are an ample proof of it.[4]

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[4] When revisiting Wigan Pier in the eighties, Beatrix Campbell reproached Orwell's notion of socialism for its too general appeal and lack of concreteness too. Part of his attraction, says Campbell, lies in his appeal for commonsense and decency – words which can highly vary according to one's own individual conviction. "You can forgive a lot for his few kind words, especially when they are punctuated by his ambitious appeal to the Left to reclaim the principles of patriotism, justice and liberty. […] Whenever socialism seems to be on the run, there is a panicky retreat to these evergreen commandments. However, it is a counsel of despair – when you don't know what to do, you seek solace in the great 'moral virtues'. The beauty of them is that everybody thinks they know what they mean, though they never say what they mean. Orwell moves between these great moral virtues and the private, commonsense morality of decency. […] his mobilisations of decency and commonsense are an important intervention in socialist culture. But Orwell takes commonsense as unified and simple, and it is precisely those virtues that he

Probably in awareness of the fact that the Left Book Club and the three selectors were strongly tied up with the Communist Party and Orwell had an unstable relation with his publisher, more malignity has been attributed to Gollancz's foreword than there is actually in it. "This brief statement," wrote Robert Hatch in 1958, "gives the book a final historical glamour – it shunts you back all at once into a period when men still thought of themselves as individually responsible and potent in social affairs. . . . These men [Gollancz, Laski and Strachey] operated on the assumption that they grasped the issues of their day." (*Critical Heritage*, 114-5) It was Harry Pollitt, leader of the Communist Party who attacked Orwell in the *Daily Worker* in March 1937 by referring to his supposedly saying that the working class smelled. ("If ever snobbery had its hallmark placed upon it, it is by Mr Orwell. […] I gather that the chief thing that worries Mr Orwell is the 'smell' of the working class, for smells seem to occupy the major portion of the book." *CW*12, 73) Knowing that his publisher was in touch with people in authoritative position, Orwell asked Gollancz to intervene and stop attacks, which, Orwell assumed, were in connection with his having served in the P.O.U.M. anarchist militia in Spain and its discrediting campaign by the Communist Party in the spring of 1937. In his indignant letter to Gollancz he wrote in August:

> The statement or implication that I think working people 'smell' is a deliberate lie aimed at people who have not read this or any other of my books, in order to give them the idea that I am a vulgar snob and thus indirectly hit at the political parties with which I have been associated. These attacks in the 'Worker' only began after it became known to the Communist Party that I was serving with the P.O.U.M. militia. (*CW*12, 72)

Gollancz contacted Pollitt on the issue and no more word was uttered in the question at the time.

The issue, however, appeared once again with the same kind of distortion many years later in the columns of *Tribune*, apropos of a collection which included an essay by J.E. Miller, 'George Orwell and Our Times'. The correspondence that followed the review of the collection (summed up by Davison as 'Orwell and the Stinkers') ran for a month in 1945. Paul Potts, among others, intervened in the debate in defence of Orwell, accusing J. E. Miller with reiterating the old libel. Orwell also answered the charges of

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affirms which have always been kidnapped by the Right, never more effectively than in the eighties, with their rugged renewal by Thatcherism." (219)

Miller, emphasising that in *The Road to Wigan Pier* he was speaking about the prejudices middle-class children were taught concerning the working class. In his reply Orwell channelled the debate into a slightly different direction: instead of being dirty due to poor circumstances, middle-class children were brought up to believe that working-class people were "smelly by nature," said Orwell. "We were taught that the 'lower classes' (as it was usual to call them) had a different smell from ourselves, and that it was a nasty smell; we were taught just the same about Jews, Negroes and various other categories of human beings." (*CW*17, 204) This slight change in emphasis shows that from a few years' distance Orwell may have realised that the significance which he had attributed to the question was excessive. The shift also reveals how Orwell's viewpoints developed in the years between: he realised that the issues of colour and race were more urgent and real than the alleged dirtiness of the working class – a development that was reasonably partly due to the years he spent at the B.B.C. The whole issue of 'smell' was put into its due place by Philip Toynbee, who in 1959 wrote that "the question of whether people smell or not never had the obsessive importance which Orwell gave to it, and has almost none today. But the real separation is precisely one of education […]" and pointed out that Orwell's praise of the condescending attitude of the working class to education was "a piece of idiocy which would ruin a book of lesser passion." (*Critical Heritage*, 117)

The winding up of the decade

The revolution and war in Spain meant an exceptionally significant phase for English leftists. The Civil War, encapsulating all the hopes of the decade, "made an epoch." Participation in the Civil War and crossing the Spanish frontier was "part and parcel of crossing the metaphorical class border." (Cunningham, 214) Connolly explains that Spain helped many writers to surpass the psychological barrier and go over. Spain was a "moment of vision" in which fears could be surmounted:

> It is too early yet to say whether writers have done anything for Spain, but it is clear that Spain has done an immense amount for writers, since many have had that experience there and have come back with their fear changed to love, isolation to union, and indifference to action. (*Enemies*, 115)

Spain held out the possibility of real action and ultimately differentiated between the "notorious stay-at-homes" and those ready to make sacrifices. Auden returned from Spain after only two months and – according to Spender – never spoke of his experiences there. 'Spain' came to be one his last poems in which he gave evidence of his social commitment. Like all other intellectuals who were reluctant to fight, he had to come to terms with the essential nature of his character and had to cope with the shame at having been unable to merge his self in the cause of the masses. Spender admits that the real thirties was that of Cornford, Christopher Caudewell, Ralph Fox, Julian Bell and Tom Wintringham, who took part in the fight and some of whom fell on the battlefields. Compared to them Auden and himself were only tourists, making short-term visits and even those at a safe distance. For them Spain was an "inner journey" in which they struggled with doubts concerning the individual's function in the war. They failed the test of action and bravery, which led them to the clarification of the self and ultimately instead of pulling them to the "public arena" returned them to "the personal, the inactive, the uncommitted or differently committed." (Cunningham, 460)

The regrettable ending of the Spanish Civil War, together with the German-Soviet pact of 1939, broke the spirit of the decade. These events shattered overnight all the hopes and illusions nursed throughout the decade. (Symons, *Thirties*, 148) The defeat of the Spanish Republic meant that "the thirties was being wound up like a company going into bankruptcy". (Spender, *Thirties*, 85) It was a common assumption that those who died on the battlefields were in a sense the lucky ones. The ensuing world war lacked all the hope, belief, idealism and positive heroism of the Spanish War. Soon after the outbreak of the Second World War enthusiastic leftists like Orwell had to realise that this time the only aim of war could be to choose the lesser evil out of two evils (imperialism versus fascism) and that it was not the time of sublime revolutionary ideas. Cyril Connolly started *Horizon* in September 1939 with the following comment:

> At the moment civilisation is on the operating table and we sit in the waiting room. For so far this is a war without the two great emotions which made the Spanish conflict real to so many of us. It is a war which awakens neither Pity nor Hope, and what began as a routine police operation, a military sanction, is now hardening into the grim historical necessity of Keeping Alive. (Spender, *Thirties*, 88)

The departure of Auden and Isherwood to America in January 1939 came to be regarded as a symbolic event. It marked the end of the great upheaval of left wing feeling; even those, who stayed were denied the possibility to fight for anything positive and had to rest satisfied with the unrewarding struggle against the various forms of 20th-century totalitarianism. "By the end of 1939," describes Symons the atmosphere, "the great tide of Left wing feeling had receded beyond the bounds of vision, and the land it had covered was as smooth, almost, as though the tide had never been." (*Thirties*, 147)

Thirties' literature: a scene for "young(ish) males"

As the source of my quotations also indicates, the period and its literature abound with reflections by active partakers. Concerning the autobiographical nature of thirties writing Janet Montefiore notes that "their work looked backwards from the start and has constantly returned to the thirties ever since the decade ended." (26) Spender's volumes of recollection are a fine example of this obsession. Relying on partakers' memoirs, literature on the thirties – the standard textbooks of, for example, Samuel Hynes and Michael Cunningham – to some extent reiterate their concerns, viewpoints and blindnesses. Due to the increased involvement of literary intellectuals in social and public affairs, literature was more than ever a scene for male writers. The conventional assumption that the public domain, the making and discussing of history, was a male preserve, was not questioned, on the eve of the crisis it did not seem a relevant issue. Though middle-class women writers from the terrain of left-wing or liberal traditions were numerous (among them ones with whom Orwell also had a relation one way or another, if only through reviewing, for example, Vera Brittain, Nancy Cunard, Naomi Mitchison, Stevie Smith, Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf), according to Montefiore they were "nudged out of view by the unquestioned assumption that the literature of the thirties belongs only to its young(ish) males." (22) Some, mainly female, critics with an alternative approach to the thirties have challenged the established standard by calling attention to the gender-blind nature of the record and by digging up and discussing women writers of the time. Rejecting the usual labels and approach Janet Montefiore, Daphne Patai, Angela Ingram and Andy Croft among others refuse to read these women's works simply as "women's writing" and call for replacing them within their

historical context. From numerous aspects women writers constitute a check on the viewpoints of the majority of men writers that have been regarded as general or even universal. The Great War, for example, the test missed by the standard thirties' generation that was born just too late, is a significant memory in women's writing as well but with a different slant. While for the Auden generation it was a missed opportunity, the denial of which they acutely felt in their mutilated masculinity, Storm Jameson, Vera Brittain or Sylvia Townsend Warner came of age during the war and for them it was something to be relented and avoided rather than missed. (Montefiore, 3) This difference in viewpoint will manifest itself in the debate of George Orwell and Vera Brittain on obliteration bombing, which I will look at in the chapter 'The man with a grouse' in detail.

Montefiore claims that the blind spot for the viewpoints of others than letfish literary intellectuals was partly due to their emphatic claim to represent the consciousness of their generation as a whole. Adopting thirties writers' own evaluation as the universal representatives of a generation, which involved the adoption of a good amount of gender bias, critics magnified their figures and their consciousness many times and shrank all other concerns of intellectuals (and non-intellectuals) not belonging to the standard group. (Montefiore, 22) It will be interesting to see that the claim to represent the consciousness of the generation is central even to such an outsider as George Orwell. Though he went out of his way to dissociate himself from the Auden generation all his career and preferred to cast an image of himself as one who represents the consciousness of common men, men in his vocabulary did not include women. With an embarrassing degree of self-conceit, as it will be shown, Orwell took for granted his own universal status as a representative of common, decent and leftish Englishmen. Montefiore argues that the autobiographical slant helped to reshape the writers' private mythologies of their own lives into public parables. (81) That they represent an issue as the predicament of the generation and thereby transform the personal into the political is especially true of Orwell. Tosco Fyvel recalled that Orwell looked at the world through the lens of his own personal situation, which is mild criticism for the egotistic way with which he liked to depict his own predicament as that of his generation. Quite characteristically, 'Inside the Whale', his essay surveying the literary trends from Housman to his day, excludes both working-class and women writers from the record

and focuses only on left-wing ex-public school intellectuals of the decade. In relation to the Auden generation he liked to establish himself as an outsider but with regard to birth and social status he was a "tower dweller" all the same.[5]

Comparing Woolf's 'The Leaning Tower' and Orwell's 'Inside the Whale' as essays looking back at the thirties from 1940, Montefiore notes that though the two authors had "little time for one another" they attack the literature of the thirties, by which they meant mainly the literature of the Auden group, "in remarkably similar terms." (12) Montefiore's main charge against both of them is that their horizon of thirties' writing incorporates only the Auden group and excludes all other contributors to literature. Given Woolf's concern for women's issues, the charge is all the graver for her. However, though it is true that Woolf does not mention a single female writer, some other aspects of her essay that are in relation to the issue should also be taken into account. Woolf's (and Orwell's) intention in the essay is to survey the literary trends of the recent past and present. Trends were at that time predominantly shaped and defined by male writers and critics. (This factor exonerates also Orwell of the charge.) What's more, as Montefiore also observes, the women writers she misses from the accounts were almost ten years older than the Auden generation, and – though active in the thirties as well – they could also be relegated to the twenties. Finally and most importantly, the closing passages of Woolf's essay should not be overlooked. Both Orwell and Woolf cast a glance at the future. Orwell envisions an age of totalitarian dictatorship – an obsession colouring most of his writings of the 1940s – "an age in which freedom of thought will be at first a deadly sin and later on a meaningless abstraction." (*CW*12, 110) As a relief from "the Boy Scout atmosphere of bare knees and community singing" Orwell prophesies a literature of conscious passivity, quietism

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[5] Looking back on the thirties when reviewing *Great Morning* by Osbert Sitwell in 1948, Orwell characteristically dissociated himself from the literary trend of the decade and deplored its members for allegedly false assumptions, which however he also shared. "The great thing is to be your age, which includes being honest about your social origins. In the nineteen-thirties we saw a whole literary generation, or at least the most prominent members of a generation, either pretending to be proletarians or indulging in public orgies of self-hatred because they were not proletarians. Even if they could have kept up this attitude (today, a surprising number of them have either fled to America or found themselves jobs in the B.B.C. or the British Council), it was a stupid one, because their bourgeois origin was not a thing that could be altered." (*CW*19, 397) Had he been as honest as he demanded of others, he should have used the first person instead of the third person plural. What was the whole of the second part of *The Road to Wigan Pier* about if not about getting rid of the middle-class background and coming to terms with the workers?

and irresponsibility of the Henry Miller type. As opposed to Orwell's sombre vision, Woolf more optimistically looks forward to a future without classes or towers, with people standing on the common ground. Such a new world will produce, Woolf hopes, a more varied literature. Dismissing the England of the past for cramming a small aristocratic class on the tower, i.e. ensuring education only for the privileged middle class, she calls upon "commoners and outsiders" to read and criticise, to contribute and write. Montefiore notes that Woolf's (and Orwell's) representation of themselves as outsiders excluded from the privileged lives of those they criticise is "rather disingenuous." (12) Being born into a well-to-do middle-class family, Woolf was of course in no way an outsider in an economic sense. However, Woolf's term "commoners and outsiders" refers not only to the underprivileged class, in spite of the fact that having read the paper to the Workers' Educational Association in Brighton, that was supposed to be the principal addressee of her essay. Outsiders is a term of wider reference than commoners and – though the text nowhere refers to women explicitly – Woolf's concerns and the context makes it quite clear that for her women constitute a significant group of outsiders. The closing passages have a strong feminist overtone. Resentment at England's exclusion of commoners from education involves resentment at her exclusion of women.

> She has left the other class, the immense class to which almost all of us must belong, to pick up what we can in village schools; in factories; in workshops; behind counters; and at home. When one thinks of that criminal injustice one is tempted to say England deserves to have no literature. She deserves to have nothing but detective stories, patriotic songs and leading articles for generals, admirals and business men to read themselves to sleep with when they are tired of winning battles and making money. (*Essays*, 177)

Whereas village schools, factories, workshops and counters were places where the lower class picked up their knowledge, home was typically the scene of girls' education at the time, which – herself having been denied the access to formal education – was a sore spot in Woolf's personal life and was one of her prime concerns regarding women's issues. Encouraging everybody without discrimination to read and write she asserts firmly that "in the future we are not going to leave writing to be done for us by a small class of well-to-do young men who have only a pinch, a thimbleful of experience to give us." (*Essays,* 178) The unequivocal reference to middle-class male intellectuals discloses Woolf's resentment at the privileged status of literary men, which due to her

personal situation was obviously of greater concern for her than the privileged status of the whole middle class. Therefore, though Montefiore's charge of omitting women writers from her account is strictly speaking true, it was a fact Woolf herself was conscious of and resented. There is no such perspective in Orwell's survey. Having clamoured against the war in the years preceding it, he finally decided to be a true patriot loyal to his England when the threat of war became reality. The essay is indicative of the agony into which he fell over the difficulty of how to account for his turn of mind to himself and to his readers. The preference for the irresponsible and passive attitude he admired in Henry Miller was only a temporary phase indicating his crisis which he overcame by committing himself to his native land more than ever – a commitment meeting a standard requirement of masculinity.

The facets of Orwell

"[…] it is perhaps true that Orwell was prematurely canonised. Because he acted what he believed and because he saw through many of the left-wing follies of his time he became, in the years after his death, something a little bit more than human." (Philip Toynbee)

Becoming a "national institution"

Orwell firmly belonged to those full-heartedly committed. His way of life was in accord with his writing, implying fervent commitment. In Spender's words, "he has practised what he preached. He is a social democrat who has fought for his beliefs and voluntarily lived like a poor man." (*Critical Heritage*, 314) John Rodden in *The Politics of Literary Reputation* identifies Orwell not so much as an artistic hero, but rather as an intellectual hero, who "writes for the age rather than the ages. Unlike the artistic hero, he or she may or may not leave any works to 'posterity', but he accepts this as the price of his commitment: he speaks to the moment and aims to shape the present." (402) Rodden points out how the obituaries of Arthur Koestler, Lionel Trilling and Stephen Spender established the image of Orwell as a virtuous opponent of orthodoxy, authority and tyranny and how this aspect of his life and work became the dominant element of the posthumous cult. The authoritative voices in Orwell's reputation-building acknowledged an unconditional admiration for the rebellious Orwell, who – based on Orwell's own confession – understood the true nature of tyranny at a very early age at school and who, as a result, took up the role of a virtuous loser, a failure and carried it to the end of his life; who denied his middle-class origins and sought contact and intimacy with the lower classes in Paris, London, and then in Spain; who could never identify with the only social group to which he would have and indeed did most naturally belong, the intelligentsia and instead constantly scourged it for its lack of common sense; who undertook the thankless task of being an internal critic of the Left; who was a natural rebel, the permanent odd man out. Koestler and Orwell mutually acknowledged each other's rebelliousness. Koestler in his 1950 obituary of Orwell noted that "his life was one consistent series of rebellions both

against the conditions of society in general and his own particular predicament". (*Critical Heritage*, 297) To live in quixotic isolation, to be a permanent dissenter and to be always on the side of the oppressed, always in search of Truth fends off the attribution of narrow-mindedness and vanities of mankind. And, as Rodden provides the necessary logical link to the high esteem in which Orwell is held, "to admire another's rebellion is to participate in it in some way, to be something of a rebel oneself." (*Politics*, 120) Quite importantly, Orwell seemed to be a rebel against the world for the fate and interest of the common man. His repeated (over-)emphasis on the decency of "common man" and his rancour against the English intelligentsia enhanced the image of Orwell as a champion of the man-in-the-street.

Orwell's quixotic predicament is aptly suggested by a scene Spender visualises while reading Orwell's essays. (*Critical Heritage*, 313) In Spender's mind the essays of *England your England and Other Essays* evoke the picture of a tall, lean man holding forth on freedom and the social classes for a group of working-class people (his "common men") in a London pub. While he is talking, he is hardly able to disguise his contempt for the bearded Intellectual speaking French over at the bar some yards away. The scene is of course highly idealistic: it presents Orwell as a kind of messianic figure prophesying to a group of incredulous workers that freedom is going to disappear soon from the face of the earth. But it also epitomises some very important aspects of Orwell's life and outlook: the scene is characteristically set in a pub, the place where ordinary people gather after work. Orwell is surrounded by workers listening to him speak. They are seemingly in the intimate contact which Orwell sought but could not achieve in his life. As they cast a wary eye at the bearded Intellectual (with a capital I) the contrast between Orwell among the group of workers and the lonely Intellectual epitomises Orwell's lifelong criticism of intellectuals (in Alex Comfort's words, his "intellectual hunting"). However, the implied intimacy with the workers is soon revealed as false since, it turns out, "the workers themselves […] do not think that this strange man […] is one of them." At the beginning of the scene it was the Intellectual who appeared to be lonesome but by the end it turns out that the loneliness of "the prophet" is much more profound: he belongs neither to the intellectuals, nor to the workers. And his loneliness becomes all the more painful as the workers see through him: "And deep down, they feel sorry for him. What they understand is that he is sick

and sad and that he has a vision of terrible realities which they prefer not to think about." This may well be Spender's own sympathy for his restless writer colleague, who was incapable of making any compromise with life, and who carried his dark vision, his odd manias and obsessions to extremes. The emotion aroused in Spender by Orwell is very similar to Muggeridge's feelings about Orwell, who once termed him a "dear oddity," suggesting that Orwell in Muggeridge's eyes was a loveable but in some aspects absurd man. ('Knight', 172)

Contributing to his image as an "extraordinary ordinary man," his down-to-earth, straightforward prose style made him more accessible to the common reader (and less of a suitable subject for structuralist, or post-structuralist critics). Withstanding the "lure of profundity"[6] and writing in a characteristically plain-spoken style meant a refreshing change from the aestheticism of the 1920s and created a bridge between high and mass culture. He has become the unique author, claims Rodden, whose works are not only assigned by school curricula but are widely read by the general public, by the "common man". The lack of literary genius enhances identification with him. Lionel Trilling in 'George Orwell and the Politics of Truth', written as an introductory essay to the 1952 edition of *Homage to Catalonia*, for example, finds immense relief that here is an outstanding writer at last, who is a figure in our lives, but who is not a genius. "We admire geniuses, we love them, but they discourage us." Orwell's great virtue is that of not being a genius, of being able to face the world "with nothing more than one's simple, direct, undeceived intelligence." (Trilling, 66)

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[6] In 'The Lure of Profundity' Orwell reviews Ortega Y Gasset's *Invertebrate Spain*, a book of essays, which aims to illuminate the causes of the Spanish Civil War but which – according to Orwell – gets nowhere. His criticism of Ortega Y Gasset's "bla-bla" on the Spanish soul and tradition, on the blood of the "degenerate" Visigoth is indicative of his undisguised intolerance of ideas which do not meet the demands of his logic, concreteness and practicality. In a letter to Henry Miller he admitted to have a "belly-to-earth attitude" which made him feel, he said, "uneasy when I get away from the ordinary world where the grass is green, the stones hard etc." (*CEJL*1, 228) He objected to Yeats' poetry partly on similar grounds. In his review of V.K. Narayana Menon's *The Development of W.B. Yeats* he relates Yeats' political deviance to his interest in occultism. "Hatred of democracy and a tendency to believe in crystal-gazing" says Orwell "go together." Opponents of progress "start off with a predilection towards secret cults." (*CW*14, 282) The review, which appeared in *Horizon* in January 1943, was followed by considerable correspondence in *TLS*, whereupon three months later a review of the same book, but much more favourable to Yeats, appeared written by Orwell in *Time and Tide.* Not that he approved of Yeats' obsession with the occult (his "outlook on life was not far removed from insanity"), yet he acknowledged his poetry. "His life was devoted to poetry with a completeness that has been very rare among the English-speaking peoples, and the results justified it." (*CW*15, 71) Interestingly though, when compiling material for *Critical Essays* in 1946 it was the *Horizon* review which he got published as 'W.B. Yeats' in it.

The core of his oeuvre and those works that earned him his fame (primarily *Animal Farm*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and journalism) were without exception political in content and touched upon the public issues of his time. He seems to have judged his output correctly when admitting in 'Why I Write' that "it is invariably where I lacked a *political* purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally." (*CW*18, 320) He was so deeply interested and involved in the public issues of his time that his preparatory school mate Cyril Connolly characterised him as a "political animal" who "could not blow his nose without moralising on conditions in the handkerchief industry". (Shelden, 263)

Being a champion of the common man, displaying an unwavering belief in truth, justice and decency, what's more, leading a life according to these principles prompts Rodden to remark that "Orwell's greatest character creation was himself, the whole literary and private personality." (*Politics*, 133) Labels attached to him by friends and acquaintances shortly after his death, like "the wintry conscience of his generation" (V.S. Pritchett), "social saint" (John Atkins), a "man who is what he writes" (Trilling) – labels which launched the Orwell hagiography and resulted in the Orwell legend – all highlighted the outstanding moral character of the author himself and less the literary merits of his works. Looking back on the writer and his works one might be tempted to presume that the way he lived is much more important than what he wrote. Rodden is ready to admit that "[i]t is quite questionable, almost painfully so for some admirers, whether Orwell's literary achievement – except perhaps in the essay form, where his compelling ethos so strongly appears – can bear the weight of esteem and significance which successive generations have bestowed upon him." (*Politics*, x)

During the last months of his life Orwell, the relatively little known English novelist and essayist, became the world-famous author of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and his death shortly after the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* made him a symbolic figure of the Cold War period. One might reasonably suppose that his sudden and exceptional fame was largely if not exclusively due to his last two books. The lavish praise and encomia bestowed on Orwell in obituaries and reviews elevated him to the stature of a heroic figure in the eyes of the most diverse intellectual and social groups. Left-wing intellectuals honoured him as a man who lived according to the

principles he preached, who – as a man of action – went down and out among the poor, who fought in the Spanish Civil War against fascism and who, at a time when few people had the courage to admit the evils of Stalinist communism, took the stance of an *advocatus diaboli* and became an internal critic of the Left. Conservatives approved of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as the anti-communist statement of a writer disillusioned with socialism, and saw Orwell as a champion of democracy who understood the importance and driving force of conservative values like patriotism, respect for national customs and personal liberty. Muggeridge explains how the conservative traits in Orwell's character raised the number of his enthusiasts: "The truth is he was by temperament deeply conservative. He loved the past, hated the present and dreaded the future. […] Part at least of his great popularity, on both sides of the Atlantic, has derived from this conservative undertow in his leftist course." ('Knight', 172) Anarchists echoed Orwell's anarchist affinities, partly on the ground that Orwell was a member of the anarchist POUM militia in the Spanish War and when discredited by the communists did not hesitate to come to their defence, and partly due to their belief that some of the components of Orwell's ethos were very much akin to their own principles, namely refusal of authority and orthodoxy, and the importance of intellectual flexibility and self-autonomy. Even Catholics claimed the atheist and quite often bitterly and fanatically anti-Catholic Orwell for their side, emphasising those features of his work and personality which bore affinity with Catholic values, for example, honesty, decency, care for the common man and the poor, anti-communism. As so many of Orwell's statements on writers and intellectuals turned out in the end to be applicable to himself, what he wrote about Dickens' becoming a national institution foreshadowed his own fate: "the very people he attacked have swallowed him so completely that he has become a national institution himself." (*CEJL*1, 415)

An apt indicator of Orwell's extraordinary reputation and role as an intellectual model has been the tendency to rely upon him as an unchallengeable authority. Rodden throws light on the rhetorical stance of many of Orwell's admirers: taking up a position of "shyness" they appeal to the recognised status of Orwell, thereby reinforcing his reputation and laying claim to him simultaneously. ('My Orwell', 13) The appearance of this classical rhetorical move in Orwell criticism, the argument *ad verecundiam*, is a sign of just how prestigious his reputation has become that it is worthwhile to claim him

for one's side. The whole process, notes Rodden, has led to the transformation of Orwell into an icon. ('My Orwell', 13)

The reasons for readers' admiration of Orwell as an intellectual hero and moral guide are various and complex. Besides the fact that his political allegiances were clearly definable, Orwell demanded and represented eternal values like Truth, Decency, Justice and Liberty, and his life is often seen as a quest for these noble ideals. His early experience of tyranny and snobbery at school and the defiance of authority later in his life, deriving allegedly from the nightmare atmosphere of St Cyprian's, his confessed sense of guilt at being a cog in the imperialist wheel in Burma, the resulting expiation of guilt among the down and out, his severe criticism of the contemporary socialist movement in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, his quixotic truth-telling efforts concerning the Civil War in Spain, his stubborn belief in the decency of the common man, his much-repeated insistence on the need for social justice and the importance of personal liberty all contributed to Orwell's reputation as an incarnation of these positive, apolitical principles. And since these ideals – however idealistic and vague they might seem – are valued at all times and are capable of lifting their followers out of context and history, so the writer who champions them will enjoy readers' estimation regardless of time. (Rodden, *Politics*, 134)

If the aforementioned ideals lifted Orwell out of his era and helped his reputation transcend party ideology, the fact that he was a public writer very much engaged in the issues of his day fixes him definitely in history and his activity as a writer becomes very much characteristic of the period from the pre-war years into the nascent Cold War. That Orwell's personal history touches upon practically all the pressing issues of his day, poverty, imperialism, socialism, war, revolution, and totalitarianism makes him appear an individual through whom "the 'universal' spirit of an age finds expression and from whose 'singular' experiences the character of an age is forged." (Rodden, *Politics*, 11) External conditions, primarily the continuing Cold War and therefore the continuing relevance of Orwell's works, especially that of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ensured increasing attention to Orwell, reaching its high point and saturation level in the Orwell-mania during the 1984 "countdown".

Whose Orwell?

Being a "political animal", it is not surprising that his work has invited politically motivated responses from readers and that during the Cold War he fell victim to political debates and was dragged to and fro, from one political group to another in order to bless their particular positions. According to Rodden, the abuse of political writers' works is practically inevitable:

> Orwell is arguably partly "responsible" for or complicitous in some of the abuses of his work, but the life and writings of every writer condition the course of his reputation. No political writer can avoid ideological distortion, let alone posthumous confiscation of his name, for no one can prevent observers from seizing on perceived affinities between his work and that of groups whom he opposed, from linking his position on one issue with a range of other allegedly related issues, or from ignoring or disregarding his stated intentions and /or the original context in which he wrote. (*Politics*, 5)

Political responses to his works and his assumed would-be opinion on political issues after his death were quite contradictory. Having been elevated to the pedestal of a "national institution", he was both well-known and – especially in the heat of the Cold War – misunderstood at the same time. It was basically *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, whose harsh criticism of totalitarianism in general, and as conservatives liked to point out, of Stalinist communism in particular, that provided sufficient ground for many reviewers to read the mature Orwell as a critic of the Soviet Union from the Right. A few days after the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Arthur Calder-Marshall fiercely attacked Orwell for presenting fascism and communism as being the same thing and thereby laying his novel at the feet of the Tories for election propaganda. (*CW*20, 128) His spite apart, Calder-Marshall proved to be right in pointing to the probable misinterpretation of the novel, the seeds of which were undeniably sown by the author himself. When *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was introduced by *Life* and the New York *Daily News* as an indictment on the left and the Labour government, Orwell felt the need to make his position clear and prepared a statement on his intentions in the novel.

> My recent novel "1984" is NOT intended as an attack on socialism, or on the British Labour Party (of which I am a supporter) but as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable and which have already been partly realized in Communism and Fascism.
>
> I do not believe that the kind of society which I described necessarily will arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that

> something resembling it could arrive. I believe also that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences.
>
> The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasize that the English speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if not fought against, could triumph anywhere. (*CW*20, 136)

Both connoisseurs of Orwell's oeuvre and personal acquaintances of the author were apt to misjudge Orwell's best-sellers. Gordon Bowker notes that even Orwell's publisher, Frederic Warburg, thought of ways of using *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for propagandistic purposes. (384) Recognising that he had a potential best-seller on his hands, the idea of a sales-enhancing propaganda movie came to his mind. "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* by the way might well be described as a horror novel, and would make a horror film, which, if licensed, might secure all countries threatened by communism for 1000 years to come." (*CW*19, 481) Warburg's "strictly confidential" report on the novel was among the first mistreatments of the book. It was not well understood, and is still not well understood today that Orwell was not a disillusioned ex-socialist, not to say ex-communist, but a consistent internal critic of the Left and that is precisely the reason for the high esteem in which he is held. John Wain rightly observes that up through 1937 Orwell saw the world struggle as between Left and Right and after 1937, the Spanish Civil War being the turning point, the emphasis shifted for him away from Left and Right to democracy versus totalitarianism and he criticised totalitarian tendencies regardless of which side they popped upon. ('In the Thirties', 79) He was fully aware of the significance of the lessons of the Spanish War in his own life: "The Spanish War and other events in 1936-7 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic Socialism as I understand it." (*CW*18, 319) His criticism of communist totalitarianism undoubtedly opened the way for conservative critics to lay claim to him. Characteristically, conservatives like to maintain that Orwell changed a lot during, and especially towards the end, of his career, namely, he discovered the positive force of patriotism and national customs, he looked back on the past with nostalgia and above all he accepted no excuses for the totalitarianism of Soviet communism. For these reasons they claimed the final Orwell, whereas the Left typically minimised the extent of Orwell's development and argued

that his standpoint did not change significantly and they therefore laid claim to the whole Orwell. (Rodden, *Politics*, 309)

Ideological misreading is a result of selective reading pursuant to one's own conviction, of picking out and highlighting those aspects of a writer's work that bear affinity with one's own allegiances and of ignoring those that do not. Rodden observes that "[…] rather than approach an author 'whole', a reader may instead focus upon parts of his work and project these for the whole, thus constructing 'his' or 'her' own Orwell." ('My Orwell', 6) Being full of contradictory material, Orwell's works are especially suitable for selective reading. For instance, his well-known about-face at the outbreak of the Second World War from an essentially pacifist anti-war standpoint to that of a "war-monger" involved a sharp reversal of opinion. In September 1937 he wrote in a letter to Geoffrey Gorer that "[i]f one collaborates with a capitalist-imperialist government in a struggle 'against Fascism', i.e. against a rival imperialism, one is simply letting Fascism in by the back door." (*CEJL*1, 284) Two years later, however, according to the confessions he made in 'My Country Right or Left' in a dream he discovered in himself the driving force of patriotic feeling and military virtues to which he had been brought up at school and he equally vehemently said that "[the] intellectuals who are at present pointing out that democracy and fascism are the same thing etc. depress me horribly." (*CEJL*1, 409) By choosing to resort to a dream to explain his change of mind he invokes emotions and irrationality, and this enables him to exempt himself from arguing. Readers often led and cheated by the absence of arguments can thus easily point out or ignore one or the other of the two contradictory standpoints according to their inclination.

Daphne Patai observes that "Orwell's characteristically assertive manner of writing invites readers to accept as conclusive whatever opinion he is expressing at any given moment." (*Mystique*, 7) Orwell's two main narrative tactics also force the reader to stand by his side. In the case of the "voice-of-the-people" stance Orwell identifies his point of view with that of everyone, yet he imposes limitations so that everyone – we learn – are all sensitive people, all decent people, all honest people etc., a technique which leads to the ostracism of those who dare to disagree with his assumptions. (Patai, *Mystique*, 10) Patai quotes Orwell from 'Writers and Leviathan': "Take for instance the fact that all sensitive people are revolted by industrialism and its products." Orwell's

other narrative posture, which Patai defines as the "voice-in-the-wilderness" stance, seems to be just the opposite of the former, however, in their effect on the reader the two postures are very similar. When Orwell says that "[f]ew people have the guts to say outright that art and propaganda are the same thing," he not only invites the reader to accept his truth but imposes a burden on him, by implying that he risks being labelled cowardly if he does not agree with the author. These narrative tactics undoubtedly enhanced the battle for Orwell's mantle, for what reader or critic would not want to belong to the camp of decent people, who would not want to be one of the few brave ones who dare to speak out?

In the following subchapters I am examining what happens if Orwell's work is approached from various political ideologies: the critic's effort to win Orwell for an ideology discolours the author's figure in its entirety and replaces it with one dovetailed to the critic's ideology. The Foucauldian unity of author and work is shattered and various Orwells emerge complying with the most diverse and opposing ideologies. However, these approaches cannot count for the contradictions of Orwell's oeuvre and the result is a tendency to highlight some aspects of Orwell's writings and ignore others. An alternative approach will be to inquire beyond political ideologies and examine what may feed those contradictory, simultaneously conservative and progressive traits. A more coherent Orwell comes to light if the author and work is examined from the aspect of gender, both his socialism and patriotism, a seeming contradiction much debated by leftist and conservative critics, become intelligible if seen to be linked to his adherence to the notion of traditional masculinity.

Dragging him to the right

The debates among political partisans during the Cold War and the need for an authentic authority on major issues like McCarthyism, Suez, Hungary, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Vietnam, Watergate, Afganistan, and the Falkland Islands invasion did not allow Orwell to rest in peace. He was dragged out into the daylight from time to time to lay emphasis upon or to prove somebody right. Intellectuals with different political affiliations wrangled with one another as to where Orwell would have stood, had he been alive, by referring to Orwell's position on related subjects from

decades ago. Norman Podhoretz's 'If Orwell Were Alive Today' in 1983 was the first systematic, and thus perhaps most notorious, attempt to speculate about Orwell's posthumous politics. While other readers had been prophesying about Orwell's would-be politics alongside their main line of discussion about Orwell, Podhoretz rendered his speculations as his only subject. (Rodden, 'My Orwell', 9) His article constituted a part of the pursuit in neo-conservative circles among the New York intelligentsia to claim Orwell for their camp on the hot issues of the Cold War. Though Podhoretz gives evidence of being aware of the extent to which Orwell's oeuvre is apt to be read selectively, the knowledge of this fact does not prevent him from claiming him and from ruminating on his 'would be' politics. Podhoretz allows both that speculating about a dead man's ideas about events he never lived to see is a "frivolous enterprise" and that Orwell changed his mind so often that "plausible evidence can be found in his work for each of the two contending interpretations (namely right or left) of where he stood." ('If Orwell Were Alive', 30-31) Yet he cannot withstand the temptation, and putting aside his quite reasonable worries, he goes on to extrapolate from Orwell's works what he would say about the conflict between the US and the USSR more than three decades after his death. The result of this "frivolous enterprise" is that Podhoretz comes to convince himself that Orwell's would-be politics would cheer the neoconservative camp. The three pillars on which he builds his argument are Orwell's critical stance against the left-wing intellectuals of his time, the fierce attitude against pacifism he came to develop after a short period of flirtation with it prior to the outbreak of WWII and his choice of America against the Soviet Union at the dawn of the Cold War. Podhoretz's sweeping desire to see Orwell on the 'right' side results in some uncanny but less persuasive arguments, for example: "[…] the fact that he criticised them [left-wing intellectuals] from within only added authority to the things he said – so much so that I wonder whether this was why he insisted on clinging so tenaciously to his identity as a man of the Left." (Podhoretz, 'If Orwell Were Alive', 33) He, so to say, makes up Orwell's mind not only on the larger issues of socialism versus capitalist democracy, pacifism versus the use of military force, the US versus the USSR but also on some quite specific issues Orwell never lived to see. Given Orwell's stance against pacifism, Podhoretz concludes that Orwell would have been opposed to a nuclear freeze and the unilateral western pledge against a first-strike in the 1980s. He takes half a

sentence of Orwell on pacifism out of context and applies it to the issue of a dreaded disarmament agreement with the USSR: "[…] the notion that a verifiable disarmament agreement could be negotiated with the SU would surely have struck him as yet another pacifist 'illusion due to security, too much money and a simple ignorance of the way in which things actually happen'." ('If Orwell Were Alive', 35) The original context of the quoted half sentence was a controversy of Orwell with D.S. Savage, George Woodcock and Alex Comfort over pacifism vs. war in the *Partisan Review* in 1942. With the German army looming over Europe, Orwell became a whole-hearted war supporter after his initial stance of peace at any price and soon after the onset of the war he was angrily voicing his opinion against the "objectively pro-Fascist" pacifists whom he now viewed as the product of bourgeois welfare and security. The whole tirade against the moral reservations of pacifists fixes the issue clearly in the context of WWII:

> I am not interested in pacifism as a 'moral phenomenon'. If Mr Savage and others imagine that one can somehow 'overcome' the German army by lying on one's back, let them go on imagining it, but let them also wonder occasionally whether this is not an illusion due to security, too much money and a simple ignorance of the way in which things actually happen. (*CW*13, 397)

While drawing parallels between historical events is certainly edifying, this should not go with the ignorance of particularities, such factors as the different actors and allies involved, their differing aims and the obvious difference of time. Obviously, "lying on one's back" in the face of an aggressively approaching army is quite different from initiating mutual disarmament agreement with one's rival. The temptation to extrapolate from Orwell's WWII journalism what he might have had to say about the Cold War is great but extremely questionable. One could make much of his anti-war stance before the war just as well and argue that he would have done everything to save the world from another world war. Rodden is right in saying that

> […] questions about a man's posthumous politics are manifestly absurd. The fact is that Orwell has been dead for more that three decades, and it is impossible to extrapolate from a man's writings what he would say about events after his death. But what is futile can nevertheless sometimes be enlightening, at least for sociological purposes […]. ('My Orwell', 3)

And in a sense Orwell was less predictable than the average. As Podhoretz also noticed, "he could always be relied on to contradict himself when the impulse seized him." ('If Orwell Were Alive', 36)

…to the left

Speculating about Orwell's likely opinions has been common practice not only among his admirers. By attributing unwanted standpoints to a would-be Orwell, detractors have managed to belittle his merits. Mary McCarthy's unsympathetic approach to Orwell in 'The Writing on the Wall', written in 1969 apropos of the publication of the *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, for example, reflected an urge to break with the "generational spokesman" of the Left, and in this an assumed would-be politics hostile to her own came in very handy. There is a discrepancy between the genre and content of McCarthy's criticism: it was intended to be a review of *CEJL*, but, as one reader who joined the ensuing debate observed, one gets the impression that instead of a book review McCarthy engaged in "polemics with the ghost of Orwell." (McCarthy, 14) About the editorial work behind the four-volume compilation McCarthy has just one quite rightful reserve: the selected material, the "epistolary blanks" suggest that the editors wanted to comply with Orwell's wish that "whatever was intimate or revealing in the private letters of the man who became 'George Orwell' should perish." (2) The central question occupying McCarthy's thoughts is, however, Orwell's personality, which apparently triggers embarrassment and repulsion in her. She doubts the honesty of his sinking (his "obeying the law of gravity"), blames him for hastening his own death by engaging in activities equalling a "succession of coffin nails hammered home", and charges him with having developed tuberculosis, the mark of prophetic artists familiar with poverty. She denounces his claustrophobic revulsion from whatever was fashionable, his inclination to be convinced of his own righteousness and his philistine mistrust of the vagaries of art and the artist. She likens his love for poetry (the love of this "curmudgeon") to that of a mastiff for a rose. On the last pages of her review McCarthy engages in "Vietnamising Orwell". Towards the end of the 1960s, the convergence of the publication of *CEJL* and the increasing opposition to the Vietnam war turned speculations about Orwell's possible stance on the war into "an intellectuals' mini-war in its own right". (Rodden, 'My Orwell', 6) Given McCarthy's wry approach to Orwell and her own disapproval of the war, it is no wonder that she lays the stress on Orwell's "belligerent anti-communism" and invests him with ideas in support of war. Profiting from the fact that a disreputable

offspring disgraces one's causes, McCarthy links Orwell to war supporters like Kingsley Amis and Bernard Levin. (Rodden, 'My Orwell', 10) After admitting uncertainty about Orwell's stance on many of the pressing questions of the day, she expresses her wish that she "could be certain that he would not be with Kingsley Amis and Bernard Levin" but the reader knows well enough that it is only a rhetorical strategy, and by taking the role of a "current pink" she indirectly reminds the reader of Orwell's offensive charges and labels, thereby diminishing his appeal. McCarthy's unfavourable conjectures provoked the otherwise taciturn Richard Rees to speak up for his late friend. Rees defended his friend along conservative lines by suggesting that Orwell would have approved America's conduct of the war. Thus, McCarthy and Rees both conjure up a war supporting Orwell, Rees approvingly, McCarthy disapprovingly. "No doubt he would often have been critical," says Rees and then goes on to deal McCarthy a blow, "but the current fashionable anti-Americanism, denigrating America and whitewashing its opponents, would have seemed to him, I think, either perverse or dishonest." (McCarthy, 15)

An S.S. man in disguise?

Orwell has not been spared by the extreme right either. Professing the ideal of "absolute detachment", Wyndham Lewis in *The Writer and the Absolute* denounces Orwell for a lifelong subjection to the fashionable left wingery of the time and considers *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen-Eighty Four* to be testimonies to his "remarkable emancipation". Lewis, who considers *Animal Farm* one of Orwell's substantial books, one that "led the wavering lefties out of the pink mists of Left Land into the clear daylight," partially absolves Orwell of what he considered his fundamental deficit, a lack of absolute detachment. But, without evidence of an unambiguous turnaround, and in fact with evidence quite to the contrary, namely the knowledge of Orwell's acute social conscience which continued to influence him, Lewis ultimately dismisses Orwell's history as one of "misdirected energy" admitting that he retained "a bit of the old sentiment" until the end of his life. (189,193)

What Lewis perceives as a sudden "burst of clairvoyance" towards the end of Orwell's life was actually a process which culminated in his last two books. It is

commonplace in Orwell literature that the seeds of his best-sellers lay in his two-fold experience in the Spanish Civil War. While his brief experience of egalitarian society in Barcelona and comradery in the trenches confirmed his belief in democratic socialism, the methods used by the communists in crushing the revolution, and of campaigning against, and liquidating anarchists on the pretext of their being in the pay of Franco, gave him a lesson about the totalitarian nature of Soviet communism. Considering the efforts he made to voice his opinion about what actually was going on in Spain and about the gross distortions in the English press, and taking into account the difficulties which he had to face in trying to make himself heard in the pro-communist left-wing press (e.g. his publisher, Victor Gollancz, turned down *Homage to Catalonia* without having a look at it, simply based on the theme of the book), it is a malicious and ill-founded allegation on behalf of Lewis to say that fearing for his career, Orwell never dared to be openly critical about the Left. Pondering, for example, on the similarities and differences of opinion between Orwell and Koestler, Lewis finds that while Koestler's disappointment impelled him to condemn all revolutions, Orwell wished to save socialism. In the eyes of Lewis, thus, when compared with his continental contemporary, Orwell fails when it comes to taking the essential step. "He will not agree," argues Lewis, "that it is social revolution itself which […] must be condemned. […] Of course there will be more wars: but the intellectual, the true *clerc*, must denounce war. Orwell is to be convicted of merely personal, career considerations, in refusing to take this final step." (187) Orwell's first biographer, Bernard Crick, has more insight when he notes that as soon as Orwell declared his political inclination in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he straight away adopted "his persona of the teller of home truth to the home team." ('Orwell and English Socialism', 5) Lewis consciously plays down the sincerity and seriousness of Orwell's social sensitivity and the intention to claim him on the 'right' side leads Lewis to perceive Orwell in a topsy-turvy way, denying the very essence of his literary persona.

> […] I perhaps should turn to the question as to whether Orwell was really a typical Left Wing figure at all. One might regard him as a sort of Colonel Blimp gone wrong; a Kipling (Mr. Muggeridge compares him with Kipling) who ran a bit amok, spat on the Union Jack as an imperialist emblem, embraced the first dark-skinned person he met and took a running kick at the posterior of the first pukka sahib to cross his path. One might regard his early anti-imperialism as a boyish enthusiasm, and his socialism as an attitude adopted to keep step with

> everybody else. And indeed a good deal of his socialism was skin-deep. The man who set out to discover the working-class in his *Wigan Pier* book was no very profound Socialist.
>
> There are a great number of facts which incline one to think that his left-wingery never ceased to be skin-deep. Had Orwell been of German nationality who can doubt that he would have been an S.S.man. (183)

Of course, Lewis remains silent about the "great number of facts" which would justify that Orwell never seriously thought over his left wing attitude. Well, no wonder, his whole life was about that.

Or perhaps he could have joined the clergy?

Obvious defacement of Orwell has also been conducted by Catholic intellectuals, for example Christopher Hollis, an acquaintance of Orwell, and one of his chief Catholic admirers. Disregarding the obvious and unambiguous fact that Orwell considered himself an atheist and despite the fact that his obsessive anti-Catholicism is evident throughout his work, Catholic readers stressed those aspects of his work and personality (decency, care for the oppressed, anti-communism etc.), which were championed by themselves as well. Hollis, in his *A Study of George Orwell* continually returns to the theme of religion, regardless of whether the discussion of Orwell's particular phase of life, manner or work would justify it or not, and much of the contemplation over Orwell's attitude to religion reflects not so much Orwell's as Hollis' frame of mind.

Brooding over the positive experience, the "spiritual vision or satisfaction" that Orwell might have expected from his déclassé adventures, Hollis concludes that the language in which Orwell explains his motives for going over to the side of the downtrodden in the autobiographical part of *The Road to Wigan Pier* – "expiation from guilt", "self-identification with the oppressed" – makes sense only within a religious framework. To take the edge off of this bold but highly disputable statement, he quickly adds that "Orwell demanded a particular religious experience, while at the same time violently denying the reality of all religious experience." (56) Hollis is right in claiming that Orwell questioned the appeal of religion in the modern world and doubted that religious people of his time really believed in personal immortality. He argued that the

decay of Christianity left a big hole and religious feeling was replaced by the modern cult of power worship, but he also explicitly stated that he did not want to see religion return. One might argue, as Spender has done, that he had definite, though simple and categorical answers to the questions that have puzzled mankind ever since its birth, and he had no affinity for philosophical and abstract thinking. "He has simple views about matters," says Spender, "which more learned men have not been decided about; for example, he thinks that God and belief in immortality are non-sense." (*Critical Heritage*, 314) But to draw the conclusion, as Hollis does, that Orwell's descent is explicable only in terms of a need for a religious experience is to ignore Orwell's essentially humanistic thinking and his irreligious temperament, and implies the Catholic critic's unwillingness to accept the quite obvious fact that, in Muggeridge's terms, he was "allergic to institutional and devotional Christianity." ('Knight', 167)

Hollis' analysis of 'A Hanging' is an even more blatant example of imposing one's own conviction upon a piece of writing running counter to it. Having correctly identified the lesson Orwell drew from the experience, i.e. "the unspeakable wrongness of cutting a life short when it is in full tide," in searching for Orwell's argumentation and not finding it, Hollis concludes that "the case is not really argued and the essay is not likely to advance the abolition of capital punishment." (39) According to Hollis, Orwell should have told us what the victim's (or culprit's) crime had been and he should have contemplated the question whether capital punishment is an effective deterrent, implying the absurd idea that if there is evidence that capital punishment is not a deterrent, we are reasonably asked to be shocked by hanging stories, otherwise our feelings of fascination evoked by such stories may be justified. By applying religious doctrines, Hollis misses the point of the essay: 'A Hanging' conveys the narrator's horror at witnessing the conscious extinction of human life and his subjective opinion on *any* hanging, on cutting *any* life short (even that of a criminal) when it is in full tide, which is brought home to him by that small detail of the victim's avoiding the puddle.

What's more, by a curious and obscure train of thought, Hollis' reading of the story convinces him that Orwell believed in life after death. He argues that Orwell's opinion on the unspeakable wrongness of capital punishment, by leaving the deterrent function of punishment out of account and neglecting the issue whether its infliction serves the general convenience of the majority, is tenable only if one believes that man

has a destiny beyond this world. (40) Hollis holds that a criminal needs to be punished, whether in this life or in the afterlife, and Orwell's quite simple belief that extinguishing a life is wrong in itself, irrespective of the victim's guilt, misses him. According to his line of thought, since Orwell protests against the infliction of punishment in this life, he must hold that death is not final and a criminal will be adequately punished in the afterlife. And, Hollis adds, this was only "one of a number of his opinions which only made sense on the assumption of an implicit acceptance of a future life." (40)

Hollis also interprets *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in religious terms. To escape the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the solution, according to him, lies clearly in man's essential belief in God and in a future life, where the injustices of this world will be put right. In Hollis' viewpoint, "the logical conclusion of *1984* is that it is only by the appeal to God that O'Brien can be defeated." (204) He seems not to recognise that Orwell's despair was so profound precisely because he was not a believer and could not console himself with a religious solution to the horrible world he envisaged. Hollis' study of Orwell will simply not acknowledge one of the most characteristic features of Orwell, his atheism; instead the Catholic critic rewrites Orwell's convictions according to his preferences, losing "George Orwell" entirely in the meantime.

The pursuit of Orwell for one's own side, especially, the stealing of Orwell back and forth between the Right and Left in the heat of the Cold War was motivated by a wish to add an authoritative voice to one's own position. If, via selective reading, Orwell could be stripped of inconvenient ideology and could be moulded into a figure that expressed views similar to those of his reviewer, the latter gained not only an authority supporting his position but an eternal champion of Truth, Liberty, Justice and Decency. And, very acutely pointing out the role of Orwell's masculinity in this debate, Rodden claims that "[…] much of the Left-Right debate about Orwell's legacy was less an ideological dispute than a battle among male intellectuals periodically doubtful about their masculinity for the right to identify with a two-fisted culture hero, with Orwell the Spanish militiaman and blunt truth-teller." (*Politics*, 116) However, the battle for Orwell's mantle is the pursuit of an idol, and the outcome of this pursuit is that Orwell's works and life have been highly idealised. With reference to the Cold War debates over Orwell's legacy Rodden remarks: "Meanwhile, as these disputes on the Left and Right

about his politics continued, the resurrected Orwell sat on a pedestal above the fray, *beyond criticism*." ('My Orwell', 11, emphasis added)

In the following chapters I suggest that examining the author and work from the aspect of gender provides a more coherent portrait in terms of ideas and explains some of the contradictions that otherwise, especially on the level of political ideologies, remain unanswered. The process of gender constitution, the way one adapts to the historically delimited idea of 'woman' or 'man' and performs its imperatives under social duress is a fundamental human experience, which comes into play when adopting various ideologies. George Mosse points out that both nationalism and socialism incorporated and relied heavily on the masculine stereotype and masculine values like honour, commitment, duty and self-sacrifice. I propose that Orwell's gender constitution precipitated the affiliation with both nationalism and socialism, or to put it differently, his turn towards nationalism had the same roots as his support of socialism: an adherence to the idea of traditional masculinity.

Reading Orwell from a feminist perspective inevitably diminishes his merits: it turns out that his advocacy of common man had not only class but gender implications – common man being literally man, excluding woman. That the human norm was more often than not masculine and misogyny was nothing exceptional in the 30s and 40s, as Cunningham suggests, does not sufficiently explain Orwell's prejudices against women, his ambivalent attitude to homosexuality and a life of repeated reassurances of masculinity. In order to better understand the "unmitigated masculinity" that Orwell's life and work reflects I turn to Butler's theory of performativity and gender constitution. According to Butler, gender is the cultural interpretation or signification of sex. Sex is a biological factity, while gender is cultural fiction.

> To be a female is … a factity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have become a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. (Butler, 522)

That is, gender is not a fact but an idea and without the various acts that are performed in compliance with that idea there would be no gender. The fictive nature of discrete and polar genders is obscured and gender has the appearance of naturalness, of having an essence. "The authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the

construction compels one's belief in its necessity and naturalness." (Butler, 522) Gender is the sedimentation of acts through time and the way one takes on its gender through the "stylized repetition of acts" is not wholly an individual matter but a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo. (Butler, 519) Human experience is gendered from the moment of birth and childhood and adolescent years are crucial in how one comes to perform one's gender. In the following chapter I will read Orwell's reminiscence of school-years and a piece of juvenilia written at the age of fifteen as writings that bespeak of the process of gender construction. The socially-compelled experiences that Orwell underwent as a child and as an adolescent and that clearly had punitive consequences explain how he became especially "entranced" by the fiction of masculinity.

The roots of Orwell's "emotional attitude"

"The child IS father to the man –
George Orwell once was Eric Blair."
(Jacintha Buddicom)

In 'Why I Write' Orwell attributes the utmost importance to childhood in a writer's emotional development. "[…] I do not think one can assess a writer's motives without knowing something of his early development. His subject matter will be determined by the age he lives in […] but before he ever begins to write he will have acquired an emotional attitude from which he will never completely escape." (*CW*18, 318) The memories of childhood and schooling, memories, which were far from joyful, lay for a long time dormant in his mind, coming to the surface not long before his death in 'Such, Such Were the Joys' and in his 'Last Literary Notebook'. When in 1938 he heard of his old school-mate, Cyril Connolly's putting memories of school years to paper in his *Enemies of Promise*, Orwell's reaction was one of bewilderment: "I wonder how you can write about St Cyprian's. It's all like an awful nightmare to me, & sometimes I think I can still taste the porridge (out of those pewter bowls, do you remember?)" (*CW*11, 175) After a couple of months, however, he also contemplated the idea of an autobiographical piece on school-years. At the end of 1938 he wrote to Connolly: "I'm always meaning one of those days to write a book about St Cyprian's. I've always held that the public schools aren't so bad, but people are wrecked by those filthy private schools long before they get to public school age." (*CW*11, 254) Those days finally came about only a decade later, but the outcome was all the more forceful and impressive: 'Such, Such Were the Joys', read together with Orwell's other comments on the subject, is simultaneously an indictment on middle-class education and a telltale confession of its author's possible source of frustration.

A female milieu

The essay forces itself upon the reader with a characteristically shocking Orwellian opener: "Soon after I arrived at St Cyprian's […] I began wetting my bed."

(*CW*19, 356) Davison appropriately calls Orwell's striking opening technique "a verbal standing on his head" (*Life*, 94), referring to Jacintha Buddicom's memory of her first seeing Orwell: Eric was standing on his head on the other side of the fence where the Buddicom children were playing French cricket and when asked why he was standing on his head, he replied: "You are noticed more if you stand on your head than if you are right way up." (Buddicom, 2) Having grabbed the reader's attention with such a forceful statement, he goes on to describe the shame and sense of guilt resulting from the undone deed of bedwetting, which takes up the entire first part of the essay. The description of the mixture of shame and guilt, in which the actual punishment, the beating, is not that horrible, highlights not the physical but the psychic-emotional suffering that the child had to go through, the sense of deep grief, of "desolate loneliness and helplessness," of being locked up in a world "where it was *not possible* for me to be good." (*CW*19, 359, italics in the original) This hostile world is created and dominated to a large extent by women, even if ultimately the punishment is carried out by Sambo, the Headmaster. The young boy is surrounded by big, masculine women: the "grim, statuesque matron, Margaret," the "intimidating, masculine-looking person wearing a riding-habit," whose name the boy misunderstands as Mrs Form and who seems all the more frightening as the boy presumes that he will be caned by this lady armed with a hunting-whip, and there is also the Headmaster's wife, Mrs Wilkes, whose suspiciousness, capriciousness and malice seem to dominate the whole school. (*CW*19, 357) Flip, as she is called by the boys, also bears signs of masculinity: she is a "stocky square-built woman with hard red cheeks," "deep-set, suspicious eyes," "full of false heartiness, jollying one along with mannish slang" and an "anxious, accusing look." (*CW*19, 357*)* As opposed to these three masculine women, Sambo is quite feminine, being a "round-shouldered, curiously oafish-looking man" with a "chubby face which was like that of an overgrown baby." (*CW*19, 358) The emotional humiliation of the boy is much more painful and profound than the physical punishment he receives from Sambo, and significantly, much of this humiliation is inflicted on him by women. It is a woman, the matron, who inspects the beds every morning and who discovers the boy's sin. Her automatic response of "REPORT YOURSELF to the Headmaster," Orwell writes, "always had a portentous sound in my ears, like muffled drums or the words of the death sentence." (*CW*19, 358)

In Orwell's memory, Flip is perversely good at causing psychological torment to her pupils. One afternoon after tea, when Mrs Form, the casual visitor happens to be there, Flip summons the boy and in his presence she tells Mrs Form about his "disgusting crime." The victim's humiliation is complete:

> To this day I can feel myself almost swooning with shame as I stood, a very small, round-faced boy in short corduroy knickers, before the two women. I could not speak. I felt that I should die if "Mrs Form" were to beat me. But my dominant feeling was not fear or even resentment: it was simple *shame* because one more person, and that a *woman*, had been told of my disgusting offence. (*CW*19, 357, emphasis added)

And since wetting one's bed at night is a deed that is out of one's power to control, the boy feels helpless at being thrown into a world where he cannot obey the rules. In the course of the beating Orwell recalls, Sambo flogs him so heavily that he ends up breaking his cane. Fright and shame seem to have an anaesthetising effect on the boy but he is to be tormented by another psychological burden: Sambo makes him responsible for the cane having broken, which the boy unquestioningly accepts. "*I* had broken it: so Sambo told me, and so I believed. This acceptance of guilt lay unnoticed in my memory for twenty or thirty years." (*CW*19, 359) Michael Carter in *George Orwell and the Problem of Authentic Existence* argues that the young Blair was in the early stages of developing an inauthentic self-for-others which externally corresponded to the requirements of authority and the absolute rules dictated by the adults while the authentic self was forced to live internally. The emphasis on (un)freedom, responsibility, guilt, anxiety, abandonment and the absurd, says Carter, invites the reader to interpret the whole essay in existentialist terms. The insecurity in which Flip kept her pupils with her capriciousness must have reinforced in him the awareness that reality was not coherent but contradictory. Bearing in mind that "the possible strategies for living out this untenable position" match the behaviour of schizophrenic persons, Carter assumes that Orwell was on the verge of this dissociative illness. (Carter, 11-16) That he did not become psychotic Carter attributes to the fact that he had not been exposed to this kind of treatment from birth – even so he finished school divided, one "who had collected acute insights into the psychological processes on which structures of power depend." (Carter, 16) The young Blair was by far not the only pupil who suffered under Flip's domination. Another pupil, Edward Meyerstein, complained that

"she was a woman of 'devastating female guile', a mistress of psychological manipulation, who left him distrustful of women for the rest of his life." (Bowker, 31) Cyril Connolly also laments that "[we] learnt the father values from a mother, we bit the hand that fed us, that tweaked the short hairs above the ear. But it was a woman's hand whose husband's cane was merely a secular arm. Agonising ambivalence!" (*Convictions*, 318)

It should not go unnoticed that until the age of eight Eric Blair grew up entirely among women. At five he was sent as a day-boy to the Catholic convent that his elder sister attended. In the convent, run by French Ursulines, he was taught by nuns as a lone boy in a school of girls. Bowker suggests a possible connection between several of his personality traits and his early Catholic education: his unremitting hostility towards Roman Catholicism, his acute sense of guilt, his Jansenist tendency to condemn whole categories of people, his complicated attitude toward women and sex and his tendency towards self-mortification. (21) What is more, being the only boy among girls and nuns must have been a burden on the development of his sexual identity. By sending him to St Cyprian's boarding school he was thrown out into the world dominated again, though in quite a different way, by women. Crick suggests that Orwell may have had a sense of betrayal when he was picked out of the feminine and secure nest of the home at such a young age and thrown into the brutal male world of boarding school marked curiously enough by female tyranny. (*A Life*, 12) The female milieu of his childhood may have led to some ambivalence in his attitude to women. On the one hand, says Crick, all through his life he made friends more readily with women than with men, but on the other hand there was a "lack of perceptiveness in his treatment of women" both as a writer and a private person. (*A Life*, 12)

The absence of the father, who served in India for years during Orwell's childhood, and then the reunification of the family, when the children had to accept an elderly stranger as their father, would not have made family life comelier. Jacintha Buddicom, a good friend of young Eric, described Mr Blair, as "not unkind . . . but he did not understand, nor, I think, much care for children – after all he hardly saw his own till he was fifty. He always seemed to expect us all to keep rather out of his way, which we were reciprocatively glad to do." (Davison, *Life*, 2) The father figure emerging in 'Such, Such Were the Joys' reinforces Buddicom's memories: "It was equally clear that

one ought to love one's father, but I knew very well that I merely disliked my own father, whom I had barely seen before I was eight and who appeared to me simply as a gruff-voiced elderly man forever saying 'Don't'." (*CEJL*IV, 360) The truncated family pattern, so typical of the generation of the thirties, with the father either lost in the Great War or, as in Orwell's case, away, far from the family in one of the outposts of the Empire, undoubtedly had an unhealthy effect on the psychic development of the children, especially the boys. Cunningham assumes that the absent father may have had some role in the increased homosexuality of the decade. (54) The all-male world of preparatory and public schools probably did not contribute to a balanced relationship with the opposite sex either. "As for women", Cunningham writes, "they frequently count for little in the Old Boy world of the all-male school and college. […] Misogyny was rife in the writing of this period." (151)

Gutless Blair – Tough Orwell

Orwell describes St Cyprian's as an expensive and snobbish school, where life was strictly hierarchical and where he belonged to the lowest caste, to the poor ones, who were admitted in order to win scholarship at fashionable public schools, preferably at Eton and thus bring prestige for the school. Except perhaps the short outings with Mr Brown, the second master, and the relief felt when the train bore him away form St Cyprian's forever, Orwell can hardly recall any good memories of his prep school. As regards its physical surroundings, the school is dominated by unbearable squalor and smell: the "compound of sweaty stockings, dirty towels, faecal smells blowing along the corridors, forks with old food between the prongs, neck-of-mutton stew, and the banging doors of the lavatories and the echoing chamber-pots in the dormitories." (*CW*19, 370) Its atmosphere is marked by tyranny, defencelessness against the whims of Flip and an attitude to children and the education of children which nowadays might appear merciless but which was not at all unusual at the time. Orwell's chronic cough, for example, was diagnosed either as imaginary or a "moral disorder, caused by overeating"; masturbation was severely punished and boys committing this irredeemable sin were said to end up in a lunatic asylum. (*CW*19, 368 and 372-5)

Of all the suffering, what afflicted the young Blair (or the remembering Orwell?) most was that he belonged to the underlings, whose parents could not afford to pay the full fees and who therefore were taken in upon Sambo's bounty. "Our brains were a gold-mine in which he had sunk money, and the dividends must be squeezed out of us." (*CW*19, 363) Goodwill functioned as long as the dividends were in sight. And even then what goodwill it was! It included "canings, reproaches and humiliations," Flip and Sambo created an atmosphere in which it was inevitable for the child to feel that he owed them a "vast debt of gratitude." And since there was no other adult authority the child could turn to and also because children tend to accept what adults tell them unquestioningly, with their methods of emotional blackmail Sambo and Flip managed to make the young Eric's psyche crumble under their absolute power. "If I contrived to seem callous and defiant, it was only a thin cover over a mass of shame and dismay. […] I had a profound conviction that I was no good, that I was wasting my time, wrecking my talents, behaving with monstrous folly and wickedness […]." (*CW*19, 366)

Several critics have remarked on Orwell's absurd obsession with poverty. Hollis notes, in connection with Eton, that Orwell's grievance that he was a poor boy among the rich is entirely a "grievance of his own imagination." (20) Anthony West in his review of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* suggests that the whole schooling business could be seen from a different perspective. If thought over logically, one should realise that it was a well-functioning commercial enterprise for the benefit of poor but clever pupils. Namely, the school charged well-to-do parents high fees and a part of these was meant to subsidise the education of promising boys, whose parents could not afford the fees. According to West, "[w]hat Orwell represents as an apparatus designed to cripple him was in actuality an attempt to give boys like him a chance to win the best possible start in life." (*Critical Heritage*, 73-74) That is, the school in today's terms would have passed the test of equal opportunities, but Orwell's hypersensitivity to the exposure of his family's inadequate financial situation prevented him from seeing or admitting the nature of the chance he was offered. Connolly was also of the opinion that far from being meant as a humiliation, his having been taken on at reduced fees was meant to be a compliment.

The sense of failure Orwell felt at St Cyprian's had many sources. The financial inadequacy of his family was only one, if quite significant factor in his discomfort. "It was not only money that mattered: there were also strength, beauty, charm, athleticism and something called 'guts' or 'character', which in reality meant the power to impose your will on others." (*CW*19, 378) He laments at having had none of these required characteristics. He was ill, he had a chronic cough, he was ugly, he did not have the power to look like a gentleman, he was not good at football and he did not have character or courage. Several of his personal acquaintances have remarked that Orwell was obsessed with the idea that he was physically unattractive and many of his letters testify that he thought of himself as a man lacking glamour and charm (see, for example, *CEJL*2, 22) Testimonies on his outlook are just as varied and contradictory as those on his childhood and St Cyprian's. Cyril Connolly's description is hardly flattering: "Tall, pale, with his flaccid cheeks, large spatulate fingers and supercilious voice, he was one of the boys who seem born old." (*Enemies*, 178) Hollis denies that as a schoolboy Orwell was either ugly or unpopular, and supports his memory by citing the positive picture of Orwell described by a fellow Eton student. (9) Whatever friends' memories of Orwell's outlook as a man or as a schoolboy may have been, it is the subjective self-image which is dominant in one's emotional development, and Orwell's image of himself both as an adult and as a schoolboy was not charming.

Flip's capriciousness seems to have known no boundaries: "An act which might get you a caning one day might next day be laughed off as a boyish prank, or even commended because it 'showed you had guts.'" (*CW*19, 371) To have guts and character was an important means of survival at school. The snivelling boy who had neither guts nor character and who was doomed to be a failure became a writer much obsessed with manliness and toughness, who often criticised his contemporaries exactly on the terms on which he was condemned at school and who went out of his way to prove to himself that he had the guts. He had the guts to descend among the outcasts, he had the guts to fight and get wounded in Spain, he always had the guts to disclose brutal truths regardless of the side on which he stood, and in Cunningham's words "the criticism of Orwell, veteran of the notoriously ferocious Eton College wall game, had nothing if not the guts." (66) In his eyes, Auden was "a sort of gutless Kipling" and the intelligentsia did not really understand that "to survive you often have to fight and to

fight you often have to dirty yourself" and that however demanding it may be, "life has to be lived in terms of efforts." Thus it is no wonder that insulted intellectuals, as Alex Comfort in the course of the debate over pacifism and war, came to regard Orwell as "the preacher of Physical Courage as an Asset to the left-wing intellectual". (*CEJL*2, 225)

Failure: a means of self-justification

There is no means for the reader to judge objectively whether Orwell was a failure either at school or later in life but he did consider himself to be a failure and the long-lasting sense of inadequacy is consonant with the harsh treatment he was allegedly subject to at preparatory school. Davison argues that it is impossible to pinpoint what the source of Orwell's unease was, but what definitely sprang from his upbringing was a coolness as far as his relationship with his parents was concerned, and the "birth of a deep-seated and long-abiding sense of failure" with respect to his school years. (*Life*, 6-7)

> […] I was damned. I had no money, I was weak, I was ugly, I was unpopular, I had a chronic cough, I was cowardly, I smelt. This picture, I should add, was not altogether fanciful. I was an unattractive boy […]. The conviction that it was *not possible* for me to be a success went deep enough to influence my actions till far into adult life. Until I was about thirty I always planned my life on the assumption not only that any major undertaking was bound to fail, but that I could only expect to live a few years longer. (*CW*19, 379)

An insecure emotional background in which one is not accepted in his or her environment will normally lead to frustration and a lack of self-confidence, since the personality of the child is not strengthened and awarded by adult authorities. Any child, who is not accepted and loved by the adults in their immediate surroundings, who is maltreated, constantly humiliated and labelled, is apt to become difficult and will be in constant conflict with themselves and subsequently with the world at large. Since the child has no means to live up to the expectations of adults, they are full of tension and fear and in the long run might come to think of themselves as a failure. Such a situation of refusal might evoke aggressive feelings, with which the individual tries to combat his or her pain, sorrow and disappointment. Thus it is no paradox that the mark of most iconoclasts is their lack of self-assurance. (Hollis, 19) Though our memory may deceive

us – different people will recall and evaluate the same event quite differently – it is not objective truth or accurate information that counts with respect to the effect of a particular event in one's personal life, but the subjective feelings aroused by that event. And as Bettelheim and Janowitz suggest, subjective feelings of deprivation and negative evaluations of past experiences are closely related to aggressive feelings. (178) In Orwell's case we might expect to see some connection between his harrowing recollection of childhood (harrowing and bitter with respect to school, reticent and ambiguous with respect to family) and his often intolerant attitude, in Muggeridges's terms, the "unnecessary and unfair virulence" with which he went on about the favourite targets of his malice. ('Knight', 172) George Elliott pointed out accurately the connection between his *sense* of maltreatment in childhood, his inclination to take it too much to heart and the way his life and manners developed.

> Psychologically, the root of Orwell's failure was, no doubt, his extreme sensitivity to cruelty and to the unjust exercise of authority. This native quality was aggravated into a malady by his experiences in his first public school […], in Eton, and in the British army in Burma. A man who was and who *thinks* he was, much abused as a child is likely to identify himself unconsciously with all sufferers and to be disposed to hate violently all authorities. (*Critical Heritage*, 338, emphasis added)

Judging by his life it seems that in the period, in which he was searching for a distinct identity, Orwell was constantly looking for failure and he deliberately ruined his career by leaving the Indian Imperial Police Force in Burma and returning home to go down and out.[7] Having had to cope with the pressure to conform at St Cyprian's and having been unable to meet the demands, there was only one way for him to secure his self-esteem and that was to make value of non-conformity. That is he searched for

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[7] At Eton he was not as excellent and diligent a student as he had been at St Cyprian's. His marks at Eton were not good enough for a scholarship to Oxbridge and the simplest solution seemed to be to continue the family tradition by joining the Imperial service. Spender thought that it was "a non-choice rather than a choice: a young man taking the first job in sight in order to get away from home and from the Etonians now become Oxfordians." (Spender, 'The Truth About Orwell') Providing pupils with the necessary abilities and morals, doubtful though these might have been, to meet the demands of life in the Empire was inherent in public-school education. Connolly sarcastically notes: "Muscle-bound with character the alumni of St Wulfric's would pass on to the best public schools, cleaning up all houses with a doubtful tone, reporting their best friends for homosexuality and seeing them expelled, winning athletic distinctions – for the house rather than themselves, for the school rather than the house, and prizes and scholarships and shooting competitions as well – and then find their vocation in India, Burma, Nigeria, and the Sudan administering with Roman justice those natives for whom the final profligate overflow of Wulfrician character was all the time predestined." (*Enemies*, 175)

failure not for failure's sake, but to prove himself to himself. Failure came to have an important psychological function in his life through which he could demonstrate that he was a worthwhile human being. By immersing into destitution he was obeying inner compulsions that were deeper and stronger than the "immense sense of guilt" he confessed he needed to expiate after Burma. Muggeridge remarks that the explanation that Orwell purged himself of his involvement in British imperialism by going down and out is a great over-simplification. ('Knight', 171) Immersion was a necessity, he owed it to himself for reasons which had their roots in his character and his childhood. Beyond the passionate sense of justice with which he came to explain his going over, he had reasons for failure of a different nature, of which he might as well have been unaware. According to Dan Jacobson, "[t]here was only one way Orwell could confront and overcome his own conviction that he was doomed to be a worthless failure. That was by failing." (50) It was probably an unconscious determination in him to prove himself to himself, to demonstrate that he could stand the test of the harshest circumstances. In existentialist terms, says Carter, it was a determination to rid himself of his inauthentic self-for-others that led "lower-upper-middle class Eric Blair into down-and-out George Orwell." (9)[8]

The traps of memory

Critics have been troubled over what conclusions to draw from the admittedly autobiographical and obviously subjective nature of Orwell's essay and they have questioned how much validity should be ascribed to his own account. As Muggeridge put it, should the memories of his prep-school days in 'Such, Such Were the Joys' be taken at their face value? ('Knight', 175) The doubt inherent in the question speaks for itself. According to Bowker, "'Such, Such Were the Joys' is an extraordinary piece of retrospective reinvention, an adult version of a childhood experience." (29)

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[8] The dread of being deprived of one's true being was, according to Carter, Orwell's main concern, culminating in the nightmare world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where totalitarian authority attempts to create a false self-for-others in its subjects. O'Brien makes this claim explicit: "You shall be hollow. We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves." For Orwell totalitarian rule was synonymous with a schizophrenic way of living and the antithesis of absolute rule was democratic socialism, for "only equality can guarantee the elimination of psychological injuries which arbitrary unelected power necessarily creates." (Carter, 16)

Reminiscence is too much burdened and shaped by the distance of years, the experience of those years and the character of the person remembering to be objectively true. "Memory is untrustworthy and malleable, and what shapes it is our expectations and prejudices." (Bethlehem, 42) Since we all are apt to resurrect our past according to our present perspectives, memory unsupported by documentation has to be handled carefully and critically. (Crick, *A Life*, 5) A most curious parallel between 'Such, Such Were the Joys' and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* warns us not to take the objective truth of every detail of Orwell's reminiscences for granted and opens our eyes to the effect Orwell's predicament at the time of writing bore on his subject. He wrote the essay during the composition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Spender in his 1953 review of *England Your England* observed that there was a striking resemblance between the world of Crossgates (St Cyprian's in the American edition) and that of *1984*. "Crossgates was in fact a miniature police state in which Sim [Sambo], the headmaster, was Big Brother, and there were tortures and confessions." (*Critical Heritage*, 314) This idea was elaborated upon by Anthony West, who compared the essay and the novel examining the role of women, the spying motif, the tyrannical pattern of society, and the mixture of hatred and love towards the master, and drew the daring conclusion that whether consciously or not, "[…] what he did in *1984* was to send everybody in England to an enormous Crossgates to be as miserable as he had been." (*Critical Heritage*, 78) Spender draws our attention to a most curious obsession in the essay, which is very difficult to explain. One day, walking outside school, the young Eric catches sight of a man looking at him and concludes that the man must have been a man hired by the headmaster to spy on boys out of school. The army of informers employed by the headmaster may as well be the product of the child's mind as a projection of the fears of the mature writer, and knowledge of Orwell's life will not allow the reader to ignore the latter option. He had a visceral hatred towards good party members, he dreaded communists just as much as fascists, and his fears having undoubtedly been increased by the persecution of the POUM he witnessed in Spain, he developed a sort of persecution mania for both fascist and communist sympathisers in his country.[9] He

[9] Most critics agree that the seeds of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* lie in Orwell's Spanish experience. What he saw and underwent in Spain – the crushing of a genuinely revolutionary process by the Soviet dominated Communist Party – was so influential that, according to Isaac Deutscher in '*Nineteen Eighty-*

often charged British intellectuals with a tendency to come to terms with fascism and in 1941 he claimed that he could make out a preliminary list of the people who would go over to Nazism should Germany invade. (*CEJL*2, 183) After 1945, as the threat of fascism receded and communism became a more imminent danger, he became more and more obsessed with categorising people according to their political outlook, resulting in the infamous list of crypto-communists, which he handed over to the Information Research Department through the mediation of Celia Kirwan.[10] The young boy's irrational fear of the headmaster's informer might well be a retrospective reinvention of the writer, resulting from his phobia of political spies.

Four – The Mysticism of Cruelty', it supplied the subject matter for much he wrote afterwards. "This was an honourable obsession, the obsession of a mind not inclined to cheat itself comfortably. […] But grappling with the Purges, his mind became infected by their irrationality. Abandoning rationalism, he increasingly viewed reality through the dark glasses of a quasi-mystical pessimism." (128) Dark though Orwell's glasses definitely were, the fact that the KGB did have a file on Orwell acquits him of the charges of "irrationality" and "quasi-mystical pessimism". In Spain, probably unknown to Orwell at the time, he was closely watched by David Crook, the man sent out to spy on the ILP contingent in Barcelona and the Blairs in particular. When the Second World War was drawing to an end and Orwell was covering events for the *Observer* and the *Manchester Evening News* in France and in Germany, he asked Hemingway for a pistol because as he told him he was afraid he was going to be assassinated by the communists. (Bowker, 324-5) After the publication of *Animal Farm* he confided to Rodney Phillips, the editor of *Polemic*, the same anxiety and bought a more effective weapon from him. (Bowker, 331) Bowker draws a parallel between Orwell's and Winston Smith's situation: "He, too, of course, was writing a book which could make *him* a quarry, just as Winston Smith, in keeping a diary, made himself a target. Clearly, in his own mind he was living the drama of Winston Smith, so that when he came to write the horror story of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* it was his own horror story that he was setting down." (370)

[10] In light of the inimical reaction to Orwell triggered by the partial release of his list of crypto-communists and fellow-travellers, Davison emphasises the need to put the whole affair into an intelligent context. (*CW*20, 318-327) He made up the list at a time when the communist threat to Western democracies was plainly apparent. The Information Research Department was set up by the Foreign Office in 1948 (and ran for nearly thirty years) to counteract Soviet subversive propaganda against the West. In the spring of 1949 Celia Kirwan visited Orwell at Cranham Sanatorium at the request of the IRD for whom she was at the time employed. (In this context it is probably quite irrelevant that Orwell had first met Celia, the twin sister of Mamaine Koestler, in 1945 when he spent Christmas – his first lonely one after Eileen's death – with the Koestlers and shortly afterwards proposed marriage to Celia, which she however refused.) Celia Kirwan outlined the activities of the IRD to Orwell and asked if he could write for them. Orwell was too ill to undertake any work and besides he preferred not to write on commission. However, he suggested some people who could be relied on to write for the IRD. A few days after Celia's visit Orwell wrote a letter to her suggesting a few more names and added that "I could also, if it is of any value, give you a list of journalists & writers who in my opinion are crypto-Communists, fellow-travellers or inclined that way & should not be trusted as propagandists. […] if I do give you such a list it is strictly confidential, as I imagine it is libellous to describe somebody as a fellow-traveller." (*CW*20, 322) Within a month he sent his list of about 35 names. He explained that "it isn't a bad idea to have the people who are probably unreliable listed" and he drew attention to Peter Smollett, whom, he suspected, was the Ministry of Information official who had influenced Cape in his decision not to publish *Animal Farm* for political reasons. It is, then, important to bear in mind that Orwell collaborated with the secret service not in order to bring any direct action against these people but to identify them as potential quislings at a time of delicate Anglo-Soviet relations. His labelling some people, for example Charles Chaplin as "Jewish" and Isaac Deutscher as "Polish Jew", makes more uncomfortable reading than the list itself.

Similarly, the undue emphasis on the title- and wealth-based hierarchy of the school might have partly resulted from the mature writer's well-known obsession with social injustice. Connolly's assumption that there is a cause and effect relation between Orwell's reduced school-fees and his early assumption of an economic explanation of society calls for a possible reversal: it can be argued that a central theme and obsession of Orwell – justified by his severe financial situation up to the publication of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – found its way into the essay to give (by all probabilities unconsciously) a subsequent explanation for his fundamental unhappiness. Robert Pearce warns us that Orwell's documentary writing can be dangerously misleading unless read sceptically. Re-examining *The Road to Wigan Pier* and comparing it with Orwell's relevant diary entries, Pearce finds that Orwell was inclined to embellish the sober accounts given in his diary, an especially conspicuous example being the "Dickensian accumulation of detail" in the chapter describing the tripe shop. Pearce argues that in comparison with the diary version Orwell "came up with an exaggerated and fictionalised version of the worst conditions in Wigan and then, perversely, described them as typical." ('Revisiting', 7) A tendency of exaggeration may be observed in his autobiographical pieces as well. If in *Wigan Pier* he was prompted to exaggerate poverty because of an acutely felt sense of social injustice, in 'Such, Such Were the Joys' he laid the blame on scapegoats for his even more acutely felt personal grievances. The difference in tone between the allusion to his parents in 'Such, Such Were the Joys' and the few letters written to or about his parents questions the entirely negative relationship displayed in the essay. The way he writes to Jack Common about his dying father, upon returning from Marrakech in 1938, is not characteristic of a relationship of simple "dislike".

> I don't think we'll reach London before April 2nd, & then I must go straight down & see my father, who I am afraid is dying, poor old man. It's wonderful how he's lasted through this winter, which must have been beastly cold in Suffolk, & he was too frail to be moved. He's 81, so he's had a pretty good innings, but what a hole it seems to leave when someone you have known since childhood goes. (*CW*11, 344)

Or, when the newly-wedded Orwells spent some time at the home of Orwell's parents in Southwold, Eileen had quite a positive impression of the family and their attitude to her husband: "[…] the family on the whole is fun and I imagine unusual in their attitude to

me because they all adore Eric and consider him quite impossible to live with […].” (*LO*, 65) A comparison of the essay and the letters shows that his tone regarding his elders was much influenced by the context of writing. Since the writing of ‘Such, Such Were the Joys’ evoked acute grievances of past and present, he was likely to lay more blame on certain people than it would have been due.

Considering the time gap between the childhood experiences described and the act of writing, the reader might expect a more or less well-balanced account. Instead, what we get seems to be a painful reopening of old wounds, nevertheless a careful reading makes us realise that new wounds may also have played a part in the excessively negative evaluation of one-time events. That is, in ‘Such, Such Were the Joys’ one can see the delicate reciprocity that exists between the individual’s childhood and the subsequent emotional attitude of the adult. Aside from inborn personality traits, childhood experiences play an immense role in the formation of the mature personality, while the characteristics of the adult, the way his life and manners have developed, his particular experiences and frame of mind (including prejudices), influence to a great extent how the person comes to evaluate his past. Instead of regarding it as a truthful source of objective information, memory might be a better tool for learning about the individual’s present evaluation of past experiences. (Bettelheim, 208) Therefore, from the perspective of the individual’s emotional attitude to life, memory might be more important than objective truth, since one’s emotional attitude is shaped not only by external circumstances but by the rumination upon and evaluation of those experiences.

Davison notes that among the reminiscences of Orwell’s childhood two kinds clearly stand out. (*Life*, 8) One, the delightful type, might be represented by Jacintha Buddicom’s recollections of joy and pleasure, the other, the bitter type, by Orwell’s ‘Such, Such Were the Joys’. In spite of their contradictory nature, both are likely true, as both probably tell only one part of the story, and which part is told is influenced to some extent by the character of the person remembering. Orwell’s younger sister, Avril, like Jacintha, considered Orwell’s recollections grotesquely distorted. According to Muggeridge she remembered her brother as a cheerful boy and their home as a happy one. (‘Knight’, 175) But to retort we could quote Orwell: “A child which appears reasonably happy may actually be suffering horrors which it cannot or will not reveal. It lives in a sort of alien underwater world which we can only penetrate by memory or

divination." (*CW*19, 383) It should be borne in mind that the young Blair was at St Cyprian's alone, far from the secure world of the family, with no possibility of redress against bullying. Avril was only 3 years old when Eric was admitted to the school and went through these experiences, and Jacintha met Eric when he was 11 (he spent five years at St Cyprian's and left it at the age of 13) – so how could they have known about his early experiences, not to mention the processes of his inner world? Orwell does not refute that his holidays, on which the girls could only base their memories, were happy. It is a different issue and much more to the point why he did not write about pleasant memories (though in his novels he did use some pleasant experiences, see for example, George Bowling's nostalgia for lost childhood in Lower-Binfield, and the fragments of an unfinished poem written in 1948 recalling a lost idyll with the plumber's children). Jacintha Buddicom writes:

> We had so many happy times during all the holidays together. […] It is strange that in his own writing Eric seems to have omitted this period altogether. After the 'awfulness' of Burma and his untoward descent into the underworld, was it deliberately blotted out because it *was* happy? This is a sad thought. (Buddicom, 6)

Sad as it may be, Orwell's recollections make it quite clear that resentment and a feeling of discomfort with his surroundings dominated and inevitably shaped or, if you like, distorted his memories of childhood. Characteristically, he never wrote about Eton in detail, a place where he was given considerable freedom and which he enjoyed. He tended to see the world in black and white and was inclined to over-emphasise the former. He was "a bit of a nagger," noted Forster, "who found much to discomfort him in this world." (*Critical Heritage*, 302)

St Wulfric's versus St Cyprian's

Though there can be no doubt about the subjectivity of the essay and the inevitable distortions it might involve, the fact that the author did not mean it to be exclusively fictitious is explicit. Several of his private letters, especially ones written to his one-time school-mate, Cyril Connolly, testify that St Cyprian's was indeed an "awful nightmare" to him (letter to Connolly, *CW*11, 253) and that he went through "quite unnecessary torments" in childhood (letter to J. Symons, *CW*19, 321). In his 1941

review of Spender's *The Backward Son* he characterises preparatory schools as "nasty little schools" staffed by their "money-grubbing proprietors" with "underpaid hacks" who do a lot of harm to children well before they enter public school. Middle-class education, says Orwell, is

> […] an ordeal, a process of toughening. Education in the narrower sense hardly enters into it. The aim is to turn out a boy who "has character"; that is to say a boy who is insensitive and physically courageous, questions nothing and has no inner life. What is aimed at is a mixture of stoicism and stupidity, and in nine cases out of ten it is successful; the tenth case is usually a social misfit. (*CW*12, 163)

The dark picture painted by Orwell of his prep school was in no way unique or exceptional in that period. St Cyprian's was probably not so different from other schools of the time, according to Bowker, it was rather Eric Blair who – differing from most schoolboys – could not conform to it. "He would, after all, develop into one of the great misfits of his generation, an outsider who made idiosyncrasy his hallmark." (29) Tosco Fyvel, a contemporary of Orwell, describes the schools of their youth as "institutions for the confirmation of special status", neatly adjusted to the network of rigid, class-ridden, bourgeois relations. (*Intellectuals*, 23) Though critics like to emphasise the discrepancies and highlight Orwell's assumed distortions, Connolly's account of the same prep school (in his version: St Wulfric's) in *Enemies of Promise* is very similar to Orwell's. He seems to have been equally miserable:

> At first I was miserable there and cried night after night. My mother cried too at sending me, and I have often wondered if that incubator of persecution mania, the English private school, is worth the money that is spent on it, or the tears its pupils shed. At an early age small boys are subjected to brutal partings and long separations which undermine their love for their parents before the natural period of conflict and are encouraged to look down on them without knowing why. To owners of private schools they are a business like any other, to masters a refuge for incompetence, in fact a private school has all the faults of a public school without any of its compensation, without tradition, freedom, historical beauty, good teaching, or communication between pupil and teacher. It is one of the few tortures confined to the ruling classes and from which the workers are free. I have never met anybody yet who could say he had been happy there. (*Enemies*, 174)

The sources to which Connolly attributes his misery and the factors of Orwell's despair are very much alike. Connolly looks back on St Wulfric's as a world dominated by female tyranny, namely by Flip "around whom the whole system revolved." He introduces Flip as an able and ambitious instructress, however, it turns out soon that her

temperamental and energetic nature hides a highly arbitrary character that has a repertoire of means to humiliate pupils. She slaps boys on the face in front of the school, she pulls the hair behind their ears till they cry and she makes satirical remarks about those out of her favour at meals. With such methods it is no wonder that "we learnt with her as fast as fear could teach us". (*Enemies*, 174) Being in Flip's favour or out of her favour was of vital concern for students. Connolly recalls that he had two friends whose favoured status was as unstable as his own: George Orwell and Cecil Beaton. Orwell was a true rebel. "He was incapable of courtship and when his favour went it sank for ever." (*Enemies*, 178) With his "non-serviam" attitude he "lacked the ape-like virtues without which no one can enjoy a public school." (*Enemies*, 208) (N. B. Connolly can not have been influenced by Orwell's reminiscences, as he wrote *Enemies of Promise* a decade earlier than Orwell's 'Such, Such Were the Joys'.) The difficult and complex character of Flip must have reinforced Connolly's verdict that "masters should all come up regularly before a psychiatrist." (*Enemies*, 11)

Though not with as much obsession and repugnance, Connolly also describes the harsh physical surroundings into which they were thrown. He was often "blue with cold, haunting the radiators and the lavatories and waking up every morning with the accumulated misery of the mornings before […]." (*Enemies*, 175) The atmosphere of the school was determined by the worship of competition and success, and the demand for "character, character, character." "In the matriarchy of St Wulfric's, it was not Character, but Character plus Prettiness that succeeded. […] Prettiness alone (Cecil) was suspect like intellect alone (Orwell) but prettiness that was good at games meant 'Character' and was safe." (*Enemies*, 190) Of course, the whole business of games, and the importance of competition and success in education was meant to train the pupils for the big games of the distinctly masculine affair of the Empire. The cult of games and athleticism, as an integral part of the cult of masculinity, was an important field of education whose not ignorable task was to produce men capable of running the British Empire. As Ronald Hyam puts it in his study on the Empire, "it was essentially the imperial destiny that tipped the balance decisively towards public school athleticism. The games ethic was a frontiersman's code, emphasising stamina and grit and team spirit. It helped to produce useful colonists, uncomplaining soldiers and resourceful missionaries." (73) But for those who continually lost these games, the words

competition and success were sure to carry a bad taste into adult life. As Connolly stated, "[i]t was Competition that turned friends into enemies. […] 'Never compete' was my new commandment, never again to go in for things, to be put up and blackballed, to score off anyone; only in that way could the sin of Worldliness be combated, the Splendid Failure be prepared which was the ultimate 'gesture'." (*Enemies*, 274) These words could have been written by Orwell as well. For Connolly, Orwell was not a parrot, but a true intellectual, who saw through the whole system of the school, who "rejected not only St Wulfric's but the war, the Empire, Kipling, Sussex and Character" and who proved that "there existed an alternative to character, Intelligence." (*Enemies*, 179)

The comparison of Orwell's and Connolly's memories of St Cyprian's and of the conclusions they drew from their prep school and Eton experiences speak against arguments of malicious distortions on Orwell's part. The only difference is to be found in the degree of resentment with which their school experiences left them. Although Connolly gives account of the same indignities, the same tyrants and the same wretchedness as Orwell, his attitude to St Wulfric's is best characterised by acquiescence and forgiving. His wounds seem to have healed, and he seems to have forgiven his childhood tormentors. Quite contrary to Connolly's resignation and generous forbearance, Orwell's resentments deepened and increased with time, leaving him no room for acquitting his one-time tormentors. Hence the difference in tone: Orwell's essay is dominated by indignation and resentment, whereas the tone of Connolly's writing implies that he has, in a psychological sense, outlived the bullies at school. Orwell's memories are entirely peopled by tyrannical adults, while Connolly's memories leave room for some mates as well. In one of his letters to Connolly, Orwell explains why, in spite of some similarities, they retained markedly diverging impressions about school. "Of course you were in every way much more of a success at school than I, and my own position was complicated and in fact dominated by the fact that I had much less money than most of the people about me […]." (*CEJL*1, 362) Here, like in the essay, Orwell laments that his misery was to a great extent due to his family's inadequate financial situation, but interestingly enough a close friend, Tosco Fyvel, thought that it was only a subsequent explanation and rationalisation of the unspeakable causes of unhappiness. Fyvel strongly doubted that Orwell was unhappy merely because

others were richer than he. “On the contrary, I thought, it was because he was basically an unhappy child, for all the countless complex reasons for which a child may be unhappy, that he seized upon this disparity of wealth as a justification for his unhappy condition.” (*Memoir*, 14) Brooding on his childhood in ‘Why I Write’ Orwell also lays stress on psychic rather than economic reasons in explaining his loneliness: “I was the middle child of three, but there was a gap of five years on either side, and I barely saw my father before I was eight. For this and other reasons I was somewhat lonely, and I soon developed disagreeable mannerisms which made me unpopular throughout my schooldays.” (*CW*18, 316)

The worth of a failure

Cunningham quotes Cyril Connolly writing in 1937 about “the typically English band of psychological revolutionaries, people who adopt left-wing political formulas because they hate their fathers or were unhappy at their public schools or insulted at the Customs or lectured about sex.” (243) Orwell in this sense is a typical psychological revolutionary, the typically homeless, fatherless, boarding-school boy, who, according to Cunningham, readily admitted that he longed for the idyllic family life of the workers. His famous idealised depiction of the warmth of family life among the working class in *The Road to Wigan Pier* with the Father and Mother sitting beside the fire is partly a projection of his own emotional problems. Warmth and kindness are enjoyed only in the company of working-class people:

> I was very young, not much more than six, when I first became aware of class-distinctions. Before that my chief heroes had generally been working-class people because they always seemed to do such interesting things, such as being fishermen and blacksmiths and bricklayers. I remember the farm hands on a farm in Cornwall who used to let me ride on the drill when they were sowing turnips and would sometimes catch the ewes and milk them to give me a drink and the workmen building the new house next door, who let me play with the mortar and from whom I first learnt the word ‘b____’; and the plumber up the road with whose children I used to go out birdnesting. But it was not long before I was forbidden to play with the plumber’s children; they were ‘common’ and I was told to keep away from them. (*CW*5, 117)

Cunningham points out that the cult of the worker was a kind of search for the lost father-figure and the cult of working-class life was a quest for the family warmth that

the bourgeois child was deprived of when being parked at boarding school. (242) The experience of home deprivation at a cruelly early age was traumatic. Orwell writes in 'Such, Such Were the Joys':

> Your home might be far from perfect, but at least it was a place ruled by love rather than by fear, where you did not have to be perpetually on your guard against the people surrounding you. At eight years old you were suddenly taken out of this warm nest and flung into a world of force and fraud and secrecy, like a gold-fish into a tank full of pike. Against no matter what degree of bullying you had no redress. (*CW*19, 370)

Spartan conditions, mental and physical competitions and strict discipline were meant to build character and thus to ensure the fitness of the next generation of the Establishment, but with the non-conforming students the bourgeois school system achieved, apparently, just the opposite. Orwell, like Connolly, became highly suspicious of competitions, taken both in the narrow and widest sense. He considered international sports competitions to equal "war minus the shooting" and tended to see life as a battleground for winners and losers.[11] His very characteristic remark that "the trouble with competitions is that somebody wins them" suggests that far from being a person motivated by the desire for success, he made a virtue of being a failure, as he often described himself. (*CEJL*3, 118) He was inclined to judge other people too on the basis of their assumed success in life, which is quite different from real accomplishments, subject as it is to personal assessment, and this very often led him to false conclusions and uncalled for presumptions. In his letter apologising for having used Spender as a symbol of the parlour Bolshie, for instance, part of his argument was that he looked upon Spender as "a sort of fashionable successful person." (*CEJL*1, 313) For Orwell, Spender was a *persona non grata* not only and not so much because he was a

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[11] Though he developed and displayed definite aversion to competition, his grudge against international sports was certainly enhanced by the increased nationalism involved in certain branches of sport (most notably football) during the war years. Apropos of the visit of the Dynamo football team to England in 1945, in 'The Sporting Spirit' he contemplated the effect of sport competitions on international relations in times of political tension. He concluded that far from creating goodwill between the nations (which is the stated aim of the Olympic Games), sporting contests increase animosity and group hatred. "[…] as soon as the question of prestige arises, as soon as you feel that you and some larger unit will be disgraced if you lose, the most savage combative instincts are aroused. […] At the international level sport is frankly mimic warfare. But the significant thing is not the behaviour of the players but the attitude of the spectators: and, behind the spectators, of the nations who work themselves into furies over these absurd contests, and seriously believe – at any rate for short periods – that running, jumping and kicking a ball are tests of national virtue." (*CW*17, 441)

communist sympathiser, but because he belonged – at least in Orwell's viewpoint – to the category of successful persons.

Having a strong sense of inadequacy, Gordon Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, reaches a state of indifference and no longer wishes to keep up with the demands of the money-centred world. He wants to submerge himself, to sink beneath the world of money into that "great sluttish underworld where failure and success have no meaning". Anthony West in his notable review of the novel emphasises that for both Gordon Comstock and, later on, in *Coming Up for Air*, George Bowling, the fear of the coming of aeroplanes loaded with high explosives is curiously mixed with a touch of perverse satisfaction. A universal smash-up, argues West, would mean to Orwell the destruction of the world built up on false values, in which he felt himself inadequate. "Like a number of other writers who had thought themselves ill-used by prewar society and had been unconsciously looking forward to Armageddon and social shipwreck, he consoled himself by constructing a fantasy of universal ruin (i.e. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*)." (*Critical Heritage*, 76) That *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is essentially and primarily a political dystopia and not a simple projection of childhood misery shall not be questioned but West's idea of drawing a possible connection between the author's innate emotional attitude and his works is certainly edifying.

The essay as propaganda

Concerning the impetus behind 'Such, Such Were the Joys', Davison is not satisfied with the usual answer that Orwell's motivation for writing the essay was, especially if his gross distortions are taken into account, his well-known animus against private schools. Based on the examination of external factors (the examination of the manuscript, the typewriter faces) Davison calculates that although the completion of the essay is given as May 1947 in *CEJL*, it is incorrect, and Orwell must have finished it a year later, after he had completed *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and when he had entered Hairmyres Hospital very seriously ill. (*Life*, 103) Taking into consideration that he was in great pain, much concerned with other matters, like the future of his adopted son, and that he was certainly aware of the fact that his essay could not be published any time soon for fear of a libel suit (Mrs Wilkes, the Flip of 'Such, Such Were the Joys' was

still alive), Davison asks why Orwell spent so much of his time writing the essay. He finds the clue in Tosco Fyvel's account of an 'As I Please' affair. According to Fyvel, Orwell planned to make an attack on Aneurin Bevan, the leader of the Labour Government and the only politician for whom he had some respect, because Bevan did not give priority in his program to the abolition of public, i.e. private, schools and instead focused on the National Health Service, on public housing and on nationalisation. As Fyvel recalls he laughed Orwell out of making this attack and actually the piece was never written, but in Davison's interpretation Orwell poured his material into an extensive essay instead which became a much more profound and swinging attack than an 'As I Please' column would have provided. (Davison, *Life*, 104) In Davison's view, even though Orwell himself very badly needed the support of the National Health Service, he believed that the health of British society depended more on the abolition of private education. Davison's argument leads to the conclusion that the essay was intended as propaganda against public schools. In the sense in which Orwell attributed a propagandistic nature to every piece of art, the essay may well be regarded as such. But then propaganda has to be taken in a very wide sense, including also the process whereby any piece of art alters, modifies and shapes the mind of the recipient. 'Such, Such Were the Joys' is an autobiographical, highly subjective piece of writing that clearly goes beyond the demands and possibilities of overt or direct propaganda. Though Orwell had a poor opinion on private education all his life and would have cheered its abolition, it was a consequence of his school years and the unpleasant memories attached to them rather than a motive behind the essay, the distortions of which were probably unconscious corresponding to the nature of memory. It is as daring to claim that 'Such, Such Were the Joys' was written in order to advance the abolition of private education as to imply that 'A Hanging' was meant to advance the abolition of capital punishment and then criticising it for not having accomplished the task.

'Such, Such Were the Joys' is the only complete piece of reminiscence by Orwell, who became less and less reticent about crucial childhood experiences towards the end of his life. (Alldritt, 103) The essay is a delicate conjunction of past and present: due to a great deal of abuse and humiliation the young Eric developed into an Orwell especially alert to injustices and grievances and at the time of writing he is full of recent

grievances which colour his memories. According to a friend and colleague, Malcolm Muggeridge, self-pity was Orwell's dominant, if not totally obvious, emotional state. Reflecting in his diary on the ostensibly correct but inherently false obituaries for Orwell, Muggeridge complains that everyone is "saying George was not given to self-pity, whereas it was of course his dominant emotion." (*Like It Was*, 376) 'Such, Such Were the Joys' is perhaps the best evidence of it. The content is in painful contrast with what the title promises. The original Blake poem, one of the Songs of Innocence, is indeed idyllic:

> Such such were the joys.
> When we all girls & boys,
> In our youth-time were seen,
> On the Ecchoing Green.
> …
> The sun does descend,
> And our sports have an end:
> Round the laps of their mothers,
> Many sisters and brothers,
> Like birds in their nest,
> Are ready for rest;
> And sport no more seen,
> On the darkening Green. (8)

The joys for Blake, the laps of mothers, sisters and brothers, birds and nests, are the warmth and harmony of family life, from which the young Blair was cut off. By invoking Blake's poem Orwell emphasises the contrast between Blake's idyllic and his own cruel childhood at school, and the reference entails quite a large degree of lament over his own unlucky fate. As the essay develops, the writer can less and less withstand the lure of self-pity, and after the quite merciless and to-the-point account of bed-wetting and beating he becomes more and more entangled in his emotional suffering, culminating in such cries as "I was damned. I had no money, I was weak, I was ugly, I was unpopular, I had a chronic cough, I was cowardly, I smelt." (*CW*19, 379)

Bowker notes that for Orwell his prep-school years were "a baptism of fire which changed his emotional landscape for ever". He left school as "a guilt-ridden and emotionally damaged child." (29) He carried childhood injuries far into adult life – and was keen on collecting further grievances. Crick warns critics against attributing too much significance to Orwell's early trauma:

> Those who are confident that they can find a psychological "hidden wound" in the young Eric and then locate *Nineteen-Eighty Four* on the map as a version of St Cyprian's, as if the vision of totalitarianism arose from prep-school terror and sufferings, may be disguising their own lack of perception of the political horrors that Orwell said were under their noses, far more dangerous, dramatic and objective, in their shared contemporary world of the 1930s and 1940s. (*A Life*, 20)

Nineteen-Eighty Four is primarily a political dystopia, written in the particular atmosphere which prevailed after the Second World War, and not a direct projection of St Cyprian's. But early experiences launched him on an emotional life full of insecurity and feelings of failure. Throughout his career he was discontent with his own accomplishments: in his 'Last Literary Notebook' he regarded his total output as "miserably small" and confessed to have always had a "neurotic feeling that I was wasting my time". (*CW*20, 204) The way one's attitude to the world develops depends very much on the way one's life develops and certain stages and experiences might have a crucial effect on one's personality and emotional attitude. Orwell's failure at St Cyprian's, his exile in Burma, then his self-chosen exile among the dispossessed endowed him with an acute sense of deprivation, and consequently, with an eye keen on injustices, and grievances, whether of his own or of others. His preoccupation with failure and the fact that, in Norman Collins' words, he went "through hell" had a twofold effect on his way of thinking. On the one hand it equipped him with a relentless will for social reform and sympathy for those on the remote periphery of society, and on the other hand, it induced in him a characteristically negative attitude and constant dissatisfaction with the world. As Anthony West observed: "… there is nothing in the realm of common or uncommon experience that Orwell cannot stand on its head and interpret in a negative and essentially paranoid sense." (*Critical Heritage*, 79)

Performing manliness through sport: 'The Slack-bob'

Much earlier than the time of writing 'Such, Such Were the Joys' but relating a school experience from a later, Etonian phase in his life, in 1918 at the age of fifteen Orwell wrote a short story, rather only a sketch, for the Eton school newspaper, *The Election Times*, in which he presented unawares the pressures of school and wider society to perform one's gender through the insistence on sport. The story appears to be

a simple tale about the painful consequences of an innocuous lie, ending with the moral that "honesty is the best policy." However, there is more to it than that. As Daphne Patai points it out rightly, the story is "an illuminating parable on the pressures boys feel to acquire and act out a masculine identity." (*Mystique*, 19)

The boy in the focus of the story is too lazy and uninterested to engage in any sport. In Etonian terms he is a slack-bob and thus a bit of a misfit, just like the character of 'Such, Such Were the Joys' though in a less anxious and resentful manner. His misfitness does not bother him, he is rather proud of his neglect of sport and convinces himself that he is the only sensible boy in the school, wet bobs, i.e. rowers, and dry bobs, i.e. cricketers, being simply fools, who "go around worrying about rowing and playing cricket." The various technical terms like wet bob, dry bob, Upper Boats, Lower Boats, designating rowing colours, as well as the short-hand reference "Lord's" to Lord's Cricket Ground, the setting for the annual Eton versus Harrow cricket match, signal the important role sport played in the life of the boarding school community and the investment of the school in bringing up the right kind of pupils through sport. Indeed, Peter Davison uses the glossary of *Eton Microcosm* to decode what the all those terms refer to. (*CW*10, 46)

The slack-bob's self-confidence comes under challenge when during the cricket match at Lord's his mother introduces him to his cousins. "…. [t]hey were all big, fat, noisy girls with red hair, seven in number." (*CW*10, 46) The girls take it for granted that he is also a cricket player and start teasing him about how advanced he is in cricket. He reluctantly admits that he is "not very fond of cricket." Feeling acutely the pressure that the girls expect him to be engaged in some kind of sport, his self-assured neglect of sport crumbles, and he gladly seizes the chance of a lie that he is a rower, when one of the cousins makes the conclusion that if not a cricketer, he must be a wet-bob. The girls press him hard to reveal on what level he is, and after a boastful claim by one of them ("I bet I'd be in the Eight if I was a boy") he ends up saying that he was going to win Junior Sculling and probably be in the Eight next year.

Having managed to escape from the girls at this point and having managed more or less to perform his manliness verbally, the story reaches its climax when a few weeks afterwards the slack-bob receives a postcard from one of the girls saying "[w]e are all coming to watch you. I hope you win." His misgiving is justified when he gets to know

from a friend that it is the day of Junior Sculling. “The boy turned pale, but he went and met them,” and the original lie then bears several more lies. To the challenge by one of the girls “if you win I’m going to give you a nice kiss,” the boy retorts that he cannot row as he has hurt his arm. The girls further press him as if expecting of him to prove that he is really a tough guy: “’Never mind,’ said Tabitha. ‘I’m not allowed, though,’ said he. ‘Don’t mind that,’ said Grace. ‘But I can’t,’ said he.” Finally, seeing that the boy will stick to his decision regardless of what they say, they let off their frustration by turning against him, naming him coward and blaming him for letting them down. The eldest girl finally shows willingness to compromise and the story ends with her claim “we’ll all come and have tea in your room now, and next year we’ll come and watch you in the Procession of Boats.” (*CW*10, 46)

The story is, to a greater extent than its explicit claim to show the futility of lying, an implicit parable of Beauvoir’s claim that “one is not born, but rather, *becomes* a woman,” one needs only to replace man for woman. If one is not born, but becomes a man, for Butler it means that gender is not a stable identity, but an “identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts.” (519) In the story the boy is regarded by the girls manly only if he does his gender in the appropriate way, in that particular place and time through engaging in sport. The body, for Butler, is a materiality that bears meaning and that meaning is historically constituted. “To be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of ‘woman,’ to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project.” (522) For the boy in the story the historically delimited possibility for materializing himself is the cultivation of his body through sport and the cultivation of his spirit through games that rely on a community of sportsmen, like cricket and rowing, as opposed to sport in which individuals compete.

The doing of gender, according to Butler, is “open to the perception of others,” and this openness to perception, this theatricality enhances the individual to do their gender according to established norms. The theatrical context in doing one’s gender through sport is obvious, especially in the case of public school sport events, like the cricket match and Junior Sculling, where the event gains its meaning primarily through the gaze of the spectators, in the boy’s case, through the gaze of female spectators, and

where the relevance of the sport activity itself, the physical exertion of the body diminishes, and theatricality gains primacy. Butler's claim that "the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts" is especially relevant in the story. The boy feels the inappropriate performance, or rather, the lack of performance of his gender all the more painful as the performance, or the absence of that performance, is watched by the girls.

Butler argues that if gender is constituted, it is capable of being constituted differently, there is always a possibility of "a different sort of repeating," a "breaking," and "subversion" of style. By refusing to do any sport, the slack-bob runs the risk of breaking the socially sanctioned, appropriate way of gender performance. As long as he is in his regular community of boys, he is proud of his uniqueness, he thinks it makes him the only sensible boy in the school, a kind of positive exception to the norm. With the appearance of his cousins on stage, or rather in the auditorium, however, the performance in sport becomes a performance in gender, and the slack-bob suddenly finds himself under duress. Justifying Butler's claim that gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end and it occurs under the situation of duress, the girls are conceived by the slack-bob as a threatening force who will punish his different kind of performance with their bad opinion of him. Butler says that "as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences" and "indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished." (522) The girls' intense expectations about the boy's sport achievements, materialized in questions like "Why aren't you in the Eleven?" "I expect he is in the Second Eleven," "Perhaps he's a Wet-bob," "You're in the Eight, of course?" already in themselves constitute duress, not to mention scathing remarks like "I bet I'd be in the Eight if I was a boy," or "Coward!" "You're letting us all down," which make the boy want desperately to appear gender appropriate, even at the expense of ongoing lies. (*CW*10, 46)

The whole experience in which the boy has to face what is demanded of him and what are the consequences if he does not meet those demands, will surely have an impact on his gender performance. It is one of those series of acts, "renewed, revised and consolidated through time", whose sedimentation will force the body to become its gender. (Butler, 523) Just as there is a sedimentation of gender norms that has produced a set of "corporeal styles," which "appear as the natural configuration of bodies," (524)

there is a sedimentation in individuals of acts that reinforce, modify or undermine the inclination to perform one's gender by complying with social laws.

The punishment that the slack-bob is trying to evade by trying desperately to appear to do his gender right is humiliation by the girls and a resulting sense of shame. Shame, as Sedgwick recalls, "derives from and aims toward sociability." (37) It is a response to the loss of feedback from others, a cut in the circuit of communication, and signals the desire to reconstitute communication, thereby repairing social isolation. The slack-bob resorts to lie because his cousins' behaviour implies that they would get cold feet and would cut him dead if he told them the truth about his neglect of sport. He is conscious of the impending rejection and he acutely feels the possibility of shame and humiliation. Shame in this context functions as a possible punitive consequence that compels the boy in the given situation to lie, and in the broader terms of his future gender performance to readjust his way of doing his gender, probably by conforming to social expectations. Shame then is "integral to and residual in the processes by which identity itself is formed." (Sedgwick, 63) In the context of the story shame is an impulse, an origin of the performative that has the capacity to regulate the production of gender.

One of the girls is trying to get the boy to row in spite of his temporary (fake) injury by promising him a "nice kiss," to which then all the girls join. The girls clearly assume that heterosexuality is a necessary element of proper masculinity and femininity, otherwise they would not think that a kiss from each one of them could outdo the injury. Their performance of gender thus involves the affirmation of heteronormative assumptions. Based on sociolinguist Penelope Eckert's research Cameron and Kulick point out that linguistic strategies that display 'verbal' heterosexuality have a special significance for adolescents. Without being necessarily interested in sex itself and without the actual behaviour necessarily being there behind the words, displaying an interest in sex and modelling the heterosexual norms of the adult world is an important sign of maturity and a bonding mechanism for peers. (Cameron, 69) Not taking part in the heterosexual talk, which is at the same time a performance of gender, has negative consequences on one's status within the peer group. (Cameron, 70) As soon as Grace utters the words "if you win I'm going to give you a nice kiss," Agatha, not by chance the oldest one, who has the most to lose by not

appearing mature enough, quickly joins in with adding "we all will." The kiss in this context is not an act that would necessarily provide pleasure for any of the girls or the boy, but is important in terms of the social value that is attached to it. It aligns them with adult heterosexual femininity/masculinity. And, as Cameron and Kulick emphasise, in (pre-) adolescence "an individual's popularity becomes linked to their attractiveness to the other sex, and their ability and desire to get a boyfriend or girlfriend." (70) The boy's rejection of the offer frustrates the girls' project at such a good chance for the enhancement of their social status, it is no wonder that the girls turn against him at this point, naming him a coward. It is a punishment bad enough, depriving him of his masculinity at one stroke, and thereby lowering his status among his peers.

The social cost of non-participation in heterosexual activity, or in the context of the story in the adolescent mocking of that activity, is high because of the social system of value that is based on heterosexuality. (Cameron, 72) As the quote by Connolly has made it explicit, homosexuality in public schools was not uncommon, though it was severely punished and kept in secret. The diverse and contradictory effects of public school education are summed up by Connolly in his "theory of permanent adolescence," a theory that is not unrelated to questions of sexuality and gender performance.

> […] in fact were I to deduce any system from my feelings on leaving Eton, it might be called *The Theory of Permanent Adolescence*. It is the theory that the experiences by boys at the great public schools, their glories and disappointments, are so intense as to dominate their lives and to arrest their development. From these it results that the greater part of the ruling class remains adolescent, school-minded, self-conscious, cowardly, sentimental, and in the last analysis homosexual. Early laurels weigh like lead and of many of the boys whom I knew at Eton, I can say their lives are over. Those who knew them then knew them at their best and fullest, now, in their early thirties, they are haunted ruins. (271)

Orwell's performance of gender both in his writings and in his life speak for the legitimacy of his fellow writer's theory. His biographies attest that he did have at least one homoerotic attachment at Eton, it was Connolly himself who was his rival for one of the boys. Connolly kept a letter by Orwell in which the latter admitted that he was "gone on Eastwood" and implored to Connolly not to say spiteful things about him to the boy though allowing for Connolly's share in him. Connolly actually thought of

including Orwell's letter in his *Enemies of Promise*, but then decided not to, and Orwell was clearly anxious about the issue. (see chapter 'Those lovely Burmese days')

The whole issue has significance because of the ambivalent attitude to homosexuality Orwell later on displayed. The intolerance towards homosexuality earned for him the label homophobe, which, however, does not depict his quite complex attitude towards the issue. (see chapter 'Ambivalent homophobia') The reading of 'The Slack-bob' exemplifies Butler's claim that "gender is made to comply with a model of truth or falsity, which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control." (528) Through sedimented experiences like the one recounted in the story, Orwell was moulded into a man of hypertrophied masculinity, who anxiously policed other people's gender performance and who was not willing to accept people who in Butler's terms ultimately "failed to perform the illusion of gender essentialism." (528)

In examining 'Such, Such Were the Joys' and 'The Slack-bob' I was interested particularly in what effects Orwell's education and upbringing might have had on his gender constitution. My reading of these pieces exemplifies Butler's claim that gender performance is governed by punitive and regulatory social conventions and the aim of the gender project is cultural survival. Orwell's failure at school was often a failure in requirements of masculinity. At St Cyprian's and Eton he had to live up not only to expectations of good behaviour or good advance in studies, but he had to conform to expectations of manliness. Quite importantly, it is not that he did not do well in his studies that he laments in 'Such, Such Were the Joys' but that he did not have the guts and character, he was not brave enough and he was not good in sports. "My situation was that of countless other boys," he writes in the essay, "and if potentially I was more of a rebel than most, it was only because, *by boyish standards*, I was a poorer specimen." (*CW*19, 381, emphasis added) That he had a chronic cough, he was weak, ugly, unpopular and cowardly, was so painful for him was because of the emphasis education put on traditional masculine virtues. The Etonian slack-bob learnt – as all of us learn – at a very early age that not complying with one's gender triggers social sanctions.

If as a child he was by boyish standards a poor specimen, in adult life he lived the courageous and strenuous life of a manly man and identified with the common man of the working class as opposed to the intellectual of the lazy middle class. If he was a failure by boyish standards, he ensured himself a safe niche by manly standards even at the price of questioning and throwing doubt on others' gender identity. Orwell had plenty of experiences in social punishment for not doing his gender right – this, rather than the general misogyny of the period might count for the manly ideal he tried to live up to, which included the diminution of women and intolerance towards those who in some way threatened the boundaries of discrete and polar genders.

The man "with a grouse"

"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone;
Dare to have a purpose firm,
Dare to make it known."
(From 'Prevention of Literature')

Failure: the source of success

Orwell seems to have never outgrown the sense of failure which he alleged to have acquired at school. In 'Why I Write', an essay which he wrote at the instigation of the editors of *Gangrel* in 1946[12] (*Animal Farm* was published in 1945), he is convinced that "every book is a failure" and admits that

> I had the lonely child's habit of making up stories and holding conversations with imaginary persons, and I think from the very start my literary ambitions were mixed up with the feeling of being isolated and undervalued. I knew I had a facility with words and a power of facing unpleasant facts, and I felt that this created a sort of private world in which I could get my own back for my failure in everyday life. (*CW*18, 316)

The careful reader comes across numerous understatements in Orwell's writing, which give the impression that he was tormented by a deep sense of inadequacy, insecurity about himself and a resulting sense of inferiority. The way Shelden opens his biography is very characteristic of Orwell: "George Orwell did not expect to be so successful. In

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[12] In 'Where He Wrote: Periodicals and the Essays of George Orwell' Peter Marks examines 'Why I Write' from the perspective of how much Orwell's thinking and writing was influenced by the periodical to which he contributed. Orwell's posthumous celebrity allowed, says Marks, that "his views transcended the initial situations they were written to address" and the ignorance of the provenance of the essays necessarily entails some distortion of the views expressed therein. (3) The handling and interpretation of 'Why I Write' is a pertinent example of distortions due to lack of contextualisation. Placed at the beginning of *CEJL*, the essay reads like the manifesto of an apprentice writer at the beginning of his career, whereas it is, rather, the review of an established career. Far from being an independent manifesto that sprang fully formed from his head, it was an answer to the editors of the short-lived *Gangrel*. In fact, Orwell was only one of four writers to produce an essay 'Why I Write' for the fourth and eventually final number of the periodical. Marks suggests that even the vocational tone in which Orwell opens the essay ("From a very early age, perhaps the age of five or six, I knew that when I grew up I should be a writer.") owes something to the quasi-religious terminology of *Gangrel* ("these four articles do provide a picture which justifies the vocational attitude: 'I write because I became a writer, because I can't help writing, because I was called'") though Marks quotes these phrases from the fourth number of *Gangrel* and there is no evidence that the editorial text had been worded before the essays were handed in. Therefore, the conclusion that "the essay does carry the mark of *Gangrel* in its concerns" is not sufficiently supported but that it "would not have been written but for the promptings of that periodical's editors" is probably true.

fact he spent much of his time anticipating failure." (Shelden, 1) He had a habit of degrading his works. We know from his letters to Brenda Salkeld how great a sense of inferiority the reading of *Ulysses* gave him at the time when he was engaged in writing *A Clergyman's Daughter*. Reading *Ulysess*, he felt "like a eunuch who has taken a course in voice production and can pass himself off fairly well as a bass or a baritone, but if you listen closely you can hear the good old squeak just the same as ever." (*CEJL*1, 139) Or, when he hesitated whether to compose the sketch that came to be 'Shooting an Elephant' (N.B: the story starts with the following opener: "In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people – the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me."), he expressed his doubts to the editor of *New Writing,* John Lehmann, in the following way: "I mean it might be too low brow and I doubt whether there is anything anti-Fascist in the shooting of an elephant." (*CEJL*1, 221)[13] A year after his first wife's death he made an awkward proposal to Anne Popham starting with a list of disadvantages, his ill health, unattractiveness, and old age, the only advantage for the bride being that she could become the widow of a writer, taking into consideration the fact that, he envisioned, he would soon be dead. Taylor puts down this constant down-playing of abilities, "the cultivation of the notion of personal inadequacy" to character: "It was Orwell, we can infer, who decided that he was a failure. The rest, the opinions of parents, schoolmasters and literary critics, was merely corroborative." (*The Life*, 320)

In 'Why I Write' Orwell denies that his motives for writing are wholly public-spirited – as it is indeed very enticing to assume they are. The demon, he says, that drives him on to the "horrible, exhausting struggle" of writing a book is the same

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[13] The impetus for 'Shooting an Elephant', like that for 'Why I Write', came from a periodical. Peter Marks suggests that just as in the case of 'Why I Write', in 'Shooting an Elephant' Orwell dovetailed his message to the concerns of *New Writing*. When Lehmann asked Orwell for a contribution to his recently launched periodical, Orwell replied that without seeing a copy of *New Writing* he could not tell whether the idea that he had in mind was likely to be in line with the periodical or not, and if not, he would not put it onto paper. Lehmann sent Orwell a copy of the first issue of *New Writing* that carried a manifesto stating that the periodical was "devoted to imaginative writing, mainly of young authors … whose work is too unorthodox in length or style to be suitable for the established monthly and quarterly magazines" and hoping to "present the work of writers from colonial and foreign countries." (Marks, 7-8) Convinced by the like-mindedness of the periodical, Orwell sent 'Shooting an Elephant' in a fortnight. The setting and subject matter of the essay and the collision of imperial rules with the narrator's moral code were sufficiently unorthodox to get onto the pages of the periodical and it duly opened its second issue. Though the accidental nature of the essay's coming into being is an interesting addition to Orwell-literature, the essay does not lose its significance due to this fact, nor due to the quite obvious phenomenon that writers do adjust their subject to the given forum to some extent.

instinct that urges the baby to cry for attention. Being haunted by a deep sense of failure, Orwell might have been driven by the anxiety of inadequacy and self-doubt to find his identity through the struggle for social good and to become *somebody* through the apparently unselfish, but at its roots egotistic, fight for others. In this sense his immersion was in fact a way to rise above everybody else and to find a distinct identity. Success was to be attained by failing. This time it was a failure consciously sought after and in nature very different from that he suffered at school – a failure that came to be the source of his self-esteem and sense of success. Failing in social terms was probably a reassuring comfort for him in psychological terms. He needed the experience in order to prove to himself and others that he was a worthwhile human being.

The emphatic assertion of independence from certain groups is a significant element in the search for identity. The anxiety of influence compels one to find one's identity by searching for alliances with social groups markedly different from those into which one was born. Several of Orwell's friends noted his strange appearance, his thin, haggard face with deep grooves down his cheeks, his outfit of shabby working men's clothes, worn jacket with leather patches at the elbows and frayed corduroy trousers; the external neglect was part of his determination to steer clear of the respectable social strata. His déclassé adventure among the down and outs after Burma, where – according to the recollections of other English officers – he did not really find his place (see Shelden's quoting Roger Beadon), was an attempt to break with the respectable life assigned by his middle-class origins and to establish his identity in an independent way. He later on attributed his commitment to the lower classes to an inclination to expiate his guilt at having been an oppressor in the imperialist system, but some critics have not been satisfied with this explanation of motives. Richard Hoggart, for example, observes that "the explanation for his immersion into the lower layers of society contains some of the truth, but it is not the whole. The whole truth is more varied. To touch bottom for Orwell was a very complicated release indeed, a shedding of guilt but also a positive test to which he was impelled." (Hoggart, 38) By all means, saints are not born saints but humans with a personal psychic need to rise above others and to gain other people's appreciation. Being a saint – much like being a criminal – suggests an inability or unwillingness to conform, an inclination to stay outside. To understand the saint's motives might be just as interesting and rewarding as analysing the criminal's

background. What at first sight appears to be an unselfish and altruistic fight for others in the name of noble principles might, at its roots, very well involve egotistic and vain motives. In his essay on Koestler Orwell himself acknowledged that revolutionary activity is due to some personal maladjustment. "Those who struggle against society are, on the whole, those who have reason to dislike it […]." (*CEJL*3, 242) He raised the issue of motivation behind Gandhi's activities and achievements as well and risked the assumption that Gandhi was driven to some extent by personal vanity: "Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent […]." (*CEJL*4, 463) In spite of his aversion to saints and sanctity, he could not avoid being labelled one – and undoubtedly, his way of life to a large extent contributed to his posthumous reputation as 'St George' Orwell who, according to Richard Rees, was "one of those self-mortifying saints who kissed the sores of lepers." (Rodden, *Politics*, 325)

It is still questionable how much effect Orwell's social struggles, the road to Wigan Pier, for example, had on ameliorating the situation of the working class, but his reputation definitely owes much to the cause of the workers. His going over proved to be an illusion – as for many writers of the 30s, it was a game of "let's pretend", untenable in the long run. (Cunningham, 263) He was one of the few, who – turning his back on his origins and the exorbitant pressures to conform – really sank into the depths, among the poor and unemployed; due to his personal history he most badly needed it. But these desperate attempts notwithstanding, the wish for personal integration into the chosen class was denied and what remained for him were merely the external markers of the proletariat as regards clothing and cigarette rolling, as well as much despair and frustration. From here there was no way back into respectable society, it would have meant a turnabout irreconcilable with his self-image. The only way forward was that of the solitary intellectual on the side of the common men fuelled by personal grievance and resentment. He became the perfect rebel, with all the positives and negatives the role entailed.

Many friends and acquaintances saw Orwell as an essentially quixotic figure. Muggeridge had the impression of Orwell as exactly like Don Quixote, "very lean and egotistic and honest and foolish; a veritable Knight of the Woeful Countenance." (*Like It Was*, 195) Woodcock opened his memoir of Orwell with the following sentence: "When I remember George Orwell, I see again the long, lined face that so often

reminded one not of a living person, but of a character out of fiction. It was the nearest I had seen in real life to the imagined features of Don Quixote, and the rest of the figure went with the face." (11) The figure of Don Quixote, literature's favourite odd man out, implies a man out of tune with reality, whose isolation and loneliness follows from his peculiar character. Orwell's quixotic attitude, on the one hand, can be seen as a noble fight for the amelioration of the world but, on the other, as a permanent discontent seemingly with the world but very likely also with himself. The dominant Orwell image is that of the nay-sayer, whose chief inclination was to react against, to say no before yes. (Rodden, *Politics*, 103) Hakan Ringbom points out that the abundance of negation in Orwell's essays confirms his image as a rebel. Whereas essay writers use the word 'not' on average less than twice per page, Orwell uses it more than three times on every page. Characteristically, he often argues from negatives, for example, "[as] usual, one can define his position more easily if one starts by deciding what he was *not*." (Ringbom, 34) The emphasis he put on what he was against – his permanent quarrels with the targets of his ill-will: the upper-middle class, the socialist cranks, the intelligentsia, the Nancy poets, etc. – obscured what he was for. After visiting Orwell in 1949 in hospital, Muggeridge lamented in his diary over "poor George," who was unable to rest his mind and find peace with the world, who on his death-bed was "still grinding over the same political questions." He continued: "He went on about the Home Guard, and the Spanish Civil War, and how he would go to Switzerland soon, and all the while the stench of death was in the air, like autumn in the garden." (*Like It Was*, 368) And at the news of Orwell's death not much later, Muggeridge noted in his diary that the saddest thing in Orwell's death was that "there was no sense of peace or relinquishment in him." (*Like It Was*, 374)

Shelden notes that "[p]laying the loser was a form of revenge against the winners, a way of repudiating the corrupt nature of conventional success…" (2) Orwell made much of the dichotomy of success and failure. Doomed to walk on the shadowy side of life, he tended to be suspicious of his fellows on the – so he assumed – sunny side. As a consolation he nursed the false belief that the winners – the old ladies in Rolls-Royces, the literary men who made it – had false values and the losers, repudiating such values, were morally right. Jon Kimche, the other assistant in the bookshop of the Westropes where Orwell worked in 1934-5 remembered how Orwell

"would at times hold forth in long harangues against the smooth literary men from Cambridge who had everything going for them, or else against the British Empire, the Catholic Church, or the filthy rich." (Fyvel, *Memoir*, 53) To avoid success and to withstand the lure of money and glamour was a touchstone in Orwell's judgement of other people. He considered, for example, that the basic flaw in Mark Twain's nature was his inability to despise success, which led to his surrender to society reflected in his books. (*CEJL*2, 328) It is to Orwell's credit that in this issue he kept himself to the terms on which he criticised others. He went out of his way to model modesty by living a strenuous life in backward conditions, even when he was fairly well-off from the sales of *Animal Farm*.

At the same time the role of the loser, necessitated by his personal psychic history, undoubtedly left a bad taste in his mouth. As an old Etonian remarked "he didn't really *like* people." (Shelden, 56) Koestler in his obituary noted that there was "an emanation of austere harshness" around him but this harshness diminished in proportion to the distance between himself and others, that is, he was full of general sympathy for common people and especially people on the periphery of society while he was severe and merciless towards those closest to him. (*Critical Heritage*, 297) There was a touch of the nagging misanthrope in his attitude towards his fellow beings. In his obituary on Orwell V.S. Pritchett put it delicately: "Growing up turned him not exactly into a misanthrope – he was too good-natured and spirited for that – but into one who felt too painfully the ugly pressure of society upon private virtue and happiness." (*Critical Heritage*, 295-6) With the vague conclusion to the statement, Pritchett toned down the quite straightforward beginning, nevertheless he raised the contradiction between Orwell's devotion to the destitute and his capability for irrational hatred.

From the perspective of having a problematic relation with one's fellow human beings, Spender assumes that great artists have, almost without exception, been failures in life. (*Thirties*, 116) Several of Orwell's acquaintances have suggested that Orwell's personal relations were unsatisfactory. Tosco Fyvel and his wife Mary visited Orwell and his adopted son Richard early in 1946. Orwell was bathing Richard and the Fyvels were witness to a gleeful scene implying genuine warmth and an excellent relationship between father and son. When Mary Fyvel remarked that in her opinion Orwell was handling the little two-year-old well, he gave a cryptic smile and said "[y]es. You see,

I've always been good with animals." (*Memoir*, 48) Fyvel concluded that it was a typical Orwellian remark with an odd grain of truth concerning the similarity between handling infants and animals. But more importantly, the remark had a sliver of truth with regard to Orwell's personality. It fitted both acquaintances' testaments and his own confession about his difficulties in getting on with people. In 'Why I Write' he propounded that he was "by nature not gregarious" and the recollections of various friends testify to this. Geoffrey Gorer reported that before Orwell met Eileen, his first wife, he was a "very lonely man", "convinced that nobody would like him" – and other acquaintances noted that he appeared the same after Eileen's death. (Rodden, *Politics*, 140) He was a permanent outsider in every group to which he would have most naturally belonged. He was the odd man out in his social class, in Burma, among leftists, and among the literary intelligentsia. What's more, Rodden draws our attention to the fact, justified by friends' remembrances, that he was an outsider even amongst his group of friends. Julian Symons observed that Orwell kept his different groups of acquaintances rigidly apart and that "because of the way in which [he] shut off the various parts of his life, nobody knew the whole of him." (quoted by Rodden, *Politics*, 137) Symons also noted Orwell's extreme reticence in private life, which made it impossible to get close to him. This "compartmentalised" and withdrawn life makes Rodden conclude that "[e]vidently Orwell was not disposed to trust people easily; in both the humorous sense that Pritchett and Muggeridge speak of Orwell's quixotism, and also in a slightly paranoid sense, he was always on the lookout for conspiracies, suspecting them almost everywhere." (*Politics*, 140)

A mind of rigid categories

The way Orwell categorised and partitioned his acquaintances seems to be a part of his general inclination to label and categorise things in life. Although he is regarded a progressive-minded man of his time, considerate and reasonable on many subjects, he was too quick to over-generalise and, on certain issues, he displayed surprising intolerance and a rather polarised way of thinking. The following description of his mental make-up by Spender is hardly flattering:

> He is a man with a grouse. He holds forth about his grievances – the intellectuals, the rich, the Stalinists, nationalists of every kind. He has simple views about matters which more learned men have not been decided about; for example, he thinks that God and belief in immortality are non-sense. The views of nearly everyone except himself, especially those of writers who are religious, he seems to attribute to a desire to be fashionable, if not to bad faith. (*Critical Heritage*, 314)

Rodden observes that his "Manichean strain" is especially evident in the radical way he juxtaposes the intellectual and the common man. (*Politics*, 175) The common man, according to Orwell, possesses all the virtues that the intellectual lacks. He is English, he is commonsensical, he is a good patriot who can withstand power-worship and does not indulge in dubious pacifism, while the intellectual is Europeanised, has lost his healthy Englishness, lacks patriotism and falls easily into the trap of fascist or communist totalitarianism. Orwell held some highly irrational opinions and was curiously honest about his prejudices against certain people, among them women, Jews, homosexuals, intellectuals and various foreign nationals.[14]

In 'Notes on the Way', written in 1940, he took a stand against Britain's exploitation of subject races, the myth of "inferior races", and the supposed biological differences between Englishmen and Orientals, which was a necessary theory to support imperialism. He reminded his countrymen that German fascism was the extension of racialism to the soil of Europe. "Hitler is only the ghost of our own past rising against us. He stands for the extension and perpetuation of our own methods, just at the moment when we are beginning to be ashamed of them." (*CW*12, 123) While he denounced the

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[14] Isaac Deutscher notes that Orwell's "mental make-up was rather that of the fanatic, determined to get an answer, a quick and plain answer, to his question." (129) He bases his opinion partly on Orwell's writings (especially *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) and partly on personal experience. They were both correspondents for the *Observer* in Germany in the last phase of the war and they occasionally shared a room. "I remember," says Deutscher, "I was taken aback by the stubbornness with which Orwell dwelt on 'conspiracies', and that his political reasoning struck me as a Freudian sublimation of persecution mania. He was, for instance, unshakably convinced that Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt consciously plotted to divide the world, and to divide it for good, among themselves, and to subjugate it in common. (I can trace the idea of Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia back to that time.) 'They are all power-hungry,' he used to repeat. When once I pointed out to him that underneath the apparent solidarity of the Big Three one could discern clearly the conflict between them, already coming to the surface, Orwell was so startled and incredulous that he at once related our conversation in his column in *Tribune*, and added that he saw no sign of the approach of the conflict of which I spoke. This was by the time of the Jalta conference, or shortly thereafter, when not much foresight was needed to see what was coming. What struck me in Orwell was his lack of historical sense and of psychological insight into political life coupled with an acute, though narrow, penetration into some aspects of politics and with an incorruptible firmness of conviction." (130)

myth of inferior races which was then being applied to Jews and Poles, in the same year, he wrote the following entry about Jews and Central Europeans in his War-time Diary:

> The other night examined the crowds sheltering in Chancery Lane, Oxford Circus and Baker Street stations. *Not* all Jews, but, I think, a higher proportion of Jews than one would normally see in a crowd of this size. What is bad about Jews is that they are not only conspicuous, but go out of their way to make themselves so. A fearful Jewish woman, a regular comic-paper cartoon of a Jewess, fought her way off the train at Oxford Circus, landing blows on anyone who stood in her way. It took me back to old days on the Paris Métro.
>
> Surprised to find that D., who is distinctly Left in his views, is inclined to share the current feeling against the Jews. He says that the Jews in business circles are turning pro-Hitler, or preparing to do so. This sounds almost incredible, but according to D. they will always admire anyone who kicks them. What I do feel is that any Jew, i.e. European Jew, would prefer Hitler's kind of social system to ours, if it were not that he happens to persecute them. Ditto with almost any Central European, e.g. the refugees. They make use of England as a sanctuary but they cannot help feeling the profoundest contempt for it. You can see this in their eyes, even when they don't say it outright. The fact is that the insular outlook and the continental outlook are completely incompatible. (*CW*12, 278)

His private remarks contradict his more thoughtful, carefully worded pronouncements and the standard of "common decency" that he expected of everyone else. Publicly he often spoke up against anti-Semitism, for example in 'Anti-Semitism in Britain', 'Notes on Nationalism' and in some of his London Letters, informing the American audience of *Partisan Review* about the state of English xenophobia and the English attitude towards Jews. In his 'As I Please' column of 28 January 1944 he wrote disparagingly about Ezra Pound's "intellectually and morally disgusting" broadcasts and stated that anti-Semitism is "simply not the doctrine of a grown-up person." (*CW*16, 81) He could not accept without reservations that Pound was awarded the Bollingen Prize for Poetry after the war. Lying seriously ill in hospital, he still found the energy, of which he was fatally running out, to say something about it. He drew a line between the aesthetic and literary merits of writing and the political outlook of writers and he expected the judges of the award to do so as well. (*CW*20, 100)

In the Second World War, he said, one had to choose between two evils and he chose the lesser evil, i.e. he sided with the old imperial powers. But this did not prevent him from criticising ferociously the reactionary nature of British policy in India and he was a committed supporter of Indian independence. He considered it a moral obligation

for his country to terminate her rule in India after the war. Yet, his demanding of political independence for India would not entail unbiased attitude to its people as the diary entry of 18 April 1942 attests. Discussing India's future with Tom Wintringham, Orwell wrote:

> One possible outcome is that India will ultimately be taken over by the USSR, and though I have never believed that the Russians would behave better in India than ourselves, they might behave differently, owing to the different economic set-up. Wintringham said that even in Spain some of the Russian delegates tended to treat the Spaniards as "natives", and would no doubt do likewise in India. It's very hard not to, seeing that in practice the majority of Indians *are* inferior to Europeans and one can't help feeling this and, after a while, acting accordingly. (CW12, 276)

Orwell kept his War-time Diary from May 1940 to August 1941 and then reopened it in March 1942. The latter exists in two versions, manuscript and typewritten, and the two versions differ. Certain passages are omitted from the typescript. In the *Complete Works* edition Davison incorporates both versions, denoting where the typescript is at variance with the manuscript. Orwell planned to publish his War-time Diary jointly with Inez Holden's one. He explained to Eileen that his factual entries, recording political events, would be followed by Inez's more feminine way of writing. The project, according to Holden, fell through due to her concern. (*CW*12, 168) According to Davison, Orwell presumably intended the shorter, typed version to be used for the joint publication. (*CW*13, 228) The quoted passage above about the Indian issue was not included in the typed version. The omission suggests that his opinions put forward in public were slightly at variance with his private thoughts which he kept to himself but which, from time to time, tended to infiltrate his writings, especially the diaries and letters not intended for publication. Even in *Burmese Days*, which is partly an indictment of British imperialism in Burma – Flory being the conveyor of the author's unorthodox political views – Orwell made concessions to the uninhibited behaviour of the pukka sahibs. When the conversation in the white men's club returns, as usual, to the insolence of the natives and the inefficiency of the British government, Orwell unfortunately steps forward and engages in a dubious explanation:

> Besides, you could forgive the Europeans a great deal of their bitterness. Living and working among Orientals would try the temper of a saint. And all of them, the officials particularly, knew what it was to be baited and insulted. Almost every day, when Westfield or Mr Macgregor or even Maxwell went down the street, the High School boys, with their young, yellow faces – faces smooth as gold coins,

> full of that maddening contempt that sits so naturally on the Mongolian face – sneered at them as they went past, sometimes hooted after them with hyena-like laughter. The life of the Anglo-Indian officials is not all jam. In comfortless camps, in sweltering offices, in gloomy dakbungalows smelling of dust and earth-oil, they earn, perhaps, the right to be a little disagreeable. (*CN*, 91)

Such controversial passages, though considerably few in number, reveal an inherently paternalistic attitude, which gives one the general impression that Orwell advocated Indian independence much less out of a genuine sympathy with Indians than due to adherence to the idea that every form of dominion of man over man is morally wrong.

In a footnote to one of Orwell's letters to Frederic Warburg, Davison gives an account of an interesting document in the Orwell Archive. In 1960 Warburg recorded his recollections of Orwell for the BBC, which was broadcast on 2 November that year. The BBC cut from his reading an awkward illumination of Orwell's way of thinking. Warburg recalled a conversation of theirs at Hairmyres Hospital about Michael Koessler, a protégé of Warburg's, who became friends with Orwell, sharing a common interest in fishing and visited him on Jura and in hospital several times. To Orwell's question about how Koessler was getting on, Warburg answered that he was not very happy because he wanted to be a farmer. Orwell was astonished. "He's a Jewish boy. I'm surprised he's interested in farming. I should have thought he was more interested in money, making money in a direct way." Warburg commented that Orwell

> placed people and events and structures in categories – sort of platonic ideas. And to him a Jew was a man who was primarily interested in making money, and a Communist was a man who followed Stalin, and everything – a Frenchmen, a Russian, a Jew, a Christian, a Trotskyist – everybody in his mind had a pattern, a rigid pattern, and it was very difficult for him to believe that they could ever depart from this pattern. […] this was the strength and the weakness of Orwell as a thinker and as a writer: that everything in his mind was arranged rather tidily in closely-knit, clearly-defined, ideas. (*CW*19, 304-5)

If the hypothesis that the underlying motive of Orwell's march to saintliness was a personal need for recognition and approval is right, the intemperance he displayed towards various groups of people is not at all incongruous. The certitude that there were people more susceptible to human vice than himself must have significantly calmed his failure-tormented ego and must have improved his self-image. In the process of ego strengthening prejudice plays an important role: it establishes groups one can feel superior to. Since a person constantly in doubt about himself is afraid of the negative

signals society may display towards him, he will find some self-justification, leading to piece of mind, in pointing out individuals or social groups that can be belittled. Therefore, the lack of a strong ego, i.e. the feeling of self-doubt and the fear of being nobody is likely to produce prejudiced and inimical behaviour. The desire to find one's identity often involves a process of strengthening one's ego through prejudice and through fighting against something. As Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz point out, being a volunteer in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War or a volunteer in the Peace Corps in the tropics of Africa served, from a certain perspective and without denying the driving force of human solidarity, to secure the volunteer's personal identity as a worthwhile human being. (63) Of course the ego strengthening process is successful if the first attempts at fighting against something turn in the end into a fight for something of social value. Orwell managed to establish his identity as the champion of the underdog and the warrior against totalitarianism (fascist and communist alike) but till the very end of his life he showed signs of anxiety about his own worth.

Hardships of his own seeking

Orwell indeed became famous for his ascetic way of living, for his constant seeking out of challenges and hardships. Mary McCarthy observed that "even when he was fairly affluent [he] seems to have been an illustrated lesson in survival techniques under extreme conditions." ('Writing on the Wall', 5) His habit of testing himself in rough circumstances started as early as his Indian service, when he chose Burma as his preference for service. Due to the fact that Burma had the highest crime rate in the Empire the province was at the bottom of other candidates' preference list. (Shelden, 88) After returning home, he decided to expiate his guilt at having been part of an oppressive system among the down and outs of Paris and London. Having finished his report on his experiences in the mining villages in the North, he hurried to the Spanish trenches. The Spanish Civil War provided the opportunity to test one's bravery and gain an increased sense of manhood if one survived. It was an enticing opportunity to demonstrate one's mettle for those who were too young to fight in the Great War. That taking part in "the Test", as Christopher Isherwood called the Spanish war, involved

considerable vanity on behalf of the "truly strong man" is implied by Orwell's vain letter to Geoffrey Gorer, asking him not to insist, in his otherwise "marvellous" review of *Homage to Catalonia,* that he was doing only sentry and was not actually fighting during the Barcelona events: "[…] if you are obliged to shorten or otherwise alter the review, it doesn't particularly matter to insist, as you do now, that I only took part in the Barcelona fighting to the extent of doing sentry. I did, as it happens, but if I had been ordered to actually fight I would have done so […]" (*CW*11, 133) Returning home with a neck wound and the secret police at his heels was an immense asset against those who knew war only on paper and he was not reluctant to rub it in whenever the opportunity arose.[15] After Spain he returned to his dilapidated village store of Wallington, choosing a demanding existence in isolation. V.S. Pritchett in his obituary remarked: "He was an expert in living on the bare necessities and a keen hand at making them barer." (*Critical Heritage*, 295) According to Shelden, various comments in the letters of Orwell's wife show that she was weary of enduring the hardships which her husband was constantly seeking. (350) Eileen's complaints throw some doubt on the perfect agreement of tastes between husband and wife as claimed by the former. In his short curriculum vitae for the American *Twentieth Century Authors* (ed. by Kunitz and Haycraft, 1942) Orwell writes:

> Outside my work the thing I care most about is gardening, especially vegetable gardening. I like English cookery and English beer, French red wines, Spanish white wines, Indian tea, strong tobacco, coal fires, candle light and comfortable chairs. I dislike big towns, noise, motor cars, the radio, tinned food, central heating and 'modern' furniture. My wife's tastes fit in almost perfectly with my own. (*CEJL*2, 24)

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[15] His answer to Nancy Cunard's request to take sides publicly on the question of the Spanish Civil War is illustrative of his pride. His reply to the call, solicited by *Left Review* in the summer of 1937 inviting opinions on the Spanish issue from writers, was especially unwelcome, so much so that Nancy Cunard did not consider it "in any sense an 'answer'." The beginning and end of his letter is especially insulting but also indicative of the advantages he drew from having proved his manliness. "Will you please stop sending me this bloody rubbish. This is the second or third time I have had it. I am not one of your fashionable pansies like Auden and Spender, I was six months in Spain, most of the time fighting, I have a bullet-hole in me at present and I am not going to write blah about defending democracy or gallant little anybody. […] By the way, tell your pansy friend Spender that I am preserving specimens of his war-heroics and that when the time comes when he squirms for shame at having written it, as the people who wrote the war-propaganda in the Great War are squirming now, I shall rub it in good and hard." (*CW*11, 68) His anxiety over former colleagues suffering under the reign of terror and in jail explains the despair explicit in the letter, which nevertheless also demonstrates the merit he forged from being in war.

If not refuted by Eileen's letters, they at least add another perspective to Orwell's probably quite one-sided point of view. Orwell's lifelong quest for challenges and hardships finally culminated in his retreat to the island of Jura, whose extreme backward conditions – no electricity, no telephone, mail once or twice a week, no neighbours, no shops nearby – propelled the already seriously ill writer to one last test. Michael Carter suggests that Orwell's self-mortification was an integral part of his quest for identity since one can achieve a fuller sense of distinct selfhood through deliberate maltreatment. (13) Finding the island of his dreams in the Hebrides, he cut himself off from society and from his fellow beings – his last emphatic 'no' to the social pressure to conform.

Patai characterises Orwell as a "man of strong opinions, on everything from Communists to cups of tea, and he expressed these opinions in a characteristically vehement form in essays, letters, journalism, and books of fiction and reportage." (*Mystique*, 1) Not only did he have strong opinions but he hammered them into his audience with insistence. Hakan Ringbom's critical analysis of Orwell's recurrent types of phrases provides evidence for readers' impression of his style. Guided by the idea that it is the most frequently occurring words rather than content words that best reveal style, he looks at Orwell's content-neutral words (adverbs, pronouns and conjunctions) and finds that categorical words like *always, all, every, never, completely, impossible* are used more frequently than the expected norm.[16] Orwell's tendency, according to Ringbom, to make a generalising statement first and modify it afterwards contributes to the impression of his style as categorical. His "categorical sentences are probably the ones that stay in one's memory long after one has finished reading the essay." (42) John Wain also observed that Orwell was "a man of comparatively few ideas, which he took every opportunity of putting across." (*Critical Heritage*, 327) One obsession of his was the hatred of all rich and cultured – possibly university-graduated – men. They were the target of the frustrated young policeman in Burma who levelled his rifle at the

[16] The following passage from 'The Lion and the Unicorn' adequately supports Ringbom's finding: "It is not that anyone imagines the law to be just. Everyone knows that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. But no one accepts the implications of this, everyone takes it for granted that the law, such as it is, will be respected, and feels a sense of outrage when it is not. […] Everyone believes in his heart that the law can be, ought to be, and, on the whole, will be impartially administered. The totalitarian idea that there is no such thing as law, there is only power, has never taken root. Even the intelligentsia have only accepted it in theory." (*CW*12, 397)

Adelphi[17], they were the target of the impotent rage of the self-pitying Gordon Comstock, and they were the target of much of the frustration of the journalist, who, having avoided Cambridge and Oxford, had to fight his way into the literary Pantheon that others reached more smoothly. As in the story by five authors, the resentment came to the surface from time to time even after he was already a relatively well-known and accomplished writer.

The story by five authors

Working for the Indian Section of the B.B.C. in 1942, he proposed to broadcast a story written by various authors including himself. He asked L.A.G. Strong, Inez Holden, Martin Armstrong and E.M. Forster to each contribute one part of a story; he offered to write the first instalment. The theme he proposed in the first part and the way he reacted to the continuation of the story is of some interest. A night air-raid in 1940 finds Gilbert Moss in a remote part of London. He has just saved the life of a man by digging him out of the wreckage and threatened by the whistle of a falling bomb has protected a child with his own body. Taking shelter in a demolished house he realises that the unconscious man lying near him among the ruins – whom he believed at first to be dead – is an old enemy of his. Suddenly he is overwhelmed by the temptation to make use of the opportunity and kill him: his death would undoubtedly be attributed to the bombing. But before giving the fatal blow with the club he has found among the ruins, Moss stops to remember why he is going to kill this man. In need of a light for his cigarette, he feels the unconscious man's pockets and comes upon a slim gold cigarette-lighter. The lighter suddenly takes him back to the past, to London "before the deluge", a London with its clubs and footmen in striped waistcoats where those who had money, like Charles Coburn now lying at his feet, were all-powerful.

> It was curious, but the excellent cloth of the man's waistcoat, and the expensive feel of the slender gold lighter, partly brought back the memory that he was

[17] Shelden recounts an interesting scene which I find quite characteristic of Orwell's attitude. When in Burma, far away from the literary world of London, he propped an *Adelphi* (to which he later on contributed) against a tree and was shooting at it from a distance. Shelden interprets this episode as being symbolic of his frustration: he wanted to be part of the literary world that *Adelphi* represented, "but he was reluctant to admit it to himself." (107)

> looking for. They both felt like money. Gilbert had known Charles Coburn as a very rich young man, horribly elegant and superior, and rather cultured as they used to call it in the nineteen-twenties. With not many exceptions Gilbert hated all rich people – though that in itself was not a motive for killing anybody, of course. (*CW*14, 102)

The gap between the two men's inherited social and financial status is established as the underlying cause of conflict. Coburn's elegant figure emanating the confidence of the well-to-do is in sharp contrast with Moss's thin, smallish figure "with greying hair and a worn, sharp-featured, discoloured face." (*CW*14, 91) The shabby raincoat, the black felt hat and above all the sour expression on his face betray a man whom youth has passed without his ship having come in. The reader is informed that before the war Coburn did him an "outrageous, mean injury" for which he now decides to take revenge and swings his club "ready for a blow that would settle his enemy once and for all." (*CW*14, 93) Here Orwell left off and the story was taken up by L.A.G. Strong. Strong chose not to bring down the fatal blow either. Instead, he introduced another character, a pick-pocket, who is rambling through the ruins in search of booty. Though Moss, catching sight of the man, is uncertain how much the man has divined of his intentions, from their conversation it becomes clear that he is fully aware of Moss's ill will. During their talk Coburn regains consciousness and Moss – having missed his chance – threatens to tell the thief the reason for his grievance.

But Inez Holden, the third contributor to the story, is rather interested in the state of mind of Coburn, whose figure has been neglected so far. Holden is not willing to write him off simply as a specimen of the privileged class and, contrary to Orwell's expectations, she sets down to elaborate *his* story. She slows down Coburn's recovery and presents the working of his mind before he regains full consciousness. In order to set Coburn's mind on the path she prefers, she puts another lighter in his pocket. The plain tinder lighter, just like the slim gold one in Moss's case, sets Coburn's memories on the move. "It seemed as if his whole mind, with all its elaborate machinery, clocked into reverse, and then went ticking and somersaulting along, backwards." (*CW*14, 123) It takes Coburn back to the front lines in Spain and the miserable hospital in France where he had been recovering from his wound. The gold lighter fills him with bitter feelings. It reminds him of his awful family of landowners. By presenting things from Coburn's perspective Holden gives a twist to the story: we no longer see Coburn only

through the eyes of Moss. Meanwhile, the pick-pocket takes advantage of Coburn's floating consciousness and runs away with the gold lighter. Orwell was explicitly unsatisfied with Holden's handling of the story. He complained to Martin Armstrong, who was to take it on, that the third instalment "does not carry on the story or rather gives it a twist in another direction." And he went on to warn Armstrong:

> Your instalment is the fourth and should therefore bring the story within sight of a climax. You will see that both the second and third contributors have passed on the baby by not explaining what was the cause of the quarrel between the two men introduced in the first chapter. I don't want of course to dictate what you are to say, but I think your contribution should certainly make this clear and then end in some way that will make a climax possible. (*CW*14, 112)

Complying with such an emphatic request, Armstrong in the fourth part finally ushers Coburn and Moss into the nearby park, where Moss holds forth about his grievance in a passionate speech, charging Coburn with having made empty promises to him in the past, thereby causing him to lose his job and what is even worse, shattering his self-respect. Armstrong's efforts did not go unrewarded. To E.M. Forster, who was commissioned to wind up the story, Orwell wrote: "The fourth instalment, which is quite good, really does what the second instalment ought to have done." (*CW*14, 129) There is no record of Orwell's opinion on the final part of the story, but considering his dissatisfaction with the earlier parts and Forster's twist which takes the story into yet another direction, it is probable that he was not happy with the conclusion. Forster brings Moss and Coburn together by Coburn's confession that it was Moss who turned him "from a dilettante aristocrat to a gay and selfless hero" who went to fight in Spain. "You've changed my life," admits Coburn. "And then they shook 'ands and started shouting and laughing like a pair of kids." (*CW*14, 164) Forster is rather interested, however, in the fate of the pick-pocket, whose figure typifies the chaos and destruction that civilisation underwent during the war. He puts the war into a wider context: "…the future might be for the rat, the lizard, the night prowler who have patiently been awaiting their turn ever since civilisation started, […] the spirit of anarchy may be stealing out of the craters our science has made, and nesting in the ruins we have provided." (*CW*14, 167) The mean-minded little pick-pocket, whom Forster names Stanley Barnes, does not care about the fine sentiments of the two men, he does not understand why they quarrelled nor why they made up. He seems to have no moral

qualms. To him both of them sound crackers, since "[if] he was given money, he didn't give it away, and if there was a war he tried to dodge it." (*CW*14, 164) One of the happier episodes in his life was when he had been employed by the British Fascists: "plenty of food, a bed to sleep in at the local centre, and ten shillings a week." (*CW*14, 165) He still owned a knuckle-duster from those days and when he creeps after the other two to see if he can benefit from their talk in the park, it is a row over this object which results in Moss's lending a fatal blow upon him. "Did Stan's own knuckle-duster kill him?" asks Forster in the short epilogue. "I don't know, but I hope not, because I believe in the importance of individual life. Coburn and Moss don't know and don't care." (*CW*14, 167) Their serious plans for the future and their noble intentions to help pull the world through are undermined by the indifference they display towards the life of Stan, who to them seems worthless.

The story itself as well as Orwell's reaction to the various contributions neatly illustrates the insistence on a favourite topic of his: the complaints of a disgruntled intellectual from an impoverished background about the rich and cultured, privileged by birth. Compared to Holden's elaboration of Coburn's figure and Forster's interest in the wider implications of the life of the pick-pocket, Orwell's preoccupation with Moss's lamentation reveals how much Orwell was a captive of his own personal situation and his own personal grievances. Given the wide range of possibilities that could have been developed, he focused on his dear old obsession of social inequalities. The first instalment reinforces Fyvel's impression of Orwell as a writer: "he always looked at the world from the perspective of his own personal and social situation and needed always to define and redefine where he stood and what he thought on any issue." (*Memoir*, 9) His reaction to the contributions is illustrative of his "definite strength of character" and his "strong opinions" as A.H. Joyce and Patai put it respectively. His resolve was never in want of a certain amount of intolerance. He did not excel at accepting others' ideas that were markedly different from his own. He mildly criticised Strong's handling of the story who, by introducing the figure of the pick-pocket to delay action, put off the matter between Moss and Coburn but did not raise any new aspect. He was, however, explicitly discontent with Holden's contribution which left the path on which he launched the story and twisted it so as to familiarise the reader with Coburn's personal situation as well. One might also wonder whether Orwell's dislike of Holden's text was

not partly due to her more meditative, feminine way of writing. With Armstrong, who wrote roughly along the lines he proposed and who at last explained the reason for the conflict in Moss's speech, Orwell had no swords to cross. Instead of observing how the story took form out of a myriad of possibilities according to the mind and character of the various authors – it is this aspect of the experiment that is so intriguing – Orwell was intent on hearing *his* story. And, since the second and, especially, third contributors failed to follow the line he dictated in the first part, he regarded the whole experiment a failure: "I'm afraid it didn't turn out quite as I had hoped." (*CW*14, 136)

Prejudice and violence

Bettelheim and Janowitz assert that one of the surest signs of a strong ego is that one is able to maintain a balanced judgement in disputes because one understands the needs of one's opponent. With a weak ego, one that needs constant affirmation, and therefore victory over others, one will be unable to make allowances for one's opponent and will always be ready to toss labels. (61) Part of the difficulty in arguing with Orwell was that he was a tough-minded and opinionated critic intent on following his line of thought rigidly, and in the heat of the intellectual debate he was not ashamed to deal some low blows to his opponents. Cyril Connolly remarked on Orwell: "His line may have been unpopular or unfashionable, but he followed it unhesitatingly; in fact it was an obsession." (quoted by Shelden, 263) Thus it happened that he used Stephen Spender as a symbol of the Nancy poets and claimed that Julian Symons displayed "vaguely fascist" tendencies. (*CW*13, 111) He was often careless and tactless in delivering his vehement charges against individuals, groups, movements or trends, charges, for which – especially for those unfavourably labelling certain individuals – he sometimes had to apologise later on. This kind of "intellectual brutality" may be seen as the expected and justifiable role adopted by Orwell the journalist, whose articles gained emphasis, flair and notoriety through a certain amount of provocation. But one might also consider whether this intellectual aggressiveness and hostility towards certain individuals and groups did not have a common root with his antinomial habit of mind, and whether his peculiar prejudices (against Jews, gypsies, Scots, Irish, women, Roman Catholics and homosexuals) and his fanaticism (pacifists are objectively pro-fascists, all tobacconists

are fascists, etc.) were not born of frustration. In his letter to Spender, apologising for having labelled him a "parlour Bolshevik", he explained that "[…] I don't mix much in literary circles, because I know from experience that once I have met and spoken to anyone I shall never again be able to show any intellectual brutality towards him." (*CEJL*1, 313) However, in view of his life and in the light of his attitude as a permanent outsider, a "natural solitary" as Hollis described him the argumentation could be reversed by saying that he displayed such a degree of intolerance towards his contemporaries precisely because he did not belong to them. Geoffrey Gorer observed that the conviction that nobody would like him made him prickly. (Bowker, 173) Ian Hamilton also pointed out that being an outsider in every walk of life carried the risk of becoming prejudiced and hostile. "Like many who steer clear of groups, Orwell persistently thought in terms of groups, of castes and types, and in 1935 he was nurturing quite a few ominously ripe prejudices: against Roman Catholics, Scotsmen (or 'Scotchmen' as he enjoyed calling them), homosexuals, vegetarians." (Hamilton, 54)

He was often bad-tempered and offensive both in life and in his writings. As Julian Symons observed, he was not perceptive towards the ideas of his speaking partner: "He might identify nationalism with Fascism in the presence of an Irish nationalist, or talk about the corrupting nature of Jewish violence in front of an enthusiastic Zionist." (Fyvel, *Memoir*, 173) Whether he found pleasure in provoking other people's affiliations or he just simply disregarded their feelings is a mystery. In a letter to Brenda Salkeld, his never-to-be mistress, he mentioned a certain Dr. Ede, with whom he had lunch:

> He is a bit of a feminist and thinks that if a woman was brought up exactly like a man she would be able to throw a stone, construct a syllogism, keep a secret etc. He tells me that my anti-feminist views are probably due to Sadism! I've never read the Marquis de Sade's novels – unfortunately they are very hard to get hold of! (*CW*10, 344)

Still more shocking to Brenda, a vicar's daughter, must have been his delight in Robin Hood's men's imagined cruelty to nuns:

> When we were children we had a story that after Robin Hood was done to death in the Priory, his men raped & murdered the nuns, & burned the priory to the ground. It seems this has no foundation in the ballads – we must have made it up. An instance of the human instinct for a happy ending. (*CW*10, 206)

While revealing tactlessness towards his correspondent, the extract also neatly exposes his low opinion of women and religion. Fyvel, Jewish by birth, had every reason to quote Symons on Orwell's blunders: from Hairmyres Hospital in 1949 Orwell wrote to Fyvel: "Ruth Fischer came and saw me the other day. She's become something of an old gossip (a typical old German Jewess – not so very old actually). But it was fun meeting somebody who had known Radek & Bukharin & others intimately." (*CW*20, 138) In his review of *The Road to Wigan Pier* Philip Toynbee emphasised Orwell's flaws: "He writes – it is the least pleasant side of him – about 'nancy poets' and 'verminous little lions', and he sees himself too consciously as the tough and honest man who really found out the truth instead of simply dealing in high-minded abstractions." (*Critical Heritage*, 116) There was en element of fanaticism in his mental make-up and he was not apt to make compromises easily. Rayner Heppenstall, with whom he shared a flat for some time in London, complained that Orwell judged people very much by their views. "He seemed to know of only two kinds of people," Heppenstall wrote, "'decent sorts' and those who had recently said or written what he could not agree with." (174) He had a habit of being overly critical with friends' books. Once his wife Eileen said that he would never be quoted in a blurb because what he said about people's books was always too offensive – Orwell took the remark as a compliment, Eileen's intentions notwithstanding. (*CW*11, 129) His friend Connolly, who also got some untoward reviews from Orwell, thought that he suffered from a curious form of Oedipus complex, by which, "having dealt his father's authority a swinging blow he would rush up to say, 'Have I hurt you?'" (Shelden, 323) Pugnacity and toughness might have been a means of self-defence. Though (or rather, since) he was an extremely resolute man, he was also very vulnerable. After the controversy with D.S. Savage, George Woodcock and Alex Comfort on pacifism and the war, he apologised to Woodcock for having attacked him rather roughly, saying "I always do when I am attacked." (*CEJL*2, 267) He had an inner drive to test himself in hardships, so to improve his self-image. He chastised his fellow-intellectuals with delight for the soft life they led. He was extremely proud of what he had endured, but, as Hollis warns the reader, "if Orwell was richer in some experiences than his fellow writers, there were others in which he was poorer, and he was more conscious of the riches than of his poverty." (54)

Numerous friends and critics have noted that there was a curious streak of violence and cruelty in his nature, supporting the charge with various incidents from his life like wasps cut in half, frogs inflated with bicycle pumps, shooting at rats, degutting adders or threatening a drunken flatmate with a shooting stick in a row. His diaries attest that the war brought forth Orwell's disposition to violence. In his war-time diary he considered the possibility of a German invasion of England and decided that he would in no way leave his native country. "[…] one must above all die *fighting* and have the satisfaction of killing somebody else first." (*CEJL*2, 349-350) He expressed delight at the death of fascist leaders during the Second World War: he confessed to Koestler, "[h]ow lovely it was to be in a hot bath and dream of the tortures one is inflicting (in fantasy) on one's enemies." (Bowker, 268) He seemed to be aware of the way the war distorted one's common sense (he thought it "a dreadful effect of war that one is actually pleased to hear of an enemy submarine going to the bottom" *CW*12, 202) yet he made a case for obliteration bombing in Germany and German-occupied territories. In the dispute with Vera Brittain, a pacifist and feminist intellectual, in the columns of *Tribune* over the use of legitimate versus illegitimate war methods he openly advocated the "barbarous features" of war. Granting that "no one in his senses regards bombing, or any other operation of war, with anything but disgust" he quickly went on to announce that "limiting" or "humanising" war was "sheer humbug" and admitted to finding no answer as to why killing civilians was worse than killing soldiers. (*CW*16, 193) He complained that legitimate warfare picked out and slaughtered all the healthiest and bravest of the young male population. "Every time a German submarine goes to the bottom about fifty young men of fine physique and good nerve are suffocated." (*CW*16, 193) In another 'As I Please' column two months later – the debate continued for some time and Orwell received a number of letters on the subject – he propounded that the parrot cry "killing women and children" needed some further comment: it was "sheer sentimentality". "Why is it worse to kill a woman than a man?" he asked. (*CW*16, 285) Daphne Patai ironically notes that it was one of the rare occasions on which Orwell clamoured for the equal treatment of women. To Brittain's objection that the unrestrained infliction of cruelty led to moral deterioration, chaos and privation and risked the survival of civilised values, Orwell retorted with his maniac insistence that Brittain, being a pacifist, was essentially pro-fascist and would leave

Hitler in control of Europe. Pacifists, said Orwell, set up a moral alibi while accepting the fruits of violence. "I would sooner be Air-Marshal Harris than Miss Brittain, because at least he knows what he is doing." (*CW*16, 196) Orwell's taking sides with 'Bomber' Harris is indicative of his stance: Harris was head of the Bomber Command from 1942 and pursued a practice of "area bombing" in Germany, which led to many civilian casualties and was therefore considered controversial. Davison remarks that though probably many blitzed British people thought Harris' methods justified, it is significant that he got no more than a baronetcy for his wartime activity. "In 1992, almost fifty years after the events, and seemingly reluctantly (and still controversially), a statue was erected in London, opposite St. Clement Danes Church, honouring Harris." (*CW*16, 197) During the war and in the years leading up to the Cold War Orwell was very much bent on contemplating war as an issue of international politics between the political elites of rival nations. He had much less thought for what it meant for his 'ordinary man'. He held that stimulating hatred and dishonesty caused more damage than the slaughter of human beings. (*CW*16, 317) As he explained it to John Middleton Murry, "You may not understand this, but I don't think it matters killing people as long as you do not hate them." (CW16, 333)

Nineteen-Eighty Four has often been regarded as the unambiguous manifestation and culmination of Orwell's violent temper. The publisher Frederic Warburg in his "strictly confidential" report on the novel wrote that in the scene where Winston Smith is threatened by the hungry rats, which will eat into his face and implores his torturer to do it to Julia, Orwell gives full rein to his sadism and attendant masochism. (*CW*19, 481) Anthony West attributes the "manic violence" and "generalised sadism" of *Nineteen-Eighty Four* to the Gothic mind of the author. (*Critical Heritage*, 78) Without equating sadism with violence as some critics have done, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does have implications of sadism, most obviously in Winston's early fantasies about Julia, which include elements of rape, torture and pleasure: "Vivid, beautiful hallucinations flashed through his mind. He would flog her to death with a rubber truncheon. He would tie her naked to a stake and shoot her full of arrows like Saint Sebastian. He would ravish her and cut her throat at the moment of climax." (*CN*, 751) Instead of taking it to be the direct manifestation of Orwell's own perversity, this perplexing scene of violence against a woman might be seen to epitomise the harmful effects of the

abnormal sexual policy of Oceania, combined with Winston's desire for Julia, whose lovely figure is ironically accentuated by the scarlet sash of the Junior Anti-Sex League.

Cunningham acutely claims that the thirties was a decade extraordinarily possessed by death and violence, and literature proclaimed the necessity of violence. (57-58) In such a context – suggests Cunningham – it is not surprising that even George Orwell, the "apostle of decency" could not resist violence. "The smashing in of faces fascinated Orwell extremely." (Cunningham, 62) In 'The Lion and the Unicorn', which was intended to be a piece of war-time propaganda in the series of Searchlight Books, he proudly emphasised that the goose-step did not exist in English military traditions. "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." (*CW*12, 396) In *Coming Up for Air* George Bowling goes to a Left Book Club meeting and listens to the speech of a well-known anti-fascist.

> I saw the vision that he was seeing. And it wasn't at all the kind of vision that can be talked about. What he's *saying* is merely that Hitler's after us and we must all get together and have a good hate. Doesn't go into details. Leaves it all respectable. But what he's *seeing* is something quite different. It's a picture of himself smashing people's faces in with a spanner. Fascist faces, of course. I *know* that's what he was seeing. It was what I saw myself for the second or two that I was inside him. Smash! Right in the middle! The bones cave in like an eggshell and what was a face a minute ago is just a great big blob of strawberry jam. Smash! There goes another! That's what's in his mind, waking and sleeping, and the more he thinks of it the more he likes it. And it's all OK because the smashed faces belong to Fascists. You could hear all the in the tone of his voice. (*CW*7, 156-57)

And then in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* O'Brien depicts a totalitarian future with the picture of a boot smashing a human face in. In the Ministry of Love torture is applied very often to prisoners' faces. Shortly after Winston is taken there, while waiting to be summoned together with other prisoners, there is an incident between two men whose faces are distorted. One of them is a man "with a chinless, toothy face exactly like that of some large, harmless rodent. His fat, mottled cheeks were so pouched at the bottom that it was difficult not to believe that he had little stores of food tucked away there." (*CN*, 877) The other man, who has just been brought in, sent a chill through the others. "[…] what was startling was the emaciation of his face. It was like a skull. Because of

its thinness the mouth and eyes looked disproportionately large, and the eyes seemed filled with a murderous, unappeasable hatred of somebody or something." (*CN*, 878) The man was dying of starvation. The chinless man offers him a piece of bread – punishment is prompt and merciless. The "short stumpy" guard

> […] let free a frightful blow, with all the weight of his body behind it, full in the chinless man's mouth. The force of it seemed almost to knock him clear of the floor. His body was flung across the cell and fetched up against the base of the lavatory seat. For a moment he lay as though stunned, with dark blood oozing from his mouth and nose. A very faint whimpering or sneaking, which seemed unconscious, came out of him. Then he rolled over and raised himself unsteadily on hands and knees. Amid a stream of blood and saliva, the two halves of a dental plate fell out of his mouth. (*CN*, 878)

The skull-faced man is not spared punishment either, he is directed to Room 101. Dwelling on Jack London's character, Orwell highlighted London's admiration for physical strength, toughness, struggle, challenges and brutality and agreed that there existed fascist tendencies in him.

> London could foresee Fascism because he had a Fascist streak in himself: or at any rate a marked strain of brutality and an almost unconquerable preference for the strong man as against the weak man. […] He was an adventurer and a man of action as few writers have ever been. Born into dire poverty, he had already escaped from it at sixteen, thanks to his commanding character and powerful physique: his early years were spent among oyster pirates, gold prospectors, tramps and prize-fighters, and he was ready to admire toughness wherever he found it. On the other hand he never forgot the sordid miseries of his childhood, and he never faltered in his loyalty to the exploited. (*CW*17, 353-4)

Of course, just as in the case of sadism and cruelty, it is improper to use the terms fascism and brutality as quasi-synonyms, a fact which Orwell later recognised and called attention to. Nevertheless, every characteristic Orwell highlights in London's character is in fact one of his own as well.

Much has been said about the countless contradictions inherent in Orwell's character. He was an ardent socialist with a lingering nostalgia for the Edwardian England of his childhood, who dreaded the machine age and who grasped the force of traditions and patriotism – who in fact turned out to be an enthusiastic patriot. He was strongly inimical to religion and Christianity but his moral code made one of his best friends regard him a "religious atheist". He was enlightened concerning racial problems,

thought that the independence of India was a point of honour for England after the Second World War, yet he was not scrupulous to admit that the majority of Indians were "inferior" to Europeans. He was insensitive to the Irish issue and was at best unfriendly towards Scotsmen. At times he appeared to be conscious of the importance of naming various races and brooded on the appropriateness of terms like Mahomedan or Moslem, Chinamen or Chinese, whereas he found pleasure in annoying Scotsmen by labelling them Scotchmen and though he held that anti-Semitism could not be the doctrine of a grown-up person, on quite a few occasions he pondered on some unpleasant habits of "the Jews". He loved animals but was not reluctant to kill them. He didn't think highly of women's intellectual capacity yet he courted several women consecutively and simultaneously in his life. His devastating remarks on "nancy poets" made him suspected of being homophobe but it has also been suggested that he had some homoerotic relationships in his life. He was a man of poor health and physique, nevertheless, he built up the image of a tough man who used his own hands to hunt food and make furniture for himself, who had an unappeasable drive to test himself in the harshest circumstances even at the price of his own health, and who often scourged his fellow intellectuals for their comfortable way of life. His affection for the working class was nothing if not ambivalent. Intellectuals usually came off badly in comparison with the working class – one learns from *The Road to Wigan Pier* that a working class boy has a healthy attitude towards education and does not want to waste his time on "ridiculous rubbish like history and geography" or that common people are much less totalitarian minded than the intellectuals – yet sometimes he wrote about working class people as if he found them intolerably offensive. Seemingly, according to Toynbee, he could hold simultaneously that all virtue resides in the proletariat and that proletarian manners are disgusting. (*Critical Heritage*, 117)

In the foregoing I suggested that the less "decent" traits of the author and work, including his disposition to categorisation and prejudice, are closely linked to the subjective feeling of failure and inadequacy, an experience that made him a great writer and a revolutionary at the same time. In this way, having developed from a sense of failure and abuse, his social radicalism and the prejudices that seem to deny social sensitive ity do not seem paradoxical any more. The sense of inadequacy made him sensitive to oppression and marginalisation, yet he did not resist the temptation to

achieve a positive sense of selfhood by openly degrading various groups of people. Several of his diary entries and his friends' reminiscences suggest that he was not as tolerant with others, e.g. Jews and Orientals, as his "official", publicly declared politics would imply.

Orwell's sense of failure, hence his efforts to overcome that sense, was gendered. In order to overcome failure and survive, which is in Butler's terms the end of the gender project, he went out of his way to perform manliness both in life and in work. He lived the strenuous life of a man's man, constantly exposing himself to hardships. Many of his ideas and commitments were closely linked to the notion of traditional masculinity. His socialism was an active commitment, hardly ever recognising women's issues. He went down the Wigan mines to watch the superhuman efforts miners exerted under inhuman circumstances and warned that all our luxuries were due to the hard and manly work of the miners, but he had no thought on the equally strenuous and unpaid work of women at home, housework and childrearing, which also led to exploitation, not across class but across gender. That he advocated the common man and degraded his fellow intellectuals also had an aspect of gender: living a physically demanding life was seen by him to be much more masculine that the soft life intellectuals led. His patriotism during the Second World War, if apparently contradicting his socialist commitment, was coherent with his notion of masculinity, after all, an important element of traditional masculinity is the service of public affairs and the homeland.

In what follows I am examining how the notion of polar genders and Orwell's adherence to traditional masculinity informed his ideas and attitude to women and women's issues. I am looking at both work and author, his attitude to women as reflected by his writings and his personal relationship with women as letters written by himself and his women acquaintances imply. Finding that an inherent part of his notion of traditional masculinity was the simultaneous elevation and degradation of women, I am challenging the claim that he displayed an evolution of attitude to women during the 40s upon the influence of his marriage to Eileen O'Shaugnessy. Looking at the relationship of the couple from the viewpoint of the woman, based particularly on Eileen's letters to a friend that have recently been published by Peter Davison, I am arguing that the way Orwell lived with women was very much in accord with the way

he wrote about them, to use the familiar claim about Orwell's social sensitivity across class. Both the examined non-fictional writings of the 40s and the relationship with women justify feminist concerns about Orwell and weaken criticism that wishes to fend off the relevance of feminist consciousness with arguments of anachronism and the scarce occurrence of prejudiced statements in Orwell's oeuvre.

Women on paper

> I had a wonderful feeling inside me, a feeling you can't know unless you've had it – but if you're a man you'll have had it some time. I knew that I wasn't a kid any longer, I was a boy at last. And it's a wonderful thing to be a boy, to go roaming where grown-ups can't catch you, and to chase rats and kill birds and shy stones and cheek carters and shout dirty words. It's a kind of strong, rank feeling, a feeling of knowing everything and fearing nothing, and it's all bound up with breaking rules and killing things. The white dusty roads, the hot sweaty feeling of one's clothes, the smell of fennel and wild peppermint, the dirty words, the sour stink of the rubbish dump, the taste of fizzy lemonade and the gas that made one belch, the stamping on the young birds, the feel of the fish straining on the line—it was all part of it. Thank God I'm a man, because no woman ever has that feeling.
> *(Coming up for Air)*

The feminist revision

Bowker's handling of Orwell's comments on the duplicity of Byron's character is indicative of the contradictions and distortions that surround Orwell in relation to women. In his review of Charles du Bos' *Byron and the Need of Fatality*, written for the *Adelphi* in 1932, Orwell dwells on the two opposing aspects of Byron's character, motivated by du Bos' observation that Byron was born "in two halves." The Byron of *Manfred* was a "fated being" endowed with beauty and "superhuman wickedness" who was the cause of much female sorrow, whereas the Byron of *Don Juan* with his "enthusiasm for justice and honesty" was a man and poet of "unparalleled qualities." Orwell concludes that "[t]he contrast between the manliness, the fundamental decency of Byron's best poems, and his behaviour towards women, brings out the truth of M. du Bos' remark that Byron was born in two halves." (*CW*10, 263-5) As is so often the case with criticism by Orwell, there is a strong case for arguing that behind his critical observations there lies an unconscious revelation of himself. That there is an undercurrent of himself in the majority of his literary criticism is in concordance with Fyvel's observation that he looked at the world from the perspective of his own personal and social situation and always felt the need to define what he thought on any issue. (*Memoir*, 9) This preoccupation with his own situation might account for the dual nature of his commentaries. Bowker notes that Orwell's assessment of Byron looks "remarkably like self-recognition", which in the light of Orwell's life and oeuvre is essentially right but Bowker's use of quotes to support his argument is loose and somewhat distorting. (140) In the first two paragraphs of the review Orwell deals

primarily with Byron's need for fatality and the committing of incest as a chance to damn himself. He remarks that "[…] the whole business of incest was a fairly trivial matter. Byron's subsequent behaviour to his wife was abominable, but the incest *in itself* was not an outrageous case." (*CW*10, 264) According to Bowker, Orwell's observation that "Byron had two halves – a 'fundamental decency' seen in his poems and an 'abominable' attitude towards women – looks remarkably like self-recognition." (140) Whereas Orwell speaks of Byron's "abominable attitude to his wife," Bowker applies the adjective to Byron's and Orwell's general attitude to women. Even if the essence of Bowker's generalisation might be implied by Orwell's review, Bowker in fact misquotes, which – taken with the remark on self-recognition – serves to support his contention that Orwell behaved abominably towards women. Ample proof can be found in Orwell's writings to suggest a questionable attitude towards women, there is no need to forge new ones.

The tide of feminist criticism in the 1980s proved to be unfavourable to Orwell's reputation. His prejudiced attitude towards women and feminism got into focus, and it laid way to inimical reaction and consequently a poor reputation in feminist circles. His scattered but ample disdainful remarks on women, his tendency to write to an assumed male audience and his tacit assumption that male is the human norm drew the anger of feminist critics who wrote him off as sexist. Rodden argues that they tended to ignore the fact that in the 1930s and 40s fascism, communism, economic depression and the issues of class and race outweighed the problems put forward by more gender-sensitive generations decades after Orwell's death. At the time, hunger marches and the issue of socialism, in the face of the threat of totalitarianism, were the urgent issues filling one's imagination and these naturally took precedence over feminist concerns. "Even women socialists of Orwell's acquaintance," Rodden reflects, "like Ethel Mannin and Jennie Lee, wife of Aneurin Bevan, turned their attention in the 1930s and '40s toward what seemed the 'larger' issues of class and race." (*Politics*, 219) Critics wishing to blunt the edge of gender conscious criticism argue that to interpret Orwell out of his time and deplore him based on the standards of a later historical context leads not to judicial criticism but to such anachronistic and excessive remarks as, for example, those of Daphne Patai's on Orwell's "masculine linguistics" and his use of 'he' rather than 'he/she'.

The Orwell Mystique: A Study of Male Ideology – the title echoes Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* – has been the most substantial feminist critique of Orwell written. It was born in the third historical phase of American feminist criticism that in the 1980s recoiled from the earlier separatist focus on the study of women authors and encompassed a gender-sensitive critique of male authors. (Rodden, *Politics*, 213-4) Patai traces all of Orwell's shortcomings back to a single assumed underlying attitude. "The concept of an ideological cluster," writes Patai, "helps us to see what it is that unifies Orwell's diverse pet peeves, his fear of socialism and the machine, his nostalgia for the past, his misogyny, his attraction to the experience of war, and the conservatism apparent in his carefully circumscribed challenge to hierarchy and inequality." (*Mystique*, 14) This ideological cluster is androcentrism. Patai's revelation of Orwell's emphatically masculine values enlightens an aspect of his character that has not previously been given enough attention. Some male readers of his works did notice his inclination to an over-emphasised masculinity, as for example Alex Comfort observed his posturing as a "Preacher of Physical Courage" or Stephen Spender noted his misogyny, nevertheless such revelations did not give way to considerations of Orwell's life and oeuvre from the aspect of gender. It is true, the extent to which the idea of androcentrism dominates Patai's reading of Orwell leads sometimes to undue exaggerations. She does not grant Orwell a single positive idea without feeling compelled to ascribe it to his underlying gender ideology, and his preoccupation with manhood. As Rodden observes, her criticism of Orwell unfortunately inclines toward a kind of one-note criticism, a trait Patricia Meyer Spacks condemns in committed, passionate feminist criticism. Patai can be said to be one of those readers who "newly aware of the injustices perpetrated on one sex find evidence of such injustice everywhere – and sometimes *only* evidence of this sort." (Rodden, *Politics*, 221) Hers is what Frank Lentricchia termed "essentialist feminism", an obsession with gender politics to an extent that it excludes from her horizon all other issues, including those Orwell was interested in, such as class distinctions, race, nationalism, poverty, imperialism, the Jewish issue etc. (Rodden, *Politics*, 222) Considering Orwell's participation in the Spanish Civil War, for example, Patai attributes Orwell's eagerness to fight exclusively to his perception of war as an initiation into, and confirmation of, manhood. One might contemplate the priority of incentives that drove men to Spain but

to deprive volunteers of the gesture of human solidarity completely is just as fallacious as not seeing that to stand the test of manhood was an important impulse for getting into the action. Explaining Orwell's response to war exclusively with an "adherence to the myth of the warrior, which makes military prowess an essential part of the conventional notion of manhood and therefore something men want and need" and disregarding the historical context that prompted volunteers to save Spain from a dictatorial regime, similarly to not acknowledging the achievement of a fortified selfhood and manhood through participating in war leads to a narrow horizon on a historical event that will not embrace a multiplicity of viewpoints. Rodden conjectures that Patai's distorted assessment of Orwell is due to "over-adjustment"; "[d]issatisfied about finding an all-too-human Orwell beneath and beyond all the honorifics, Patai seems … to have overadjusted… Her original 'tragic' Orwell was the incarnation of 'passion' and 'honesty'; she blames her failure to notice his not inconsiderable shortcomings on Orwell rather than herself." (*Politics*, 216) Rodden here plays down the importance of Orwell's biased views on women, the phrase "all-too-human" substitutes in a quite questionable way "andocentric" or "misogynist," since it is the andocentric outlook and a concomitant degradation of women that Patai disapproves most in Orwell's fiction. Rodden also forgets what he points out elsewhere: that these "not inconsiderable shortcomings" were carefully buried under the laurels he was accorded posthumously and Orwell's relegation of women was grossly overlooked by critics. Considering the significance of the Spanish War in Orwell's life, for example, it was feminist consciousness that first pointed out that the polarised notion of genders and the uncritical view of patriarchal society enhances anxiety about one's manhood and an all-too-eager readiness to respond to the call to arms, to stand the test of manhood.

Cunningham claims that misogyny was the habitual outlook of many of Orwell's contemporaries graduating from the all-male world of prep school and college. (151) If Orwell's notion of gender was earth-bound and conservative, it was conventional for the time. In Jenni Calder's words, "on that particular issue he was part of his time, certainly not ahead of it." (123) But feminist critics have not been as forgiving as Calder, they have charged him with a consciously sexist ideology and perhaps they have been inclined to attribute more malice to Orwell than would actually be due. Here I depart from third-wave feminist readings of Orwell and argue that instead of conscious

misogyny it was the traditional notion of genders and the social pressure to do his gender right, i.e. to perform manliness, that lead to an attitude and outlook to be challenged from a feminist perspective. He fits the pattern of writers and poets of the time whom Janet Montefiore describes as having taken gender privilege for granted "with what now looks like a staggering degree of arrogance, as their right and due." (82) His misogyny was not so much an ideology thoroughly examined and consciously pronounced – as it has been observed in connection with Orwell's anti-Semitism, he was too decent-minded for that – but was rather the outcome of the social milieu that was saturated with stereotypes of this type, and his personal history of experiencing shame and punishment for not complying with gender norms. Branding women as inferior, says Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, is a potent means by which patriarchs enhance their self-confidence.

> Possibly when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their inferiority, but with his own superiority. That was what he was protecting rather hot-headedly and with too much emphasis, because it was a jewel to him of the rarest price. Life for both sexes – and I looked at them, shouldering their way along the pavement – is arduous, difficult, a perpetual struggle. It calls for gigantic courage and strength. More than anything, perhaps, creatures of illusion as we are, it calls for confidence in oneself. Without self-confidence we are as babes in the cradle. And how can we generate this imponderable quality, which is yet so valuable, most quickly? By thinking that other people are inferior to oneself. By feeling that one has some innate superiority – it may be wealth, or rank, a straight nose, or the portrait of a grandfather by Romney – for there is no end to the pathetic devices of the human imagination – over other people. Hence the enormous importance to a patriarch who has to conquer, who has to rule, of feeling that great numbers of people, half the human race in deed, are by nature inferior to himself. It must indeed be one of the chief sources of his power. (*Room,* 32)

Instead of a conscious and systematic misogynistic sexual politics, an ignorance of the implications of gender polarisation is inherent in Orwell's work. Such a lack of awareness of perspectives is implied, for example, in a letter to Brenda Salkeld on the choice of pseudonym. Reflecting on his choice of a nom de plum, he remarks in an offhand manner that it "would be amusing to choose a female pseudonym, e.g. Miss Barbara Bedworthy (as so many women writers have chosen male pseudonyms)" but he doesn't seem to be aware of the reason why the choice of a pseudonym of the opposite sex has traditionally been one-way. (*CW*10, 369)

Feminists were quick to notice that Orwell's concern for the working class tended to be selective: working-class women and their miserable conditions evaded his attention in his sociological pieces. Beatrix Campbell points out that the industrial north visited by Orwell was dominated by cotton as well as coal and the neglect of the former shows his inattention to arduous female labour. "Orwell wrote his experiences of the working class by reference only to men." And she comments wryly: "Men still do this – they talk of men's struggles, movements and characters as if they were writing about the whole class." (6) Orwell casts an occasional glimpse on women's domestic drudgery and explores the fact that working-class women do not get any help in housekeeping from men – a custom that after some hesitation ultimately evokes his approval in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. In line with his idealisation of the working class and his debunking of the middle class, especially the intelligentsia, he cherishes the phenomenon that unemployment does not alter the conventional (lack of) share of household chores. Unemployment creates an "anomalous position": the man is out of work while the woman's work continues as before (Orwell's choice of words suggests that the situation should be the other way round, leaving the woman without work), nevertheless, the man retains his power within the family, which is embodied by his refusal to get involved in the housework:

> In a working-class home it is the man who is the master and not, as in a middle-class home, the woman or the baby. Practically never, for instance, in a working-class home will you see the man doing a stroke of the housework. Unemployment has not changed this convention, which on the face of it seems a little unfair. The man is idle from morning to night but the woman is as busy as ever – more so, indeed, because she has to manage with less money. Yet so far as my experience goes the women do not protest. I believe that they, as well as the men, feel that a man would lose his manhood if, merely because he was out of work, he developed into a 'Mary Ann'. (*CW*5, 75)

But perhaps his more sensitive attitude to gender roles fell victim to the general tendency in *The Road to Wigan Pier* to paint the working class all positively and the middle class all negatively. In the diary version of the passage he gave evidence of some consideration for women's lot. It is unfortunate that the original experience described in the diary evolved into the passage above championing the traditional division of labour along gender lines, most conspicuous in the working class:

> We had an argument one evening in the Searles' house because I helped Mrs S. with the washing-up. Both of the men disapproved of this, of course. Mrs S.

> seemed doubtful. She said that in the North, working-class men never offered any courtesies to women (women are allowed to do all the house-work unaided, even when the man is unemployed, and it is always the man who sits in the comfortable chair) and she took this state of things for granted, but did not see why it should not be changed. She said that she thought the women now-a-days, especially the younger women, would like if men opened doors for them etc. The position now-a-days is anomalous. The man is practically always out of work, whereas the woman occasionally is working. Yet the woman continues to do all the housework and the man not a handsturn, except carpentering and gardening. Yet I think it is instinctively felt by both sexes that the man would lose his manhood if, merely because he was out of work, he became a 'Mary Ann'. (*CW*10, 448-9)

The transformation from the diary to the book version is lamentable: whereas the diary version contains the seed of a radical deviation from the traditional family pattern, the published book – being a celebration of working-class mentality in every respect – is a yielding to the belief in the superiority of man. As opposed to the diary where the passage offers a discussion of the division of labour within the family and conveys a female point of view about a desirable change in the state of things (Mrs Searles "took this state of things for granted, but did not see why it should not be changed"), the book is simply a definite and authoritative declaration of the conventional perspective on gender roles. It conveys the message that the hierarchical relations in the working-class family are to be admired and followed as an example, with the self-evident result that housekeeping is left entirely to the woman. The statement that "on the face of it [this state of affairs] seems a little unfair" cuts dead the possibility of diverging from the conventional male point of view and implies that the hope for a radical diversion is to be refused. The expression "on the face of it" modifies the sentence by implying that an examination of the question in depth would convince us of the opposite of, or at least of something different from, what follows. And the last two sentences are an arbitrary confirmation of the ingrained perspective: Orwell claims that women do not protest against the status quo and assigns them the thought – quite likely his own one – that participating in housekeeping would deprive men of their manhood. Mrs Searles' wish that things changed is curiously transformed into the declaration of an experience, which tells him that women do not protest. Eager to identify with the working class, Orwell does not recoil from approving its most unfortunate customs and champions these attitudes as the symbol of their healthy outlook on life instead of grasping the very

elemental fact that they are necessitated by circumstances.[18] For instance, instead of making the link between the inability of the poor to study and their inadequate economic situation, he celebrates their refusal to study as a healthy attitude. Admitting that he has stayed for a long enough period of time with working-class people to withstand the lure to idealise them, he proceeds to do exactly that:

> In a working-class home – I am not thinking at the moment of the unemployed, but of the comparatively prosperous homes – you breathe a warm, decent, deeply human atmosphere which it is not easy to find elsewhere. […] I have often been struck by the peculiar easy completeness, the perfect symmetry as it were, of a working-class interior at its best. Especially on winter evenings after tea, when the fire glows in the open range and dances mirrored in the steel fender, when Father, in shirt-sleeves, sits in the rocking chair at one side of the fire reading the racing finals, and Mother sits on the other with her sewing, and the children are happy with a pennorth of mint humbugs, and the dog lolls roasting himself on the rag mat – it is a good place to be in, provided that you can be not only in it but sufficiently *of* it to be taken for granted. (*CW*5, 107-108)

As Beatrix Campbell points out, instead of facing the contradictions and problems inherent in the working-class family, Orwell endows it with an idealistic unity. "[…] given the ideological universe he inhabited in interwar England, there is no sense in Orwell of the family as one of the sites of sexual division in the working class, because he takes the standpoint of men, not women." (222)

Rodden suggests that Orwell's exceptionally unfortunate case with his feminist critics could be due to his exalted status as a champion of justice and decency.

> How can one be a truly 'popular' hero and not stand as the champion of half of humanity? feminists across the political spectrum ask, justly, about Orwell. […] Fairly, or not, feminists have expected more of Orwell than of his contemporaries, they have wanted him to be Trilling's and Spender's 'extraordinary ordinary man' on women's issues too. (*Politics*, 224)

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[18] Roughly a decade later he deplored the thirties' affiliation with the proletariat in his characteristically harsh language. Reviewing *Great Morning* by Osbert Sitwell, he wrote in the *Adelphi* in 1948: "The great thing is to be your age, which includes being honest about your social origins. In the nineteen-thirties we saw a whole literary generation, or at least the most prominent members of a generation, either pretending to be proletarians or indulging in public orgies of self-hatred because they were not proletarians. Even if they could have kept up this attitude (today, a surprising number of them have either fled to America or found themselves jobs in the B.B.C. or the British Council), it was a stupid one, because their bourgeois origin was not a thing that could be altered." (*CW*19, 397) Juxtaposing the passage with the early experience of his carrier (tramping, going down in the mines, joining the Spanish militias) makes the reader wonder about the flagrant inconsistency of his seemingly honest, because of its vehemence and assertiveness, manner of writing.

And realising that he did not meet their expectations, their disappointment has been strong. Heightened expectations, as always, have led to a more intense feeling of resentment, giving way to absolute rejection: the feminist revision has been the strongest challenge to Orwell's reputation. The issues he was so concerned with – politics, economy, poverty, class-distinctions – were ones belonging to the public realm traditionally assigned to be dealt with and solved by men and he displayed no sensitivity to the "petty disasters" of women, as he termed women's concerns in a review of a female author in 1946. (*CW*18, 175) The exclusion of 'common woman' from his notion of 'common man' was not primarily a linguistic carelessness to which he was otherwise especially alert. Consequently, "many women," says Rodden, "cannot 'read themselves into' Orwell very easily. They come to him with the expectation that he speaks to 'the common reader', only to find the dialogue virtually closed. His reader seems to be the common *male* reader, and the disappointment is keen." (*Politics*, 225) In the eyes of feminists, Orwell's blindness to women's issues and his own emphatic masculinity calls into question, perhaps even invalidates, his commitment to social justice. Unfortunately, his exploration of racial and economic oppression was never coupled with a revelation of gender polarisation, the values dictated by his 'democratic socialism' failed to question the notion of male superiority. It is this weakness which, feminists contend, invalidates his concern for social justice. As Patai complains, his gender ideology "conflicts with his attacks on hierarchy and injustice, which remain woefully incomplete, even hypocritical." ('Orwell's despair', 88)

The charge: anti-feminism and woman hatred

There is no way of denying that Orwell did much to let feminists down. That he was "not sensitive" to women's rights, as Rodden puts it, is euphemistic for the intolerance he displayed towards feminists and birth control supporters in his time. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* he included feminists in his (in)famous list of cranks – fruit-juice drinkers, nudists, sandal-wearers, sex-maniacs, Quakers, 'Nature Cure' quacks and pacifists – all these are assumed to be attracted with "magnetic force" to socialism. (*CW*5, 161) No wonder that he invited the label "anti-crank crank". Roger Fowler points out that lists are highly typical of Orwell when passionate and damning. The syntax of

listing has a levelling effect, it implies that the items in the list are much the same. The use of plural forms suggests stereotypical thinking. Fowler is especially critical of Orwell's use of lists:

> The use of list structures […] is an extreme and absurd technique of criticism. Lists lack logic and discrimination. They reduce everything to the same level, and therefore are offensive to some of things listed, which quite obviously have merit outside of this context: Quakers and tinned food, for instance. If Orwell is not making clear discriminations in this list, it is because he is proceeding in a tone of raucous mockery; it is, however, close to intemperance and intolerance. (59)

Other disdainful remarks on feminists suggest that the inclusion of feminists in the list was not only for the purpose of "raucous mockery." In the dark vision of the future that he depicted in a letter to Brenda Salkeld in 1933, Orwell considered a "fearful tribe" of feminists to be one of the threats to civilisation. He reflected two directions toward which the world could move: a complete overthrow of the present order by means of a revolution or the continuing and consummate hegemony of business accompanied by the feminists' coming into power:

> A few years ago I thought it rather fun to reflect that our civilisation is doomed, but now it fills me above all else with boredom to think of the horrors that will be happening within ten years – either some appalling calamity, with revolution and famine, or else all-round trustification and Fordification, with the entire population reduced to docile wage-slaves, our lives utterly in the hands of the bankers, and a fearful tribe of Lady Astors and Lady Rhonddas et hoc genus riding us like succubi in the name of Progress. (*CW*10, 317)

It is worth giving the two ladies mentioned in this apocalyptic vision a more objective assessment. Nancy Astor, the first woman to enter the House of Commons, was a member of parliament almost throughout Orwell's career, from 1919 until 1945. She was an advocate of temperance and women's rights. She campaigned to lower the age for women's suffrage to twenty one, for equal rights in the Civil Service and was a supporter of the nursery schools of Margaret McMillan. In the year when Nancy Astor took her seat in the House of Commons, there was another woman candidate for a seat, this time in the House of Lords, Lady Rhondda, born Margaret Haig Thomas. Having joined the Pankhursts' organisation, the Women's Social and Political Union, and having carried out small acts of militancy in the fight for women's vote in the early 1900s, it was probably a matter of fact that Margaret Rhondda should attempt to take the seat of her deceased father – with whom she was on good terms and worked closely

during the First World War – in the House of Lords in 1919. The lords were terrified and quickly set up committees to reject her claim. (The House of Lords admitted women into its body only in 1958.) Viscount Rhondda had left to his daughter not only his title, but full possession and control of his properties. She inherited an active place in the financial world and she kept her feet. She was considered a talented and successful businesswoman. (*CW*10, 317) In 1920 she founded an independent weekly, the *Time and Tide*, whose editing she took over from the initial editor in 1926. A large number of the contributors to the magazine were women: Vera Brittain, Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf, Crystal Eastman, Nancy Astor, Emmeline Pankhurst, Olive Schreiner, Rebecca West, Rose Macaulay, Naomi Mitchison, Elisabeth Robins. As Margaret Rhondda put it in its first issue, *Time and Tide* came into being in order to fill a gap in the press. The idea behind it was to create "a paper which is in fact concerned neither specially with men nor specially with women, but with human beings. […] the press of today, although with self-conscious, painstaking care it now inserts 'and women' every time it chances to use the word 'men' scarcely succeeds in attaining to such an ideal!" (*Time and Tide*, 14 March 1920) Though the magazine must have lost some of its early feminist zeal as the Second World War loomed, there is some irony in the fact that Orwell found his first war-time job in 1940 as a regular movie and theatre reviewer for this, in its hay-day, feminist periodical.

Feminism aside, having an aversion for the movement and for some of its members does not explain away Orwell's often expressly contemptuous attitude towards women. Rodden is incorrect when he criticises feminists on the grounds that their charges of Orwell's misogyny and contempt for women "equate his scattered comments dismissive of feminism with woman-hatred in general." (*Politics*, 213) Just as the irregularity of his dismissive remarks about 'Jews' does not exempt him from the charge of anti-Jewish attitude in spite of his declared stance against anti-Semitism, that his condescension to women can be deduced from scattered remarks only, does not invalidate the criticism;. While he knew better than to consciously differentiate based on race or religion, nevertheless his irritation at Jewish habits justifies his friend Muggeridge's conjecture that he was "inclined at times to be vaguely anti-Semitic." ('Knight', 172) Similarly, there is something to be said against remarks like "[o]ne of

the surest signs of his [Joseph Conrad's] genius is that women dislike his books" (*CEJL*1, 227) or

> [d]oubtless Gissing is right in implying all through his books that intelligent women are very rare animals, and if one wants to marry a woman who is intelligent *and* pretty, then the choice is still further restricted, according to a well-known arithmetical rule. It is like being allowed to choose only among albinos, and left-handed albinos at that. (*CEJL*4, 431)

Such statements sound grievous even if we take the different historical context, the primacy of the economic crisis and the looming world war with its totalitarian regimes into consideration. Though feminist criticism has been especially harsh on Orwell's misogyny, it was undeniably Orwell who occasioned the charge.

Rodden emphasises that the Orwell cult is in part a cult of masculinity. It is worth quoting him at some length:

> The masculine voice of Orwell's prose, his association of moral courage with physical courage, his own 'manly' example that socialism is something to fight and die for, his railing against the 'softness' of a machine civilisation, his emphasis on 'hard' experience rather than theory and jargon, his conviction that one could be a socialist and yet be an 'ordinary' man, his Quixotic capacity to *act*: Orwell the man and writer projected a virile image, especially attractive to radical male intellectuals of a generation naively worshipful of 'common' men of action. Indeed part of his appeal has always been his capacity to make intellectual life seem manly, not effeminate, a calling of unusual adventure, larger than life. Male intellectuals have therefore projected their own dreams onto him, romanticizing his life as the saga of a world-historical individual somehow managing to touch all the major currents of his age, from poverty to imperialism to fascism. In all this Orwell has seemed the quintessential public writer – and the public sphere is the one to which men have traditionally felt called and compelled. (*Politics*, 225)

Orwell's markedly masculine stance has been rewarded by male readers. As Rodden notes, the critics, who played the largest role in his reputation building and, more importantly, for whom Orwell stood as an intellectual model, have been men. For them Orwell was not just a "political or generational exemplar", a figure whose ethos guided them in all urgent public issues of their day, but an "inspirational gender model" to which they might as well have been blind: "male critics have been peculiarly silent as to the significance of Orwell's reputation among male intellectuals and his special masculine appeal." (Rodden, *Politics*, 212) Their silence might have been due to their being unaware of this factor in Orwell's appeal, just as Orwell seems to have been unconscious of his own emphatic masculinity. Even if some critics noticed Orwell's

particular masculine appeal, this recognition was not coupled with a critical stance either. Quite to the contrary, Paul Potts, for instance, in his 'Quixote on a Bicycle' assures his one-time friend of unconditional praise for everything he was, including his unquestionable masculinity. "He was very masculine; not necessarily a bad thing in a man, but in the sense that he was every inch a man, and not in the sense that he was a penny-halfpenny trying to be tuppence." (Potts, 250) The exaltation of masculinity gains an unfavourable taste when it becomes the ideal in opposition to femininity, as when Potts goes on to applaud Orwell's kindness: "He was kind looking but it was a masculine kindness – most kindness isn't." (Potts, 250)

Christopher Hitchens, saving Orwell from feminist criticism, argues that if "viewed with discrimination", Orwell's prejudice turns out to be against "the sexless woman, or the woman who has lost her sex and become shrivelled and/or mannish." (*Why Orwell Matters*, 150) Without supporting his view from Orwell's text, he comments on the phenomenon as being an "old male trope" and adds that it conforms to his wider dislike of anything "unnatural". Putting the latter word within quotation marks reflects an awareness of the distinction between biological and acquired social attributes but one wonders whether his suspicion of Orwell's being a captive of the "old male trope" is not a revelation of his own preferences. Self-revealing passages are to be found not only in Orwell's critical statements but also in the commentary of Orwell's observers.[19] According to Rodden, "[j]ust as some of Orwell's critical statements on Dickens, Swift, Tolstoy, and Kipling tell us more about him than about them, observers' comments on Orwell not infrequently amount less to literary criticism than to self- and group-analysis." (*Politics*, 9) Instead of sex – Orwell equally showed preference for boyish as well as womanly women – Hitchens should have argued in terms of gender: Orwell's prejudice was more probably rooted in a fear of the mix of social roles, as his

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[19] Commenting on the passage from *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* that constitutes the motto of this chapter, Hitchens again betrays an ambiguous attitude. He notes that "[m]any a true word is spoken in jest and there is an obvious element of tongue-in-cheek in the above, but it's hardly an exaggeration to say that Orwell wrote for a male audience." (142) The three parts of this sentence are sufficiently disconnected in order to make its meaning vague and the latter part of it is not really a condemnation as it presumably is supposed to be. Does Hitchens merely repeat the widely accepted criticism that Orwell wrote for a male audience, or is it supposed to pertain here to this specific passage? If the latter is the case, Hitchens gives himself away, since what he says then involves that the abuse of sexuality and the jest on it is allowed within a male community, and a man has to guard himself only in the presence of women.

hatred of feminists attests. His denouncement of women taking up traditionally male roles (like Lady Rhondda and Lady Astor) as well as his criticism of men retreating into passivity (or even softness), traditionally associated with women, is linked to the perception of social roles rather than to preference for sexuality.

A doubtful evolution of attitude

Facing the charge of misogyny, Rodden warns the reader not to overlook Orwell's respectful comments about feminism and women's issues, which, drawing on Arthur Eckstein's observation, were on the rise from the mid-1940s, while, at the same time, his condescending remarks about feminism and women's capacities diminished greatly. (*Politics*, 436, n97) Rodden points out that Orwell reviewed Hilda Martindale's *From One Generation to Another* in 1944 and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* in 1945 favourably. His praise of Martindale's book is indeed unrestrained but is mainly directed at Martindale's efforts as a factory inspector to expose the atrocious working conditions into which employers forced their female and child labourers until almost the beginning of the Great War. The blunt truth-teller about the working conditions of male labourers in Wigan could not but welcome Martindale, who gave attention to female employees as well, all the more so since, as Orwell argues, she had "none of the bitter anti-masculine feeling that feminist writers used to have." He solemnly concluded that Martindale's "own career, and the self-confidence and independent outlook that she evidently showed from the very start, bear out the claim that women are the equals of men in everything except physical strength." (*CW*17, 271) Unfortunately the declaration of such a statement ironically bespeaks of a need to be reminded of or convinced by it.

Orwell lavished much less praise on Woolf's book, which has become a substantive text of feminist criticism. Noting the central argument of Woolf's book, the need for women to have financial independence, Orwell cuts his review short and disregards the myriad implications of Woolf's refined text. He concludes that "[a]t times this book rather overstates the drawbacks from which women suffer, but almost anyone of the male sex could read it with advantage." (*CW*17, 288) Patai draws attention to the "uncharacteristically circumspect and wary tone" of the review, "he neither engages the book nor strongly contradicts its premises. He is clearly on his

guard." (*Mystique*, 20) Rodden notes that Orwell's positive statements – including these reviews – are from the mid-1940s, supporting the impression that Orwell's views on women's issues, "though they hardly became progressive, were not static throughout his life." (*Politics*, 437, n112) Rodden ascribes the "evolution of his attitudes" possibly to his marriage to Eileen and the adoption of their son. Taking the positive comments to be an evolution of attitude, however, disregards the ongoing undercurrent of Orwell's negative attitude towards women and feminism, which kept coming to the surface from time to time even after he had made concessions. Just after he had been convinced by Martindale's book and personality that women were not inferior to men, he began shilly-shallying again when he found in a privately conducted sociological 'survey' that women could not pass the intelligence test.

> Here is a little problem sometimes used as an intelligence test.
> A man walked four miles due south from his house and shot a bear. He then walked two miles due west, then walked another four miles due north and was back at his home again. What was the colour of the bear?
> The interesting point is that – so far as my own observations go – men usually see the answer to this problem and women do not. (*CW*16, 277)

In the spring of 1945 as a war correspondent he had the opportunity to observe the municipal elections in France, in which women voted for the first time in French history. Though the caption of his article for the *Manchester Evening News* promises some discussion of this historic event, it cannot be argued that Orwell attributes too much significance to it. Indeed, rather to the contrary, his speculations imply an anxiety at the forthcoming results of women's "venture into public life." "By far the most important unknown factor is the attitude of the women," he writes. Assuming a stronger connection between the Church and women than between the Church and men, he worries that "[i]t is possible that the Church may as in the past, make an authoritative pronouncement against certain political doctrines, especially Communism: in which case the large female vote might be a very serious handicap for the parties of the Left." (*CW*17, 126) Three weeks later he covered the elections for the *Observer*, informing the British that the results showed a general leftward slide. His anxieties and predictions were not justified – he was silent about these just as about women's participation in the vote at all.

In a review of D.H. Lawrence's *The Prussian Officer* he deduces from one of the stories, 'The White Stocking', the simple moral that "women behave better if they get a sock on the jaw occasionally." (*CW*17, 386) Apropos of Orwell's 'Books v. Cigarettes', which appeared in *Tribune* in February 1946, a correspondent justly suspects him of an exclusively male perspective. Intending to examine the question whether low book-consumption is due to the high price of books, Orwell compares reading habits mainly to traditionally male spare-time activities: drinking, smoking, going to the dogs and the pub. Joyce A. Sharpey-Shafer wonders whether since women and children "don't appear to need beer and cigarettes as much as men" did that mean he implied they did not need books either? (*CW*18, 97) In describing his ideal pub, the Moon Under Water, Orwell displays a similarly male-centric, somewhat paternalistic attitude. The Moon Under Water is an unmistakably nineteenth-century public house in appearance: "its whole architecture and fittings are uncompromisingly Victorian" with grained woodwork, open fires burning in the bars (a separate one for women) – its atmosphere and mentality are similarly Victorian. The motherly barmaids are middle-aged women, who call everyone dear, irrespective of age and sex. The greatest asset of the pub is its garden, where the family members can entertain themselves while Dad is having his fun. The garden "allows whole families to go there instead of Mum having to stay at home and mind the baby while Dad goes out alone." Believing this to be progressive-minded ("It is the puritanical nonsense of excluding children – and therefore, to some extent, women – from pubs that has turned these places into mere boozing shops instead of the family gathering places that they ought to be." *CW*18, 100), he only fits the need of the family to that of the husband.

An assumption of male superiority is inherent in his citation of Babylonian marriage customs in the columns of *Tribune* (June 1944). He quotes a passage from the Penguin version of *Herodotus*, which gives an account of the system the Babylonians had designed to portion out maidens of marriageable age.

> Once a year in each village the maidens of an age to marry were collected altogether into one place, while the men stood round them in a circle. Then the herald called up the damsels one by one and offered them for sale. He began with the most beautiful. When she was sold for no small sum of money, he offered for sale the one who came next to her in beauty… The custom was that when the herald had gone through the whole number of the beautiful damsels, he should then call up the ugliest and offer her to the men, asking who would agree to take

> her with the smallest marriage portion. And the man who offered to take the smallest sum had her assigned to him. The marriage portions were furnished by the money paid for the beautiful damsels, and thus the fairer maidens portioned out the uglier. (*CW*16, 246)

Unfortunately Orwell does not elucidate his standpoint on the issue or what his point is at all in setting forth this old patriarchal custom, which flies in the face of the concept of the emancipation of women in the 19th and 20th centuries. The two sentences he adds as a kind of comment and conclusion are ambiguous and uninformative on his assessment of the custom: "This custom seems to have worked very well and Herodotus is full of enthusiasm for it. He adds, however, that, like other good customs, it was already going out round about 450 B.C." (*CW*16, 247) Does he approve of the positive discrimination with which the design helped to even out the inequalities of nature and portioned out the ugly maidens with money received for the beautiful ones? Even if he can be credited with such an egalitarian spirit, the question remains whether he noticed the subordinate relation of human beings inherent in the custom at all. In a letter to David Astor in 1948 he again gave evidence of his doubtful concept of human relations along gender lines. Drawing a comparison between horses and humans, he wrote to Astor: "Bobbie [Astor's horse] is here & in good form. He is bigger than the other horse, Bill's mare, & oppresses her a great deal, but she likes being with him, which I suppose shows that women like that kind of thing really." (*CW*19, 485)

Significantly, all the examples, mentioned above, of Orwell's inherent assumption of male superiority are from the mid-1940s, which does not lend support to Rodden's claims about an evolution in his attitude. Though Orwell summed up his time spent at the BBC during the war as two wasted years (from August 1941 to November 1943) and he came to be very critical of the BBC's influence on young artists (describing the organisation as "a mixture of whoreshop and lunatic asylum"), it brought him into contact with a wide range of his literary contemporaries, as well as scientists, historians, and politicians. The programmes he had to produce included talks on science, art, politics, and religion, such as discussions of *The Social Contract, The Koran, Das Kapital*, social problems including minority issues, issues of colour, and the status of women – and because of these he was probably forced to think over some of his ideas. He was alerted, for example, to the delicate issue of the naming of nationalities by the Eurasian writer Cedric Dover. Whereas earlier he admittedly found

pleasure in annoying the Scottish by referring to them as "Scotchmen", during and after his employment at the BBC he emphasised the importance of avoiding insulting nicknames on several occasions and went through *Burmese Days* to change troublesome nationality designations to politically correct ones before the reprinting of his book.[20] However, the impetus was not an internal incentive but an adjustment to external expectations, therefore relapse into old habit was to be expected. In 'Revenge is Sour', written for *Tribune* in November 1945, he dwelt on the absurdity of revengeful emotions occasioned by the sight of a Jewish Viennese officer getting his own revenge for his people on the Nazis by kicking a captured SS-officer. Criticising the little attention Orwell ever paid to the holocaust and its aftermath, Fyvel did not conceal his indignation at Orwell's designation of the Viennese officer as "the Jew" and "the little Jew" right through the article. (*Memoir*, 180)

The BBC might have exerted some influence on his views on women's issues as well. Contemplating the possible relation of Yeats' political conservatism and his leaning towards occultism, Orwell claims that "[t]hose who dread the prospect of universal suffrage, popular education, freedom of thought, emancipation of women, will start off with a predilection towards secret cults." (*CW*14, 282) Universal suffrage and emancipation of women are very unorwellian concerns, what's more the terms are rarely if ever used in his writings. By the time Orwell wrote the review on Yeats, he had been working for a year and a half at the BBC, where – among others – he was

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[20] It is interesting to track the process of his becoming aware of the importance of nationality and race designations and of the way he held forth about his turn of mind. Preparing some BBC talks for publication under the title *Talking to India*, on 21 June 1943 he sent back the proofs to the publisher Philip Unwin with the following notes: Another copy is with Cedric Dover "who had asked to be sent one. He hasn't returned it. If he doesn't do soon I don't think it is worth waiting as he is not likely to make any alterations that matter much. He merely wanted a copy to make sure typing errors, etc. had not slipped in, & I had already been over the MS. to make sure of that." (*CW*15, 151) On the same day Orwell sent a postcard, changing his assessment of Cedric Dover's possible alterations: "I am sending separately C.D.'s copy of the proofs of 'Talking to India'. He has only made minor alterations, but he says it is *particularly important* that the word 'Negro' (pp 17-21) should *always* be given a capital." Half a year later he conceitedly stepped forward in the columns of *Tribune* as one among the very few journalists who were exceptionally aware of the delicacy of the issue. In a 'voice-in-the-wilderness' style he wrote: "It is an astonishing thing that few journalists, even in the Left wing press, bother to find out which names are and which are not resented by members of other races[…]. 'Negro' is habitually printed with a small n, a thing most Negroes resent. One's information about these matters needs to be kept up to date." (*CW*16, 23-24) The last sentence refers vaguely and indirectly to the fact that his own enlightenment, however indignant he seemingly is because of the lack of care of others, is owing not to his own sensitivity but to some external influence, though the reference is sufficiently vague to avoid readers' attention and thus to put Orwell on the pedestal with respect to the colour question.

responsible for organising the talks of 'The Cradle and the Desk', a series discussing the emancipation of women. In describing the programme to Ethel Mannin in a 1942 invitation to her, however, he included his personal reservations about the need for and (male) desirability of women's emancipation: "This, of course, is a subject of great interest in India, and roughly what we want discussed is how far women benefit by escaping from home and whether in the long run it is desirable for them to undertake the same work as men." (*CW*13, 474) Just as the BBC – through the people he met there and worked with – might have prompted him to think twice about nationalities, he might have been impelled to conform to progressive views on issues of gender. However, besides the quite few positive statements denigrating phrases kept popping up from time to time, just as in the 1930s, which suggests that his ideas basically remained unchanged. Negative statements weigh heavier than positive ones, they even tend to invalidate or considerably decrease the weight of the latter.

Ambivalent homophobia

Orwell's ambivalent attitude to homosexuality is closely linked to his heightened sense and assertion of masculinity. On the face of it, he took a harsh stance against homosexuality. His branding of homosexual contemporaries as "pansies" and "nancy-boys" and the implied denigration was certainly bound up with the traditional assumption of homosexuality as a deviation from masculinity. He criticized nancy-boys for their soft and secure way of living and for their inability to respond to the manly challenges of hard times (e.g. their reluctance to take part in the Spanish Civil War). George L. Mosse in *The Image of Men* claims that the traditional image of man entails a strong-willed, virtuous and brave soul in a healthy and strong body resembling Winckelmann's Grecian athletes, who is able to control his emotions and due to a readiness for heroic self-sacrifice is a solid and reliable building stone of society. (Mosse, *Image*, 33) Both feminists and homosexuals challenge this traditional notion of masculinity, the former by stepping over the well-established border line between the two genders and by threatening to invade the prestigious public sphere of men's activities, the latter by blurring the accepted norms in sexual behaviour. There is good reason to surmise that Orwell's dislike of both groups can be traced to this common

feature of them. The common denominator of most of his pet hates enlisted in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, for example, is an inimical stance towards, or a challenge to, masculinity. The middle-class cranks attracted to socialism – pacifists, feminists and Quakers – all turn the traditional attributes of masculinity upside down, but fruit-juice drinkers, nudists and sandal-wearers are also suspicious, not to mention sex-maniacs. By the latter he presumably meant homosexuals, at least, that is what is suggested in a 1936 letter to Jack Common in which he complained about the socialist bourgeoisie as a sort of preliminary round for the tirade in *The Road to Wigan Pier*:

> And then so many of them are the sort of eunuch type with a vegetarian smell who go about spreading sweetness and light and have at the back of their minds a vision of the working class all T.T., well washed behind the ears, readers of Edward Carpenter or some other pious sodomite and talking with B.B.C accents. (*CW*10, 471)

The intolerance towards homosexuality, like in the passage above, describing the homosexual Carpenter as a "pious sodomite," earned for him the label homophobe, which, however, does not depict his quite complex attitude towards the issue. Patai suggests that the labels he attached to homosexual literary intellectuals were a "verbal tic", not to be attributed too much significance. (*Mystique*, 85) His homophobia directed against the Auden-circle was a part of his wider skirmish with the intelligentsia. The stubbornness with which he kept a distance from the homosexual alliances of the Oxford and Cambridge literary graduates leads Newsinger to suspect that "his homophobia had more to do with his objection to the social and political position of the Auden circle than it did their sexual preferences." (28)

In the sense that homosexuality became accepted as a personal idiosyncrasy, Julian Symons describes the thirties as the homosexual decade – the best example being the longstanding liason of Auden and Isherwood, the "Homintern", as Connolly labelled it. Many of the coterie's dedications originated in the shared male bed. (Cunningham, 148) Homosexuality, says Symons, became "a sort of password, so that several homosexual writers of little talent found their work accepted by magazines simply on the basis of personal friendships." (*Thirties*, 40) Symons acknowledges that homosexuality in literary circles was not a new phenomenon, the twenties also had its famous homosexual writers, the contribution of the thirties to the phenomenon was that the attitude they adopted suggested that "the assertion of sexual freedom" became a

social duty. (*Thirties*, 41) Auden blamed his homosexuality on the absence of his father, but the enclosed male society of public schools must also have had an impact on the emotional development of students. Connolly, in describing his theory of permanent adolescence, laid the blame on the intense experiences of public schools: the crippling effect leaves their graduates "adolescent, school-minded, self-conscious, cowardly, sentimental, and, in the last analysis, homosexual." (Cunningham, 132)

With respect to the issue of homophobia, Patai considers Orwell's deep revulsion at obese, therefore effeminate, men to be more significant than his disapproval of homosexuality among intellectuals, which might have had other sources as well. Whether sahibs or socialists, Orwell could not stand fat men with a huge buttock. Two passages, one depicting Flory's reaction to MacGregor's shape in *Burmese Days* and one in which Orwell describes the "typical" socialist cranks in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, are worth comparing.

> Nasty old bladder of lard! he thought, watching Macgregor up the road. How his bottom did stick out in those tight khaki shorts. Like the one of those beastly middle-aged scoutmasters, homosexuals almost to a man, that you see photographs of in the illustrated papers. Dressing himself up in those ridiculous clothes and exposing his pudgy, dimpled knees, because it is the pukka sahib thing to take exercise before breakfast—disgusting! (*CW*2, 77-78)

> One day this summer I was riding through Letchworth when the bus stopped and two dreadful-looking old men got onto it. They were both about sixty, both very short, pink, and chubby, and both hatless. One of them was obscenely bald, the other had long grey hair bobbed in the Lloyd George style. They were dressed in pistachio-coloured shirts and khaki shorts into which their huge bottoms were crammed so tightly that you could study every dimple. Their appearance created a mild stir of horror on top of the bus. (*CW*5, 161-162)

Oldness, baldness and obesity, especially matronly big bottoms in tight clothes betraying every dimple are a severe challenge to the traditional beauty of the athletic male body. Basing her argument upon the observations of Gregory Lehne, who regards homophobia as a complex reflection of social and political attitudes rather than a fear of homosexuality per se, Patai suggests that Orwell felt threatened not by homosexuality itself, but by a change in the male sex role. (*Mystique*, 84) Since homosexuality involves the danger of being branded effeminate, his anxiety about masculinity and his ambivalent homophobia are certainly to be linked. A connection between the two is suggested by Orwell himself in the characterisation of a male character in the detailed

layout for the unfinished 'A Smoking Room Story'. "Like all men addicted to whoring, he professed to be revolted by homosexuality" runs the explanation as to why one of the characters becomes indignant at the mentioning of homosexuality. (*CW*20, 190) Orwell's own promiscuity and his tirades against homosexuality curiously match the sexual habits of this character. But even without regarding the sentence as autobiographical, it is clear that its underlying assumption is that virility and the fear of homosexuality as a fundamentally unmanly distortion of heterosexuality are connected. And there is another aspect in which this sentence could be provocative. The "professed to be revolted" formula throws doubt on the honesty of revulsion. Orwell's descriptions of strong and healthy men with fine physiques are in sharp contrast with his description of fat men. Having "much nicer bodies" than white men, hairless with "firm-knit silken skin," "beautiful bones," and "perfect teeth," he found Burmese boys superior in physique to Europeans. The bodies of miners strengthened by hard work were especially appealing for him:

> It is only when you see miners down the mine and naked that you realise what splendid men they are. Most of them are small (big men are at a disadvantage in that job) but nearly all of them have the most noble bodies; wide shoulders tapering to slender supple waists, and small pronounced buttocks and sinewy thighs, with not an ounce of waste flesh anywhere. In the hotter mines they wear only a pair of thin drawers, clogs and knee-pads. You can hardly tell by the look of them whether they are young or old. […] You can never forget that spectacle once you have seen it – the line of bowed, kneeling figures, sooty black all over, driving their huge shovels under the coal with stupendous force and speed. (*CW*5, 20)

In 'The English People' he lamented the change in men's physiques over the preceding century: "Where are they gone, the hulking draymen and low-browed prize-fighters, the brawny sailors with their buttocks bursting out of their white trousers, and the great overblown beauties with their swelling bosoms, like the figure-heads of Nelson's ships?" (*CW*16, 203) Without the implication that homosexuality ever was an integral part of his life these passages do imply latent homosexuality. This is, however, nothing unique if one considers that the cult of virility often leads to the exclusion of women

from men's circles and establishes men's house institutions with repressed homosexuality.[21]

There have been some attempts to throw doubt on Orwell's heterosexuality. Christopher Hitchens suggests, for example, that his unrestrained homophobia might arouse suspicion: "More suggestive in the pop-psychology sense is the very evident fact that Orwell seemed unable to stay off the subject. He went well out of his way to take a stick to 'nancy-boys', 'pansies' and 'sodomy' and this, as we have come to know, can be a bad sign." (*Why Orwell Matters*, 146) In an interview given to Gordon Bowker in 2000, Michael Sayers hinted at an intriguing aspect of his relationship with Orwell when they shared a flat in 1935. According to Sayers' recollections, he and Orwell developed a close, homoerotic relationship. One morning, Sayers recalls, when Orwell brought him his usual cup of tea, he said: "Spite and malice, Michael. Spite and malice! Don't let me write today!" Orwell's exclamation betraying a guilt-ridden conscience made Sayers suspect that there was "something inside himself that was repellent and dangerous to him." (Bowker, 175) Sayers memories correspond to or perhaps echo Mabel Fierz's opinion on Orwell's bafflingly violent altercation with flatmate Heppenstall. According to Fierz, with whom Orwell also had a fling, Orwell's behaviour was due to "disappointed homosexuality." (Bowker, 177) In spite of the consonance between Fierz's comment and Sayers' memories, one is left in doubt about their truthfulness, particularly due to the vacuum into which Sayers' delicate story is dropped to reveal something new and undoubtedly scandalous about Orwell in 2000. In the light of Sayers' story Fierz's casual remark gains undue importance and one wonders whether Sayers did not make the most of a perhaps careless thought by reassessing it. Sayers' reminiscence evokes reservations about how one should accept friends' recollections.[22] All the more so, since Orwell had had some unwelcome words

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[21] See Millet's depiction of repressed homosexuality in the Nazi regime: "The virility cult of Nazi male culture, its emphasis upon 'leaders' and male community, lent the entire Nazi era a curious tone of repressed homosexuality, neurotically anti-social and sadistic in character. The men's house culture of the Nazi Männerbünde constituted something very like an instance of state-instituted deviance." (167)

[22] In the case of friends' published memories, as distinct from the literary criticism of impartial critics – impartial in the sense that they did not know the object of their criticism personally – personal vanity is a strong if not acknowledged factor. A substantial part of Fyvel's *Memoir* deals, for example, with Orwell's anti-semitism, probably in response to Orwell's comment about Fyvel to Julian Symons in a letter of 1948, published in *CEJL* in 1968. (Fyvel's book appeared in 1982.) Dwelling on the need to draw a distinction between anti-semitic remarks uttered before 1934 and those after 1934, Orwell acquits Eliot of anti-semitism and goes on to say that "[s]ome people go round smelling after anti-semitism all the

about Michael Sayers. In a letter of 1949 he wrote about the surprising change in Sayers' character:

> About 1938 he suddenly disappeared to America, and in 1945 was over here again, talent-scouting for some periodical or publishing house. He wanted me to write something, although well aware of my views. In ten years he had changed in the most astonishing way, turning into a fat prosperous business-man, completely Americanised and somewhat ashamed of having once tried to be a poet, and did not even get his Irish accent back until softened by drink. He was very pro-USSR, but in what struck me as a curious way, i.e. from the angle of a business-man who saw Russia as a powerful and potentially rich country with which America could do a profitable deal. One could not possibly have credited him with any proletarian sympathies. (*CW*20, 94)

The letter having been included in *CEJL*, Sayers would have needed to have the skin of an elephant to let such harsh words roll off his back. Apropos of the shooting stick incident Crick also raises the question of whether personal vanity did not play a part in friends' evaluations of Orwell. Commenting on Heppenstall's perception of a "curious blend of fear and sadistic exaltation" in Orwell's facial expression at the crucial moment, Crick claims that "'[s]adistic exaltation' is, of course, meant to demolish more of Orwell's achievements than his lack of *Adelphi* Quaker-Marxist virtues in dealing with a difficult friend." (*A Life*, 178) Heppenstall was not alone in pointing to this dark side of Orwell's character, even if he may have exaggerated it. The account written some twenty years later raises the same kind of problems as Orwell's own autobiographical writings. "It is more reasonable to infer from it that when Heppenstall wrote this account, he had come to think that Orwell's writings were grossly overestimated or that he intended his account to be a symbolic criticism of Orwell's character, rather than to believe that he saw the incident in just such terms at the time." (Crick, *A Life*, 178)

Whatever the truthfulness of the accounts about Orwell's homoeroticism in private life, it was at most latent – in a similar way in his writings nice male bodies are the object of adoration but active homosexuality would be an open assault on true masculinity. Given his troubled sense of himself, the ethos demanded at school (and put

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time. I have no doubt Fyvel thinks I am anti-Semitic." (*CW*19, 461) Interestingly, Fyvel in his book passes off the charge to Muggeridge, who indeed once said that Orwell was inclined to be anti-semitic, and claims that he, i.e. Fyvel, would never put it so boldly and a considerable part of the book is aimed at clearing himself of his late friend's charge and mitigating it to an ambivalent attitude towards the Jewish issue.

forward by a highly controversial female teacher) and the general atmosphere of the period, in which women did not count for much, it is no wonder that he put his masculine attitude so emphatically in the foreground while 'female' and 'feminine' together with 'homosexual' most often had a pejorative connotation in his vocabulary. The snivelling boy who suffered so much from not having guts, and lacking charm and character, and who felt himself punished for these deficiencies, came to adopt in adulthood a masculine view and way of life which ensured him the opportunity to hand down the abuses he had received as a child. He rebuked his fellow-intellectuals for their unmanly unwillingness to get into the action, to accept and adjust to the imperative that "life has got to be lived largely in terms of effort". (*CW*5, 183-84) That was the underlying reason for his indignant criticism of Auden's 'Spain' as well; how dare a poet who is not willing to sacrifice the convenience of his security speak so lightly about "the conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder". (*CW*12, 103) What Orwell was unaware of was that playing the macho game was also a kind of refuge, a kind of security that ensured not his physical but his psychic well-being. Being fully aware of the hardships to which he voluntarily subjected himself, each of which was a step in fortifying his sense of himself, he felt relief in taking his revenge and rebuking others on the same grounds he was denounced as a child.

In his reflections on "essentialist feminism" Frank Lentricchia points out that social engenderment, the imposition of certain cultural and social standards on the biological sexes, has consequences not only for women, as feminists like to emphasise. Patriarchal oppression involves imposing standards of masculinity on men. That is to say oppressors become victims of their oppression. In 'Shooting an Elephant' Orwell depicted how tyrants lose their freedom in an imperial context, how their actions are dictated by social pressure. Though he displayed ample signs of anxiety about manhood, he failed to grasp that social constructs of masculinity might impose severe restrictions and demands on men's behaviour, just as an imperial context imposes expectations both on rulers and ruled. "… if you are male," writes Lentricchia, "you must police yourself for traces of femininity. If you are male it means, among other things, that the great dread is not so much that another man might call you feminine or womanly (in our culture, a pretty dreadful prospect) but that you might have to call yourself feminine or womanly." (137) However much Orwell saw, and impelled us to

perceive, the effects of school as crippling, its ideals, especially that of masculinity, with which he admits to have been unable to comply, became the most important guiding principles in his later life and he engaged in much "moral sermonising, shamings and beatings" against those he saw as not having internalised these principles.

Women in life

> This woman business! What a bore it is! What a pity we can't cut it right out, or at least be like the animals – minutes of ferocious lust and months if icy chastity. Take a cock pheasant, for example. He jumps on the hens' backs without so much as a with your leave of by your leave. And no sooner is it over than the whole subject is out of his mind. He hardly even notices his hens any longer; he ignores them, or simply pecks them if they come near his food. (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying)*

As his thoughts on women, femininity and feminism imply Orwell's relationships with and attitude towards women were not without contradictions in life either. Though he gave evidence of, in his own words, "hideous prejudices" against women, according to Bernard Crick, his first biographer, it was to them that he was most prone to open his reticent personality. His relation with Eileen O'Shaughnessy, a witty, intelligent and independent wife, and his desperate efforts to find a companion after her death suggest that he needed women beyond the physical drive, which – as his latest biographers emphasise – so often lead him astray. An assessment of the numerous ambiguities of Orwell's relation with women is not facilitated by biographers who sometimes wish to add support to their evaluation of this aspect of Orwell's life with a selective reading of his fiction. Given the fact that critics have so often asserted the autobiographical nature and source of Orwell's oeuvre, a projection of his fiction onto his life is an alluring undertaking; however, the covering up of blank spots of biography with such doubtful sources is not without its drawbacks.

Jeffrey Meyers, one of Orwell's rather recent biographers, who was proud to write the first biography of Orwell based on the twenty volumes of Peter Davison's *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, but not yet having access to the complementary twenty-first volume, *The Lost Orwell*, handles a striking passage in Orwell's 'Last Literary Notebook', written towards the end of his life, as straightforward autobiography. In the passage the narrator criticises women for their incorrigible untidiness and devouring sexuality and makes the claim that female sexuality is a means to exert power over men:

> There were two great facts about women which it seemed to him that you culd [sic] only learn by getting married, & which flatly contradicted the picture of themselves that women had managed to impose upon the world. One was their incorrigible dirtiness & untidiness. The other was their terrible, devouring sexuality. This was disguised by the fact that women usually remained chaste till

> marriage, & were more or less monogamous by instinct. But within any marriage or regular love affair, he suspected that it was always the woman who was the sexually insistent partner. In his experience women were quite insatiable, & never seemed to be fatigued by no matter how much love-making. In the long run even the motive behind their sexuality became uncertain. Perhaps it was sheer sensuality, but perhaps again they simply felt that sexual intercourse was a way of keeping the man under control. At any rate, in any marriage of more than a year or two's standing, intercourse was thought of as a duty, a service owed by the man to the woman. And he suspected that in evy [sic] marriage the struggle was always the same—the man trying to escape from sexual intercourse, to do it only when he felt like it (or with other women), the woman demanding it more & more, & more & more consciously despising her husband for his lack of virility. (Diferent [sic] in the working class?) (*CW*20, 204-205)

Though Meyers finds it strange that the man who was not repelled by the dirtiness and disorderliness of his surroundings charges women with shabbiness and that the importunate philanderer who implored several women to make love to him charges women with insatiable sexuality, he nevertheless claims that the passage makes it clear that Eileen, Orwell's wife, had a greater need for sex than Orwell himself, who, weakened by deteriorating health could not satisfy her sexually. (Meyers, 158) Meyer's assumption of Orwell's passage as straightforward autobiography disregards autobiographical facts, especially the nature and time of the couple's illnesses. When Orwell's health began to deteriorate severely and fatally, Eileen had been dead for years. She had been suffering from the symptoms of her illness and ultimately had died long before Orwell fell seriously ill with his lungs, who was sexually quite active even during his bouts of illness, see his affair with Lydia Jackson during and after his stay at Preston Hall Sanatorium. In quoting the passage Meyers leaves out the question in parenthesis at the end. By omitting the question which implies an assumption that the problem has a more general class aspect, the issue might be more successfully made to seem to pertain to the author's individual life.

Daphne Patai avoids the blunders of biographers when trying to solve the discrepancy between Orwell's life and the passage, as she does not fall into the trap of reading it as straightforward autobiography. Taking it to be a possible sketch for future fiction, she compares the passage to the view of sexuality Orwell attributes to Ma Hla May, Flory's mistress in *Burmese Days*. (Patai, *Mystique*, 40) "She believed that lechery was a form of witchcraft, giving a woman magical powers over a man, until in the end she could weaken him to a half-idiotic slave. Each successive embrace sapped

Flory's will and made the spell stronger – this was her belief." (*CW*2, 54) The fear of female sexuality, which is believed to be a means to keep men under control, is a sign of regarding love relations as a matter of dominance, which, though the author attributes this to Ma Hla May, on account of the exploitative relation he carries on with the native girl, is rather the outlook of Flory himself.

Those lovely Burmese days

Orwell's sexual life and relation with women has to quite a considerable extent been disclosed. His youth, if one considers his attenuated family background or his schools, was not a good ground for developing a balanced emotional life. The absence of the father, the overwhelmingly feminine milieu, first at home then at the convent, and the controversial matron who coloured those crucial and sensitive years of early adolescence must all have contributed to his ambivalent attitude towards women. From the age of 5 to 8 he attended a school for girls run by nuns, then from the age of 8 to 13 and from 14 to 18 he was a student at the boarding schools of St Cyprian's and Eton respectively, both of them schools exclusively for boys. One could hardly expect that a young person undergoing education in such enclosed schools would not become confused in his emotional life. Like any other school of unmixed adolescent students, Eton was not exempt from frustrated and misdirected sexuality either. That friendship between boys had a strange emotional undercurrent is attested by the extract of a letter from young Blair to schoolmate Connolly, in which he asks for a share in one of the boys of Connolly's election:

> I am afraid I'm gone on Eastwood (naughty Eric). This may surprise you but it is not imagination, I assure you (with no shame and remorse). The point is that I think you are too (to the pure all things are pure), at any rate you were at the end of last half. I am not jealous of you (noble Eric). But you though you aren't jealous are apt to be what I might call "proprietary". In the case of Maud & Caroe you were quite right but what I want you to do is not regard me as another Caroe whatever points of resemblance there may be. Don't suspect me of ill intentions either. If I had not written to you, about 3 weeks into next half you would notice how things stood, your proprietary instincts would have been aroused & having a lot of influence over Eastwood, you would probably have put him against me somehow, perhaps even warned him off me. Please don't do this I implore you. Of course I don't ask you to resign your share in him, only don't say spiteful things. (*CW*10, 80 and Bowker, 65)

Davison's editorial notes on the letter make it clear that the original and complete text of the letter is lost. The extract survives because Connolly quoted part of Orwell's letter when writing to Terence Beddard in 1921, who was a King's Scholar in the election before Orwell's and was no longer at Eton when Connolly wrote to him. The extract exists in two versions. Connolly copied it for the Orwell Archive in 1967 and another version exists at Tulsa University. The two versions slightly differ, the one at Tulsa is interspersed with Connolly's ironic comments (here in brackets) and the sentence on Maud and Caroe is not included therein. Davison furthermore observes that in the sentence "[i]f I had not written to you…" the manuscript originally had '6' instead of '3' but was crossed out. Davison concludes that "this may indicate fidelity to Orwell's original, but because there are a considerable number of differences between the version Connolly gave the Orwell Archive and that at Tulsa […], it is impossible to be sure how reliable Connolly's text is." (*CW*10, 80) Connolly printed the letter to Beddard in *Enemies of Promise* but did not include Orwell's extract. He made Orwell feel uneasy by informing him in 1938 that he had not included "an old letter of yours" in his book. "What you say about finding old letters of mine makes me apprehensive," was the cautious inquiry on Orwell's part but the issue was not taken up ever again between them, at least in surviving documents. (*CW*11, 175) Shelden concludes that it would be unwise to assume that Orwell's "adolescent affections for other boys ever reached an advanced stage of sexual contact. He may well have been as chaste in his relationships with boys as he was in his relationship with Jacintha. As his letter to Connolly reveals, he was awkward in romantic matters and was slow to assert himself." (76)

His first love, which developed from a childhood friendship of many years' standing, was abruptly ended when he left for Burma. Jacintha Buddicom was more than the object of his love, she was an intellectual companion to whom he showed some of his early poems and stories and who shared his love of nature and books. She inspired many of his early poems, however, she did not reciprocate his love. The young Eric complained in verse:

> Friendship and love are closely intertwined,
> My heart belongs to your befriending mind:
> But chilling sunlit fields, cloud-shadows fall –
> My love can't reach your heedless heart at all. (*CW*10, 82)

In 1922, preparing for Burma, the nineteen-year-old Blair proposed to her, but she refused. Shortly before his death, when he renewed correspondence with many of his one-time lovers, he still upbraided her for abandoning him "with all hope denied." (*CW*20, 44) The let-down he felt at Jacintha's silence from home after the exchange of a couple of letters might have to some extent contributed to his looking for pampering by Burmese lovers and prostitutes, though disappointment in love was not necessarily a decisive factor in white men's sexual behaviour in the dominions.

Ronald Hyam in *Sexuality and Empire* argues that sexuality was a significant factor in maintaining and running the British Empire. "The expansion of Europe was not only a matter of 'Christianity and commerce,' it was also a matter of copulation and concubinage. Sexual opportunities were often seized with imperious confidence." (2) Focusing on the period from the 1860s to the Great War, Hyam examines how sexuality and official policy on sex, such as the purity campaign from the 1880s on, the aim of which was to reform, i.e. to reduce, sexuality, influenced race relations. The purity campaign reinforced the policy of social distance that was widely adhered to after the Indian Rebellion of 1857. The changing attitude towards sexuality fitted the general pattern of imposing a sound, paternalistic and condescending administration. Relaxed sexual relations (by which Hyam most likely means white men's unrestricted access to native concubines and prostitutes) everywhere promoted relaxed race relations, while the purity campaign combined with the appearance of the memsahibs in the dominions significantly contributed to tension between rulers and ruled. If, says Hyam, until the mid-1800s the sexual scene for British officials in the dominions was characterised by overt sexual intimacy, by the 20th century the atmosphere changed to aloofness and a tightening up of moral standards, accompanied by suppressed eroticism. (120) At all times, however, whatever the official standpoint on sexuality was, running the Victorian empire meant for the officials at the outposts exposure to an unusually hot climate dominated by incessant rain, lack of amusement and intellectual challenges, and above all loneliness and boredom, including sexual deprivation. The 'misery' of the empire called for the solution of concubinage and prostitution. (One wonders whether the hot climate was a reason or an excuse: how would imperial men have behaved, had they been posted in the North in an especially cold climate.) Lord Crewe's Circular in 1909 condemned concubinage as "gravely improper conduct" which had been the source of

serious trouble among native populations and which diminished white men's authority and impaired his capacity for useful work in the Service. (Hyam, 157)[23] However, as with some other dominions, Burma escaped the repressive sexual code till even into the 20th century. Burma, according to Hyam, had the reputation for being a marvellous place for "rest and recreation", where girls were cheap and sensuous. (10) Even into the 20th century ninety percent of British officials took mistresses in Burma and a special school was founded in Rangoon to educate the children of European fathers. Christopher Hitchens notes that exploitation in its social aspects depended on a double indecency; "[e]ven the most educated Burmese or Indian man would and could be refused entry to the English Club. But even the least educated Burmese girl could be admitted to the white man's bungalow – for cash and via the back door." (*Why Orwell Matters*, 144)

Far from the role of a socially sensitive writer but rather more in line with the role of a pukka sahib, Orwell had no scruples about buying love from the undereducated but beautiful native girls of the Far East. "[…] For twenty silver pieces,/Maiden, sleep with me" says the persona to the Burmese girl in his ironic poem about prostitution. (*CW*10, 90) Not having to perform the delicacies of courtship gave him a sense of relief, as several of his homeland women friends later on complained about his poultry

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[23] Though there is strong reason to argue for the hypocrisy of the sexual directive, Hyam's sneer at it is characteristic of his whole approach to the subject. Contrasting the circular with the practice of French empire-builders, he claims that concubinage was supported by the French as being desirable for the "health and hygiene, discipline and prestige of the French official." He laments the prudish British standpoint with a "How striking is the contrast!" sigh. He deplores the "neurotic puritanism" of the British elsewhere, too, and overtly mourns the decay of concubinage and prostitution. In his viewpoint the 20th-century international effort to control prostitution and trafficking in human beings was essentially inspired by British prudery: it was "a transmutation on to the world stage of the country's *parochial* attitudes." (149, emphasis added) He complains that "Many people's essentially harmless pleasures are now penalised, prostitution is widely frowned upon […]" (152) On the ground that feminism is more interested in gender than sex (and the subject of Hyam's book is sex, not gender), he rejects the relevance of feminist criticism to his theme. Had he contemplated the gender implications of sexual relations between rulers and ruled, his book would surely have had a wider appeal. Rejecting the "suspect feminist argument" that sex is domination within a power relationship, his analysis remains only a disclosure of habits without the explanation of ideology behind it. In consequence, it is not exempt from contradictions. "Is it exploitation," he asks, "if he (the white man) negotiates with the father or headman, presents the expected gift and pays the requisite bridewealth for a temporary wife?" (207) How can one reconcile the implied negation of the preceding question with the viewpoint that "the very essence of adult sexual behaviour" is that "we combine with, but also grant autonomy to, the beloved partner." (17) How should one match the purchase of a human being for sexual use with autonomy? Not being able to see how "feminist hysterics" can contribute to our understanding of society and past, he remains an almost wholehearted supporter of the British empire, glamorises it and rejects the sordid aspects of the exploitative trait of British sexual behaviour.

technique of pouncing abruptly on his partners. Over twenty years later, he confessed to Harold Acton, an old Etonian, the delight he had in Burma. "His sad earnest eyes lit up with pleasure when he spoke of the sweetness of Burmese women. […] But for his nagging social conscience I suspected he might have found happiness there." (Bowker, 82) To another Etonian he admitted that he frequently visited brothels in Rangoon. Hitchens suggests that his relation with native women was an implicit element causing him to resign from the police and return home, but there is no evidence in either Orwell's work or his biography for this insinuation and Hitchens' phrase "I am morally certain" in this cause and effect relation implies conjecture: he is projecting his own morals upon Orwell. Neither at the time nor later when he advanced to be the guardian of the underdog, the oppressed and the victims of injustice did he display any recognition of the link between masculine domination and imperialism. According to John Newsinger, while he became highly critical of imperialism and of any dominion of man over man, the idea of the existence of the more delicate and indirect oppression of women evaded him. His "radicalisation did not extend to gender relations […]," says Newsinger, "he never developed an understanding of the relation between Empire and sexuality." (6) Patai throws light on how gender polarisation and racial domination were intertwined in Orwell's mind. In the confessional part of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, relating his awakening to an immense sense of guilt at having served an evil system, he compares the status of Burmese servants to that of women.

> But one did not feel towards the 'natives' as one felt towards the 'lower classes' at home. The essential point was that the 'natives', at any rate the Burmese, were not felt to be physically repulsive. One looked down on them as 'natives', but one was quite ready to be physically intimate with them; and this, I noticed, was the case even with white men who had the most vicious colour prejudice. When you have a lot of servants you soon get into lazy habits, and I habitually allowed myself, for instance, to be dressed and undressed by my Burmese boy. This was because he was a Burman and undisgusting; I could not have endured to let an English manservant handle me in that intimate manner. I felt towards a Burman almost as I felt towards a woman. (*CW*5, 132)

This transformation of Burmese males into social females, according to Patai, is indicative of the paternalistic nature of the imperialist enterprise, in which the British were associated with manliness and adulthood and the Indians with childishness and

femininity. British males extended their ideas about masculinity and domination to a different object, a new kind of woman. (Patai, *Mystique*, 24-25)

In a letter of 1934, written to Myfawny Westrope, wife of the owner of Booklovers' Corner, Orwell's aunt Nellie suggested that he might be able to write on the position of Burmese women in society. Introducing Orwell to her girlfriend, aunt Nellie finished her letter by informing Mrs Westrope that she was on the point of writing a letter to the editor of *Le Temps* and offering an article by Blair for its "Women in the Modern World" series. "I think they might like one on the Burmese women who really have a unique position among the Eastern women, being the equals of men. If they would like the article, then Eric could do it very efficiently with his experience out there." (*CW*10, 354-55) Aunt Nellie's assumptions about the nature of her nephew's "experience out there" must have been far from reality and considering Orwell's failure to recognise the relevance of gender relations in terms of imperialism, it is not surprising that the article was never written, regardless of whether Orwell ultimately learnt about the possibility or not.

Eleanor Jaques and Brenda Salkeld

Having returned home in 1927 after five years of service, he got himself on the troublesome and rambling ways of apprenticeship: he went down and out in London and Paris, tried hop-picking in Kent, taught at The Hawthorns and Frays College, getting back to his family home at Southwold from time to time and trying to get his first articles and books (*Down and Out in Paris and London, Burmese Days*) published in the meantime. At Southwold he fell under the spell of Eleanor Jaques and Brenda Salkeld more or less simultaneously. His letters to Brenda, a clergyman's daughter, who was a gym mistress at St Felix in Southwold, date from 1931.[24] Problems arose almost at the beginning of their relationship. In July 1931 he already felt the need to defend himself and explain his behaviour.

> Please don't think I am merely heartless. You know I am fond of you, at any rate as I understand fondness, & your friendship means a great deal to me. I am

[24] Not all the letters from Orwell to Brenda have been released. Davison compiled the unreleased ones from Bowker's biography and under the title 'Summaries of letters from Orwell to Brenda Salkeld' arranged them in chronological order in *The Lost Orwell* (92-98).

> sometimes lonelier than you guess, & it has made a great difference to me to have someone who took an interest in me. [He had only said what he said] because it hurt me to be played with – I did not mean that I merely wanted to discard you because someone else would do as well & would be less trouble. But perhaps I conveyed that impression. Don't think that I was merely callous & selfish. It is only that I am fond of you & it hurts me not to have you altogether. (*LO*, 93)

The trouble of not having her altogether remained a never-to-be solved problem in the course of their relationship. The pleasure he was to find in Eleanor's arms a year later he never received from Brenda. Her stubborn refusal did not discourage him, indeed, it rather fuelled his pursuit for many years – causing some stir years later even in his married life. His periodically intensifying besieges may have prompted biographers to regard Brenda as the great and unfulfilled love of his, yet his letters speak of a much more mundane and ambivalent relationship. Apart from the salutations and farewells ("Dearest Brenda" and "With much love" as a rule) his letters to her lack intimacy and warmth. As Crick observed, the endearments of salutation have no relation with the content of the letters and seem almost mocking in tone. (*A Life*, 151) The two dominant elements of these letters are his lectures to her on what to read and the apparent pleasure he found in annoying her. He half-heartedly invited her to join him hop-picking: "What fun if we could both go hopping together. But I suppose your exaggerated fear of dirt would deter you. It is a great mistake to be too afraid of dirt." (*CW*10, 206) In another letter he teased her indirectly, about her friends and probably through her literary taste:

> Have you seen any more of your friends who worship Bernard Shaw? Tell them that Shaw is Carlyle & water, that he ought to have been a Quaker (cocoa and commercial dishonesty), that he has squandered what talents he may have had back in the '80's in inventing metaphysical reasons for behaving like a scoundrel, that he suffers from an inferiority complex towards Shakespeare, & that he is the critic, cultured critic (not very cultured but it is what B meant) that Samuel Butler prayed to be delivered from. Say that Shaw's best work was one or two early novels & one or two criticisms he wrote for the Saturday Review when Harris was editor, & that since then it has got steadily worse until its only function is to console fat women who yearn to be highbrows. Say also that he has slandered Ibsen in a way that must make poor old I turn in his grave. Also that Shaw cribbed the plot of "Pygmalion" from Smollett & afterwards wrote somewhere or other that Smollett is unreadable. By the way I hope you are fasting hard, as this is Lent? I have so few excesses of any kind that I have really nothing to give up. (*CW*10, 307)

Compared to this passage, the way he asks her to pray in anticipation of the American publication of *Burmese Days* is mild: "Please pray for its success, by which I mean not less than 4000 copies. I understand that the prayers of clergyman's daughters get special attention in Heaven, at any rate in the Protestant quarter." (*CW*10, 350) Crick appears to suggest that Orwell's loneliness and frustration justified his rudeness to her. "Possibly he was a little importunate with her, but she would have nothing of him but friendship, so that he, occasionally, like many a lonely and sexually underemployed young men, tried to make her feel guilty and then rudely mocked her." (*A Life*, 151) Juxtaposing his letters to her with those to Eleanor Jaques, however, reveals that he was pretentious towards Brenda even when he was having a (fulfilled) love affair with Eleanor.

Dennis Collings, Orwell's best male friend in those days in Southwold, had been courting Eleanor when in the summer of 1932 she and Orwell grew closer. The two men spent only intervals of the year at home, as Collings worked in Cambridge, Orwell in Hayes near London teaching at The Hawthorns. In June 1932 in a letter to Eleanor Orwell was contemplating the possibility of not coming to Southwold for the summer holiday but instead going to some quiet place to France where he could concentrate more on his work and would have "less temptation from the World, the Flesh and the Devil", leaving it to Eleanor to decide to which of these categories she belonged. His resolution, however, was not firm enough as in another letter to her in August he was enthusiastically convincing and reminding Eleanor of their appointment. "Dearest Eleanor, Do not forget *Tuesday*, 2.15 pm by Smith's bookshop. And, as you love me, do not *change your mind* before then. If you are at church on Sunday, pray for good weather on Tuesday. […] P.S. Please send me a line to reassure me that you have not changed your mind." (*CW*10, 262) Brenda must have learnt about the Eleanor-affair, as, according to Bowker, she told Orwell that she would not take him seriously when "he was dallying elsewhere." In August Orwell responded to her with a letter full of contradictions:

> I am sorry I worried you the other night. It is necessary that we should come to an understanding sooner or later, but there is no particular hurry. If your answer must finally be no, I don't see why even then we should part, unless a sort of undefined relationship such as we have worries you. I would infinitely rather have you as a friend only than not at all, and I would even, on those terms, undertake to stop pursuing other women if you really wanted me not to. I don't know if you ever quite realised how much you mean to me. Besides, you said that you thought you

> would finally take a lover, and if so I don't see why it shouldn't be me, unless you have some reason for drawing back from me personally. I don't particularly mind waiting; I should have to wait in any case, as I am not in a position to marry and shan't be for several years probably. So let us continue as we are, unless you have really some reason for wanting to get rid of me. I recognise that there is something in your life which you don't want to sacrifice by tying yourself irrevocably to another person, but surely such a relationship as we have doesn't interfere with that? Only, even if we are only friends, you mustn't mind my making love to you in a small way and occasionally asking you to go further, because it is my nature to do that. (*LO*, 94)

In a letter to Eleanor written in September Orwell recalled their summer adventure with fondness ("I cannot remember when I have ever enjoyed any expeditions so much as I did those with you. Especially that day in the wood along past Blythburgh Lodge – you remember, where the deep beds of moss were. I shall always remember that, & your nice white body in the dark green moss." (*CW*10, 269)); and in an ensuing letter he asked for permission to continue their fling. "It was so nice of you to say that you looked back to your days with me with pleasure. I hope you will let me make love to you again sometime, but if you don't it doesn't matter, I shall always be grateful to you for your kindness to me." (*CW*10, 271) The passage, especially the "doesn't matter" and "I shall always be grateful" can be read in two ways: according to Crick, under the surface of a kindly and decent fairness, there is an underlying self-pity, "perhaps even veiled reproach – as if to suggest that she thought he was not good enough for her and was only doing it out of kindness." (*A Life*, 145) Furthermore, still more than self-pity the sentences, especially the act of asking for permission, imply an assumption of domination and power instead of reciprocity and trust. The tone of the letter is reminiscent of the dubious chivalry of courtly love. Playing the role of a subordinate lover, he begs for a 'yes' from his lady, thereby granting a temporary shift in hierarchical positions. Based on the observations of Hugo Beigel, Kate Millet points out that in elevating the woman upon a pedestal, chivalry functions to palliate and disguise the injustice of the woman's inferior position. Through chivalrous behaviour the master group "allows the subordinate female certain means of keeping a face."

> Both the courtly and romantic versions of love are "grants" which the male concedes out of his total powers. Both have had the effect of obscuring the patriarchal character of Western culture and in their general tendency to attribute impossible virtues to women, have ended by confining them in a narrow and often remarkably conscribing sphere of behaviour. (37)

Instead of free and mutual love Orwell's phrases imply a hierarchical relationship that is further complicated by the conscious deceit of his friend: "When we were together you didn't say whether you were going to let me be your lover again. Of course you can't if Dennis is in Southwold, but otherwise? You mustn't if you don't want to, but I hope you will. Write soon." (Crick, *A Life*, 145)

It became his habit to invite his girlfriends for walks in the countryside and seduce them there – pastoral seduction found its way into his fiction as well. Delighted by Mabel Fierz's successful contribution in getting Leonard Moore to find a publisher for *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Orwell reciprocated her mediation with an invitation to the country.[25] Mabel was not shy to refuse such an occasion:

> Darling, how splendid! 2.30 then at Hayes Station on Monday. Take me then by the quickest route to a punt on the river. I adore a warm sunny day in a punt. I will punt you carefully along the prettiest ways and not upset your male dignity into the Thames! Take your costume in case we find a suitable place. I hate the usual swimming bath. It will be nice. Not as you say a decent walk. I prefer the opposite! If it rains. Well, we will visit the Pubs in turn. The great thing is to walk as little as possible, so try and find out the route … (Bowker, 138)

When moving to the capital in 1934 – still under the protective wing of Mabel Fierz – to work as a bookshop assistant in Booklovers' Corner, he found other young women to court. Eleanor by this time had got married to Dennis, Brenda – it must have become clear to him by this time – would never give in to him. In November 1934 he continued to urge her to come to stay with him because Mrs Westrope, his landlady, would not object to his having women up in the flat, as he later explained to her, she was the "non-interfering sort", so rare among London landladies. According to Bowker, Orwell's letter of invitation is laced with smutty jokes. Brenda refused the offer again. In London Sally Jerome broke up with him when she found out about his other girlfriends. With Kay Welton it was different. "There was never any thought of marriage on either side," says Bowker, "and they agreed to part if someone else came along; nevertheless they

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[25] Mabel Fierz was a friend of the Blair family and an important source of encouragement at the troublesome and slow beginning of Orwell's career. Bowker describes her as a "vivacious, opinionated woman who enjoyed the company of young artistic people, believed that she had an eye for talent and the drive to bring it on." (118) It was Mabel Fierz, through whom Orwell got into contact with Leonard Moore and it was owing to her personal intervention and pressure on Moore that he took the effort to find a publisher (Gollancz) for *Down and Out in Paris and London*, which had been refused by both Faber & Faber and Cape.

became lovers and Kay grew quite fond of him." (163) That somebody else happened to be Eileen O'Shaughnessy, though Orwell's love for Eileen did not put an immediate end to his relationship with Kay. For some time he kept having Kay to his room at the top of Parliament Hill, while he found time to date Eileen as well. It is from Kay that we know about his suspicion of being sterile and Kay – like Brenda – also referred to his unfavourable view on women. She thought that his "ultra-masculine opinion" made him refuse to go Dutch in restaurants with women and she believed that while he liked women, he did not regard them "as a force in life". (Taylor, *The Life*, 152) With lively insight Kay also alluded to another aspect of his character: his unremitting complaints. She considered his obsession with money a symptom of profound self-pity. He imagined himself "the victim of injustice because he was poor and couldn't afford the things he felt he ought to have and had to struggle for things […]." (Taylor, *The Life*, 153)

Marriage

Davison's publication of the recently revealed letters of Eileen to her friend Norah Myles uncovers the hitherto somewhat enigmatic figure of the wife and, among other things, throws light on Eileen's annoyance at her husband's egotism. Jeffrey Meyers has noted that except for the letters that Orwell wrote during the last months of his life when he faced his disease with "Keatsian courage" his letters are "strangely impersonal, rather pedestrian and unvarying with each correspondent." (*Critical Heritage*, 379) Half of the twenty volumes of *The Complete Works* bear out the truth of this observation. Eileen's vivacious and dynamic letters are a sharp contrast to Orwell's quite monotonous correspondence. Her emotional condition leaves its mark on each of her letters and her sense of wry humour and a readiness to grasp things ironically make her correspondence an exceptionally enjoyable and entertaining reading.

In the spring of 1935 Rosalind Obermeyer, Orwell's landlady, who was studying psychology at University College London, gave a party for some of her fellow students, Eileen O'Shaughnessy and Lydia Jackson among others. Orwell and Richard Rees were also invited. It is said that Orwell immediately fell for Eileen, in spite of her being "[r]ather drunk, behaving my worst, very rowdy." Before Orwell left the party he told

Mrs Obermeyer, "[…] *that* is the kind of girl I would like to marry!" and he insisted on escorting Eileen to the bus stop. (Crick, *A Life*, 172) By this time, if not a well-known, Orwell was a writer at least launched. He had published *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *Burmese Days, A Clergyman's Daughter* was about to appear, he was composing *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and was a regular reviewer for *The Adelphi* and the *New English Weekly*. His modest success in literary life must have been appealing to the young woman oriented towards the world of letters as well.

Eileen was two years younger than Orwell. She was born in South Shields, the daughter of a collector of customs. From Sunderland Church High School for Girls she went to St Hugh's College, Oxford with a scholarship to read English. She graduated in 1927, though she failed to get the First and thereby lost the chance for an academic career. After graduation, among other jobs, she worked as a teacher, ran a secretarial and typing agency, tried free-lance journalism and helped her brother, Laurence, a distinguished surgeon, in editing his work for publication. (*CW*10, 394) When Orwell met her in 1935, she was living with her widowed mother in Greenwich and was reading for a master's degree in psychology at University College London. Lettice Cooper, who worked with Eileen at the Ministry of Food during the war, recalled that she was

> […] of medium height, a little high-shouldered, she was very pretty, and had what George called a cat's face, blue eyes and near black hair. She moved slowly, she always looked as if she was drifting into a room with no particular purpose there. She had small, very shapely hands and feet. I never saw her in a hurry, but her work was always finished up to time … Eileen's mind was a mill that ground all the time slowly but independently. Diffident and unassuming in manner she had a quiet integrity that I never saw shaken. (*CW*10, 394)

Lydia Jackson was witness to Eileen and Orwell's relationship from the beginning. She reported that Eileen in her strange way decided that if she were still unmarried at thirty, she would marry the first man asking her to do so. (Bowker, 168) Her decision chimed with Orwell's intentions. In September 1935 Orwell told Heppenstall that "[s]he is the nicest person I have met for a long time. However, at present, alas! I can't afford a ring, except perhaps a Woolworth's one." (*CW*10, 393) But the proposal must have been made since a few days later he wrote that "Eileen says she won't marry me as yet … as she is not earning any money at present and doesn't want to be a drag on me. However,

that will arrange itself later when she has finished her course at London University." (*CW*10, 399) At the beginning of 1936 Orwell set off to the industrial north for two months to collect material for his next book. He wrote to Cyril Connolly that he left somewhat reluctantly, hating to leave Eileen for any length of time. (Crick, *A Life*, 199) When Eileen finished her course in the summer, they promptly got married and moved into Orwell's cottage in Wallington, which he had rented shortly after his return from the north. The cottage, the village store, was dilapidated enough to attract Orwell. As he told Connolly, it was "quite a nice little cottage but with absolutely no conveniences" and the garden was a "pigsty". (*CW*10, 472) It was a challenge, a manly challenge, to put it in order, in which however he did not succeed completely. Lettice Cooper remembered that

> [n]othing in it worked. The sink would be blocked. The primus stove wouldn't work. The lavatory plug wouldn't pull. The stairs were very dark, because there were never any bulbs in the lights. And they'd put piles of books on the staircase at odd places, so there were lots of traps, and the place was rather dusty. But it was a nice cottage, in a lovely part of the country. (Bowker, 186)

Though Eileen was certainly aware of Orwell's penury, the backward conditions of the beginning of their married life must have been a source of tension. Lacking the recently discovered letters of Eileen, though in a characteristically male-centred way of thinking, assigning intellectual work to the man and the menial chores of existence to the woman, Crick assumes that the only tension between the couple was over Eileen's determination to visit and help her brother from time to time.

> There is no indication of jealousy on George's part, only the *obvious surmise* that her absence affected his progress on *The Road to Wigan Pier* – having to do for himself at their cottage in Wallington, not to mention having to cope with the remorseless knockings on the shop door, asking for pennyworths of sweets and small groceries, while his mind brooded on socialism and Spain. (*A Life*, 203, emphasis added)

Eileen's letters to Norah[26] reveal that care of the man was not as obvious to Eileen as Crick surmises and she resented the way her husband subordinated everything to his Work. Her letters attest that the onset of their marriage was indeed troublesome. "I lost my habit of punctual correspondence during the first few weeks of marriage," writes Eileen to Norah in November 1936, "because we quarrelled so continuously & really bitterly that I thought I'd save time & just write one letter to everyone when the murder or separation had been accomplished." (*LO*, 64) The reasons for her distress were complex: a mother spending the week before the wedding with the couple, a "dreadful aunt" staying for two months with the newlyweds, the Spartan conditions of the cottage in which the kitchen was flooded and food went mouldy on rainy days all contributed. Her work-minded husband did not make things easier for her: "[…] Eric had decided that he mustn't let his work be interrupted & complained bitterly when we'd been married a week that he'd only done two good days' work out of seven." (*LO*, 64)

Lydia Jackson was shocked by Orwell's decision to go to Spain at the end of 1936, which of course involved leaving his new wife in that ramshackle old cottage. He broke the news of his leaving to Eileen's family with the remark that he "[s]han't be kissing [Eileen] under the mistletoe this Christmas." (Bowker, 199) This recollection of Lydia suggests that Eileen might have felt neglected by her husband's intention to leave, yet there is no trace of resentment in her letter to Norah written just before her own leaving for Spain in February 1937. Though she fears she may loathe Barcelona, her letter is permeated with positive expectation. The following passage neatly shows her sense of excitement and her enjoyable prose style.

> I leave in a hurry, not because anything is the matter but because when I said that I was going on the 23rd, which has long been my intention, I suddenly became a kind of secretary perhaps to the I.L.P. in Barcelona. They hardly seem to be amused at all. If Franco had engaged me as a manicurist I would have agreed to that too in exchange for a salvo conducto, so everyone is satisfied. The I.L.P. in

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[26] Norah Myles (1906-1994, née Symes) became a friend of Eileen's when reading English at St Hugh's College, Oxford. She was married to Quartus St Leger Myles in 1933. Norah met Orwell once or twice and she found him "rather intimidating". Shortly before Eileen's fatal operation, when considering the possibility of both of them dying (Orwell was working as a war correspondent in Europe, therefore Eileen preferred to "cover the possibility that you might be killed within the next few days & I might die on the table on Thursday"), she thought that Norah and Quartus would take their adopted son and would bring him up beautifully. Eventually, after Orwell had also died, it was Orwell's sister, Avril, who took care of Richard and in spite of Eileen's poor relation with Avril and her fears of Richard being reared by her, he was very happy with her. See Davison, *The Complete Works,* vol. 17. pp. 108-9. The six letters to Norah were written between 1936, the year of Eileen and Orwell's wedding, and 1941.

> Barcelona consists of one John McNair, who has certainly been kind at long distances but has an unfortunate telephone voice and a quite calamitous prose style in which he writes articles that I perhaps shall type. But theoretically George gets leave at the end of this month and then I shall have a holiday, willy John nilly John. (*LO*, 68)

When she was taken from Barcelona to the front, she was quite thrilled by a brief exchange of fire. Mentioning it to Moore, she professed to having never enjoyed anything more. (Bowker, 211) The danger in which the couple found themselves after the May events must have forged them closer. On New Year's Day 1938 Eileen wrote to Norah from Wallington that the Spanish war "still dominates our life in a most unreasonable manner," though it launched them on diverging paths: Orwell from then on could not stop writing about political terror in one way or the other, while Eileen returned to complete pacifism and joined the Peace Pledge Union. (*LO*, 71)

A corollary of the Spanish war's effect on the Blairs' private life was Eileen's relationship with Orwell's commander, George(s) Kopp. Though the two men's friendship cooled in the 1940s, at the time Orwell held his commander in high esteem.[27]

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[27] It has long been suspected that Kopp was not the man he pretended to be and whom the Orwells thought him to be. The recent findings of the Belgian journalist Bert Govaerts has revealed much about him and has made it clear that in spite of his remarkable courage on the battlefield he was an adventurer who had a tendency to create a myth of his past and offering each time a version of his life that most fitted his interests and the given circumstances. Kopp, concludes Davison, "to put it politely, was in many ways a man of mystery and the full facts of his life are still not fully known." (*LO*, 83) He was Russian by birth but grew up and was educated in Belgium and Switzerland. He studied engineering but did not graduate. He married a Belgian wife in 1925, had five children and divorced in 1935. In Spain he falsely claimed to be a reserve officer in the Belgian army though he lacked even basic military training. He quickly became a captain in the republican army. He said he was Belgian-born, was a widower and had to flee Belgium after being discovered smuggling arms to the Republic. He was "a ladies' man," adds Bowker, "with his own seductive charm, in which his penchant for exaggeration obviously played its part." (206) Having fallen a victim to the Stalinist purges in Spain, he spent some eighteen months in the most horrible conditions in prison. When he was finally released, he got himself to England and spent some months with Eileen's family at Greenwich. At the time Orwell was completely taken in by Kopp. In *Homage to Catalonia* he writes: "He was my personal friend, I had served under him for months, I had been under fire with him, and I knew his history. He was a man who sacrificed everything – family, nationality, livelihood – simply to come to Spain and fight against Fascism. By leaving Belgium without permission and joining a foreign army while he was on the Belgian Army reserve, and, earlier, by helping to manufacture munitions illegally for the Spanish Government, he had piled up years of imprisonment for himself if he should ever return to his own country. He had been in the line since October 1936, he had worked his way up from militiaman to major, had been in action in I do not know how many times, and had been wounded once. During the May trouble, as I had seen for myself, he had prevented fighting locally and probably saved ten or twenty lives. And all they could do in return was to fling him into jail." (*CLNF*, 451) However, later on Orwell discovered the adventurer aspect of his character. The records of an interview for MI5 in 1943 states that according to Blair "He was physically courageous and resolute and, generally speaking, an adventurer. He had a tendency, however, to embellish things, and although deserving of confidence in his personal conduct, one hesitated to accept anything he said without additional corroboration." (*LO*, 87) At the beginning of the Second World War Kopp returned to France

It was Kopp who did much to care for Orwell when he was shot in the throat and Orwell risked his own life when making efforts to get his friend and commander released from jail. Eileen's summation of the "Georges Kopp situation" to Norah reveals something of the true nature of their relationship, which according to D.J. Taylor has been "one of the enigmas of the Orwells' Spanish trip." (*LO*, 83)

> The Georges Kopp situation is now more Dellian than ever. He is still in jail but has somehow managed to get several letters out to me, one of which George opened and read because I was away. He is very fond of Georges, who indeed cherished him with real tenderness in Spain and anyway is admirable as a soldier because of his quite remarkable courage, and he is extraordinarily magnanimous about the whole business – just as Georges was extraordinarily magnanimous. Indeed they went about saving each other's lives or trying to in a way that was almost horrible to me, though George had not then noticed that Georges was more than "a bit gone on" me. I sometimes think no one ever had such a sense of guilt before. It was always understood that I wasn't what they call in love with Georges – our association progressed in little leaps, each leap immediately preceding some attack or operation in which he would almost inevitably be killed, but the last time I saw him he was in jail waiting, as we were both confident, to be shot, and I simply couldn't explain to him again as a kind of farewell that he could never be a rival to George. So he has rotted in a filthy prison for more than six months with nothing to do but remember me in my most pliant moments. If he never gets out, which is indeed most probable, it's good that he has managed to have some thoughts in a way pleasant, but if he does get out I don't know how one reminds a man immediately he is a free man again that one has only once missed the cue for saying that nothing on earth would induce one to marry him. (*LO*, 71)

In her New Year's Day letter to Norah Eileen also mentions her longing for a son. Writing about the family matters of a common acquaintance of theirs, Mary Wardell, a fellow-student at St Hugh's, Eileen confesses the feelings aroused by Mary's son:

> David is very intelligent and makes me slightly jealous because I should like a son and we don't have one. Mary and I summed up human history in a dreadful way when I was there – I was in the throes of pre-plague pains, which happened so late that I was wondering whether I could persuade myself that I felt as though I were not going to have them, and Mary wasn't having any pre-plague pains at all and was in fever and going to the chemist to try to buy some ergot or other corrective. (*LO*, 73)

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and joined the French Foreign Legion. From 1942 he sought contact with MI5, probably with the aim of finding financial support for his doubtful experimental work and inventions. For some time he was also employed by SOE, but he had to flee France when a member of his group was collared. After the war he began a new life in England, married Doreen Hunton, half-sister of Eileen's sister-in-law, got to farming but still kept on trying to sell his inventions. He sold a wrecked truck to Orwell, which put an end to their friendship. He became a Roman Catholic and fierce anti-communist and died in 1951.

Orwell shared her longing for a child and this lead to their adoption of Richard in 1944. It is not known why they could not have a child: Orwell thought himself to be sterile but Eileen's subsequent disease might also throw doubt on her ability to bear a child.

Having completed her course work in June 1936 and having got married the same month, Eileen never finished her thesis necessary for the award of a master's degree. She was supposed to write on the use of imagination in school essays in consultation with Prof. Cyril Burnt but she did not get beyond settling on the title. The reason for this failure is mysterious. Bowker notes that she had a year in which to complete the work, two months of which Orwell spent in the north, and even thereafter she could have asked for a year's extension. Orwell's role in her abandoning her career is nowhere referred to but considering his male-centred outlook, combined with his aversion to university graduated intellectuals, it can hardly be surmised that he clamoured for an independent career for Eileen, the starting point of which would have been the completion of her degree. A self-effacing wife keeping home for him in the background probably suited his needs better than an academic wife pursuing her own career by doing field research here and there. Kay Welton recognised the problem from the female perspective: "She'd been to university, and had very much an intellectual standing in her own right. I thought it was rather tragic that she should all give it up, you know. I don't think I would have." (Bowker, 168) If not tragic, it is sad and indicative of their relationship that on the passenger list to Morocco, where they shipped to spend the winter of 1938 in a better climate, Orwell designated his profession as novelist, while Eileen wrote "Profession-Nil". (Bowker, 243) Bowker draws the conclusion that "Eileen's love for Orwell was highly sacrificial, putting her own career aside and devoting herself to caring for him. She believed in his great gifts and great potential and was prepared to suffer with him and, to an extent, to live with his neglect of her." (328) Eileen's sacrifice in the marriage is obvious but whether it was as conscious and light-hearted as Bowker implies is doubtful. In Eileen's lifetime Orwell was still a mediocre writer, whose "great gifts and great potential" in which Eileen is assumed to have believed had not as yet manifested themselves. Therefore, to endow her with a conscious effort to devote herself entirely to her husband's literary career is an ex post facto reasoning employing a factor that was non-existent at the time. Orwell expected her to adapt to him and his work while his expectations involved no

reciprocity. His devotion to her was not unconditional. Eileen complained to Lydia that "[i]f I were at the opposite end of the world and I sent Laurence [her much-beloved brother] a telegram, saying 'come at once', he would come. George would not do that. For him his work comes first." (Bowker, 265)

Eileen is said to have resented that, unlike her brother Laurence, her husband did not need her help in his work, but her letters to Norah reveal that she was more involved in Orwell's work than has been assumed. When Orwell had handed in the manuscript of *The Road to Wigan Pier* to Moore before leaving for Spain, he authorised Eileen to decide in any matter that should come up in connection with the book. Eileen managed the book cleverly, she resisted Gollancz's intention to disjoint its two parts. There are hints in Eileen's letters at her typing *Homage to Catalonia*, revising his manuscripts and at their common pleasure in Orwell's writing *Coming Up For Air*. Her attention and support during the composition of *Animal Farm*, whose publication she was, alas, not fated to see, is well-known. There are allusions also to their being intellectuals partners in a wider sense. When breaking the news to Norah of their having the poodle puppy Marx, she explains the choice of name as follows: "We called him Marx to remind us that we had never read Marx and now we have read a little and taken so strong a personal dislike to the man that we can't look the dog in the face when we speak to him." (*LO*, 72) The first person plural speaks of an intellectual bond between the couple. Her independent way of living was probably more disturbed by her husband's expectations to conform to him and his dominating manners. Their penury and the miserable conditions in Wallington aside, Eileen's letters attest to her resentment at Orwell not letting her get away. A couple of months after the wedding she already complained to Norah: "I thought I could come & see you & have twice decided when I could, but Eric always gets something if I'm going away if he has notice of the fact, & if he has no notice (when Eric my brother arrives & removes me as he has done twice) he gets something when I've gone so that I have to come home again." (*LO*, 64) It has been suggested that by choosing for herself a job in London later on during the war she was fleeing the tight embrace of Wallington, whose strenuous way of living exhausted her, though in her characteristically ironic and matter-of-fact style hardships are mitigated. It is difficult to tell, for example, whether light-heartedness or exhaustion dominates the way she recommends poultry-keeping to her friend:

> There is probably no question on poultry-keeping that I am not able and very ready to answer. Perhaps you would like to have a battery (say three units) in the bathroom so that you could benefit from my advice. It would be a touching thing to collect an egg just before brushing one's teeth and eat it just after. (*LO*, 72)

The irony of her advice is increased by her complaint of being sick of having to eat boiled eggs all the time. Apart from these vicissitudes her reflections on "Eric" are affectionate, though not rarely in a teasing way. She closes the third letter with the following passage:

> Eric (I mean George) has just come in to say that the light is out (he had the Aladdin lamp because he was Working) and is there any oil (such a question) and I can't type in this light (which may be true, but I can't read it) and he is hungry and wants some cocoa and some biscuits and it is after midnight and Marx is eating a bone and has left pieces in each chair and which shall he sit on now. (*LO*, 74)

The tone of her letters defies her stance as a self-sacrificing and naïve literary wife who worshipped the ground on which her writer husband cum hero walked on. Having an opportunity to peer behind the scenes, she could be ironic even about his Work. On 'The Lion and the Unicorn' she comments:

> George has written a little book, no 1 in the Searchlight Books (Secker & Warburg 2/-), out next month, which please note. Explaining how to be a Socialist though Tory. It was going to cost 1/-, which would have been better, but Warburg changed at the last minute & the book had to have another 10,000 words inserted to give value for twice the money. Some of the later ones look like being good. (*LO*, 80)

Illnesses and loves

Just before the publication of *Homage to Catalonia*, in the spring of 1938 Orwell fell ill with bronchitis and began coughing up blood. He was transferred to Preston Hall Sanatorium under care of Eileen's brother and stayed there for nearly half a year. It was during this stay at the sanatorium that he made the first advances towards an affair with Lydia Jackson.[28] Lydia recalled that she was not the least attracted to the man but knowing his unhappy and depressed state of mind made it difficult for her to reject him.

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[28] Lydia Jackson (1899-1983, née Jiburtovitch) was Russian by birth. She went to England in 1925 and in 1929 got married there. She divorced in 1935, the year preceding Eileen and Orwell's wedding. Eileen and Lydia were both postgraduate students at UCL reading psychology. Whereas Eileen failed to complete her studies with a thesis, Lydia graduated in 1942 and was also awarded a DPhil in 1949. By

> When we were out of sight of the buildings, we sat on the grass and he put his arms around me. It was an awkward situation. He did not attract me as a man and his ill health even aroused in me a slight feeling of revulsion. At the same time, the fact that he was a sick man, starved of intimacy with his wife, made it difficult for me to repulse him. I did not want to behave like a prude or to treat the incident as a serious matter. Why should I push him away if kissing me gave him a few minutes of pleasure? I was convinced that he was very fond of Eileen and I was in no sense a rival to her. (*CW*, 336)

Orwell was advised to spend the winter in a better climate, so, with the anonymous gift of L.H. Myers, the couple went to Morocco, which, however, proved to be an unfortunate choice; it unnecessarily burdened both of them physically just as badly as mentally. The misery of the country weighed heavily on their minds. Eileen wrote to Norah that "Marrakech crawls with disease of every kind, the ringworm group, the tuberculosis group, the dysentery group; & if you lunch in a restaurant the flies only show themselves as flies as distinct from black masses when they hurry our for a moment to taste a corpse on its way to the cemetery." (*LO*, 76)[29] The climate did not work its magic on Orwell, in fact both of them fell ill several times that winter, and Eileen hoped "he may not be much worse at the end of the winter abroad than he was at the beginning." (*LO*, 76) Being well aware of her husband's poor health, she was rather matter-of-fact about her husband's future": "I expect his life has been shortened by another year or two but all the totalitarians make that irrelevant." (*LO*, 76) However, Eileen also grappled with health problems and it is around the time of their Moroccan stay that one can find the first traces of her complaint. Orwell later on attributed Eileen's early death to their wretched life and to Eileen's overwork at the Censorship Department and the Ministry of Food. Eileen's letters reveal that the operation which directly caused her death involved the removal of her uterus because of cancer. Her illness then was not a thing of recent origin, her letter from Morocco about the suspicion

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then her one-time friend had been dead for four years. She practised child psychotherapy and under her pen-name Elisaveta Fen translated Chekhov's plays. She lived for a while in the cottage at Wallington when the Orwells had moved out and remained in touch with Orwell after Eileen's death too. She stayed at Jura for a week in the spring of 1948 when Orwell was in Hairmyres Hospital and it is presumed that she typed 'Such, Such Were the Joys' for Orwell during her stay. She visited Orwell at the hospital when he was already in an advanced state of his illness. She published her autobiography, *A Russian's England*, in 1976, in which she gives account of the Orwells and their relationship.

[29] Eileen's words immediately call to mind the opening of Orwell's 'Marrakech': "As the corpse went past the flies left the restaurant table in cloud and rushed after it, but they came back a few minutes later." (*CW*11, 579)

of "another cyst" implies that she had been grappling with her disease for quite awhile before the eventual operation. Apropos of a slight illness in Morocco, Eileen light-heartedly but morbidly implied the priority Orwell's health enjoyed over hers in a letter to Mary Common, who stayed in the cottage with her husband while the Blairs were away in Morocco: "[…] in fact Eric was ill and in bed for more that a week and as soon as he was better I had an illness which I'd actually started before his but had necessarily postponed. I enjoyed the illness: I had to do all the cooking as usual but I did it in a dressing-gown and firmly carried my tray back to bed." (*CW*11, 249)

Tosco Fyvel in *Memoir* recalls a conversation between Orwell and Mary Fyvel about the time the Orwells spent in Morocco. "He said that he found himself increasingly attracted by the young Arab girls and the moment came when he told Eileen that he had to have one of these girls on just one occasion. Eileen agreed and so he had his Arab girl." (109) His debaucheries have been attested to by several acquaintances. Lettice Cooper believed that "he was not the kind of person who likes being married all the time." (164) Not all his affairs were known to Eileen though. In all probability he kept his fling with Lydia Jackson concealed from her. Keeping an eye on their return to England at the end of March 1939, Orwell picked up the thread he let drop with Lydia almost a year before. On 5 March he welcomed the prospect of seeing her again: "I am afraid it is a very long time since I have written to you & I don't think you have written to me either, have you?" (*CW*11, 336) Informing her about the probable date of their arrival, he quickly gets to the point of his letter: "I suppose I shall be in London for a bit before going down to see my people etc. So looking forward to seeing you! So try & keep a date or two open a few days after the 1st of April." Not only the content, but the commanding and condescending tone of his letter is intriguing: "I have thought of you so often – have you thought about me, I wonder? I know it's indiscreet to write such things in letters, but *you'll be clever & burn this, will you?*" (*CW*11, 336, emphasis added) Lydia seems to have had an ear for Orwell's dominating manners and besides was embarrassed by the game he proposed to play behind Eileen's back: "I had several men friends at the time whom I found more attractive than George, and his masculine conceit annoyed me. Least of all did I want to disturb his relationship with Eileen, or have anything to conceal from her." (*CW*11, 336) On 30 March he was disappointed not to find Lydia at home. He left her a postcard:

> I knocked at the door of your flat & was very disappointed not to find you at home. I gathered from the hall porter that you weren't actually away from London. I've got tomorrow to go down & see my parents for the week-end, but hope to see you when I get back, about Tuesday. Meanwhile if clever I *may* be able to look in for half an hour tomorrow morning, so try & stay at home in the morning will you? (*CW*11, 348)

The next day he was even more confused and impatient:

> You were mean not to stay at home this morning like I asked you. But perhaps you couldn't. I rang up 3 times. Are you angry with me? I did write to you twice from Morocco & I don't think you wrote to me. But listen. I am coming back to town Monday or Tuesday, & Eileen is going to stay down here a bit longer. I shall have to be in town several days to see to various things, so we can arrange to meet – unless you don't want to. I'll ring up. (*CW*11, 348-9)

His plans, however, fell through due to his weak health. As soon as they got to Southwold, he fell ill and spent a week in bed. From Southwold they went straight to Wallington, but he did not give up the hope of a date with Lydia. On 11 April he again wrote to her that "in not many days I'll have to come up to town on business, & we'll meet then." (*CW*11, 351) Lydia Jackson remembered that when they met at last, her annoyance "was distinguished by compassion" and though she "resisted throughout [their relationship] becoming a love affair", she "could not be unpleasant to him. He, no doubt, chose to think that I let him kiss me because I liked it. I did not." (*CW*11, 351) Surviving documents suggest that Eileen did not know of her husband's clandestine infatuation for her girlfriend but Lydia was not the single target and village gossip reached Eileen about Orwell's ongoing affair with his old love, Brenda Salkeld. According to Lydia Jackson, on their return from Morocco Eileen was angry with her husband. Their relationship, which had been "unusually harmonious," began to go "seriously wrong" because of a "schoolmistress, or something." "The village people saw him meeting her. This affair goes on because she wouldn't sleep with him. If she had, it would have been finished long ago." (*CW*11, 351)

The depressed years of war

With the outbreak of the war Eileen obtained work with the Censorship Department of the War Office in London, commuting each day to and from Greenwich for some time and spending on average one weekend per month at Wallington. Orwell's

efforts to enlist were not successful. He applied to do intelligence work in France but with its collapse by May 1940 his application got nowhere. When he got engaged by *Time and Tide* to do theatre and film reviews he moved to London, but such a job in the midst of a war was obviously unsatisfactory for a man with a "warrior cast of mind", as his brother-in-law described him. When it became clear that his dream of an active role in the fight would not come true in this war (in June 1940 he was given grade C), he joined the Local Defence Volunteers, an organisation that was created to back up the army in the event of a German invasion. He was envious to see Anthony Powell in uniform and was fascinated to see that Powell's trousers were strapped down. "I used to wear ones that strapped down under the boot myself. These straps under the foot give you a feeling like nothing else in life." (Bowker, 280) The debacle of Dunkirk in June 1940 brought about a personal tragedy for Eileen: working with the Army Medical Corps her much-beloved brother Laurence was killed in the retreat. According to friends, Eileen never fully recovered from this loss. The Fyvels noticed a profound change in her.

> She seemed to sit in the garden sunk in unmoving silence while we talked. Mary, my wife, observed that Eileen not only looked tired and drawn but was drably and untidily dressed. Trying in vain to involve Eileen in conversation, Mary said that she seemed to have become completely withdrawn. (*Memoir*, 105)

Margaret Branch, a friend of the O'Shaughnessys', who saw a great deal of Orwell and Eileen during the war, saw in Eileen "visible signs of depression." "In her severe depression she was facing the dark night of the soul. Nobody could get through to her." (Fyvel, *Memoir*, 135)

How much Orwell was a partner in Eileen's bereavement and her mental condition is not known but a letter he wrote to Brenda on 25 June 1940 is indicative of a lack of comprehension.

> Dearest Brenda, I've tried so often to forget you but somehow didn't succeed. I wonder where you are & what doing … I wonder if you are happy. If things just break up & go to pieces as I fear they may, I must try & see you once again. You are such a big piece of my life. Do you remember our walks to Blythburgh, & the time we found the nightingale's nest? And that beautiful walk we had last summer just before the war began. How long is it since I last saw you? I think it was at Christmas, wasn't it? I couldn't explain then abt you & me & Eileen, you didn't want me to, & of course such relationship (as) was between us was unfair and impossible for you. Eileen said she wished I could sleep with you abt twice a year, just to keep me happy, but of course we can't arrange things like that. It's a pity

> though we never made love properly. We could have been so happy. If things are really collapsing I shall try & see you. Or perhaps you wouldn't want to? I've no rights over you, & I dare say you've found somebody else long since, but we have been friends so long that you are part of me in a way. I've been longing for months to write to you & compelling myself not to. But today is my birthday & Eileen said I was to give myself a birthday treat. Write, if you feel like it, to the above address, & tell me what you're doing & what your plans are, & whether you are happy. Take care of yourself, dear love, take cover when the air raids start, & try to be happy./With love/Eric. (*LO*, 96-97)

Though the letter is a poor testament of Orwell's care for Eileen, it is an exceptionally self-revealing and personal letter, and, according to Bowker, the fact that Brenda guarded the letter from publicity until her death "speaks volumes" about her relationship with Orwell. (266)

Eileen's health deteriorated quickly in the war years. In a letter of December 1940 to Norah she could still be ironic about her mysterious illness:

> They diagnosed cystitis and then they diagnosed nephrolithiasis & then they diagnosed Malta fever with ovarian complications & then they went all hush-hush while they diagnosed a tuberculous infection so that I couldn't possibly guess what they were testing for. They haven't yet diagnosed cancer or G.P.I., but I expect they will shortly. (*LO*, 79)

Yet it is evident that she suffered much from the bouts of her developing illness: "I have been ILL. Ever so ill. Bedridden for 4 weeks & still weak." (*LO*, 79) In 1941 she wrote an exceptionally depressed letter to Norah, which bespeaks of an acute sense of loneliness and forsakenness and which might justify Margaret Branch's diagnosis of "severe depression." Though the letter is sprinkled with her sense of irony, its tone is incomparable to anything she had hitherto written.

> The semi crest means that the paper was waste before it Flowered. The same is true of my time as a government servant. There is not much paper, so to sum up:
>
> Physical condition – much improved by air raids, possibly because I now sleep several hours a night longer than ever in my life;
>
> Mental condition – temporarily improved by air raids which were a change, degenerating again now that the air raids threaten to become monotonous;
>
> Events since the war – daily work of inconceivable dullness; weekly efforts to leave Greenwich always frustrated; monthly visits to the cottage which is still as it was only dirtier;
>
> Future plans – imaginings of the possibility of leaving a furnished flat ("chambers") that we have at Baker Street & taking an unfurnished flat north of Baker Street to remain in George's Home Guard district, with the idea that we might both live in this flat – probably to be frustrated by continued lack of five shillings to spend & increasing scarcity of undemolished flats & perhaps by our

> ceasing to live anywhere. But the last is unlikely because a shorter & no less accurate summing up would be
>
> NOTHING EVER HAPPENS TO
> Pig.[30]
>
> Please write a letter. The difficulty is that I am too profoundly depressed to write a letter. I have many times half thought I could come to Bristol but it is literally years since a weekend belonged to me & George would have a haemorrhage. I suppose London is not a place to come to really but if you do ring NATIONAL 3318. My departmental head is as frightened of me as he is of taking any decision on his own & I can get Time off. Meanwhile give my love to everyone. E. (*LO*, 81-82)

Much is involved in this short letter whose telegraphic style was forced both by paper shortages and by its writer's despair. It insinuates her ignored ill health and a feeling of emotional neglect. It implies her exhaustion with her monotonous job as a government servant, her frustration at being tied to the family at Greenwich and to George who would have a haemorrhage if she could at last arrange to visit her friend. Her distress at the condition of Wallington and at their continuing poverty is undisguised and the atmosphere of blitzed London, with destroyed buildings and monotonous air raids, unmistakably left its mark on the letter.

If Davison's conjectural dating of Eileen's originally undated letter is correct, i.e. assuming that she wrote the letter in March 1941, the following month Orwell would meet Inez Holden through Wells and she would duly become his lover. According to Bowker, Orwell took her regularly to lunch and back to the flat while Eileen was at work, though that could not have lasted long as Eileen resigned from the Censorship Department in June and on 25 June Orwell took up work at the BBC, which meant a great of overtime and the opportunity to court other women. On the first occasion when he "pounced" on her, Inez was surprised by his "intensity and urgency" as she recorded the experience in her diary. (Bowker, 278) The next day Orwell explained to her about the nature of his marriage, which Inez found "helpful and clarifying." That evening they had dinner a trois, of which Inez wrote: "There was rather an atmosphere of submerged strain. Might be worth writing a short story about this sort of thing. Also almost subconsciously [Orwell] seemed to have disappeared as if

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[30] All the six letters written by Eileen to Norah Myles were signed by the pet-name 'Pig'; Davison notes the irony involved in the coincidence of Eileen's pet-name and Orwell's pillorisation of pigs in *Animal Farm*. (*LO*, 67)

to dissociate himself from the whole story." (Bowker, 278) In an interview Holden told Ian Angus that she saw Orwell several times a week for about ten years. Taking into account Orwell's other dalliances and his long stays at Jura and in sanatoriums in his last years, the claim seems to be somewhat exaggerated. Expecting to marry him after Eileen's death, Holden probably attributed more significance to their affair than Orwell himself.

That Orwell's attitude and grasp of human relations remained unchanged is supported by his actions as well. Crick recounts an indecent case in which Orwell tried to force himself upon a young woman whom he knew from his BBC days. He would sometimes go on his own to William and Hetta Empson's Saturday night parties. On one such occasion, when heading for home, neither was able to get a taxi and Orwell insisted, against her inclination, on walking her home. On the way he tried to make love to her "far too persistently, somewhat violently even." In order to get rid of him, the woman promised to meet him again sometime. "[…] on not keeping the unlikely rendezvous," says Crick, "she received a violent letter of formal reproach, actually trying to make her feel guilty […] about the social solecism of breaking an appointment." (Crick, *A Life*, 320) Admitting that "the ground is delicate and speculative," Crick puts down Orwell's infidelities in the last years of the war partly to Eileen's symptoms, her frequent bleedings and fatigue. (*A Life*, 331) The reasoning is unsatisfactory in the sense that Orwell deceived her quite from the beginning of their married life and not only, as Crick claims, in the last few years of the war. It is not known, whether Eileen resented Orwell's infidelities. He confided to his various lovers the open nature of his marriage, and if Lydia Jackson's recollection of Eileen's reaction to Orwell's unhappy affair with Brenda Salkeld is right ("This affair goes on because she wouldn't sleep with him. If she had, it would have been finished long ago."), she did not expect absolute fidelity of her husband.

The agony of dying without a ruling

Like the good cause and perilous predicament of the Spanish War, the adoption of a son brought Orwell and Eileen closer after years of bereavement, destitution, hard work and ignorance of each other. After Eileen's death Orwell is said to have regretted

immensely not having told her that he loved her much more since they had had Richard. (Bowker, 328) Being sure that he was unable to have children, Orwell had been insistent on adoption – Eileen was less resolute, she had doubts about being able to love and care for somebody else's child. Besides, as Lettice Cooper suggests, she may have feared the loss of the independence she gained as a woman with a job. The adoption of a child "meant giving up her own work in the Ministry of Food where she was happy and where she had a life of her own, not as George's wife …" (Cooper, 166) As regards her anxiety about being able to love an adopted child, her doubts were unjustified, after the adoption of the three-week-old boy, with the help of her sister-in-law in the summer of 1944, she developed into a caring mother. The sense of responsibility must have had a positive influence on her. Lettice Cooper remembered that when they had attended the court to have the adoption approved

> [s]he came round to the Ministry with Richard – frightfully proud and pleased. And for the first time in her life she was wearing a hat. She had a neat coat and skirt on – she wasn't generally very neat, and she had bought a yellow felt hat so that the judge should think she was an entirely suitable person to look after Richard, and Richard was fine, very cheerful. (Bowker, 321)

Unfortunately she was not to enjoy motherhood for long. With the war drawing to an end on the continent, Orwell accepted the offer to cover events in Europe as an *Observer* war correspondent. He left London in mid-February 1945 and Eileen retreated to the O'Shaughnessy family home in Greystone with Richard and had herself examined. The diagnosis and the frequency of her indispositions called for an immediate operation. On 21 March 1945, in an exceptionally long and erratic letter, Eileen explained to her husband: "The idea is that I should go in next week and I gather he means to operate quickly – he thinks the indications are urgent enough to offset the advantages of operating on a bloodless patient; indeed he is quite clear that no treatment at all can prevent me from becoming considerably more bloodless every month." (*CW*17, 96) Without any trace of self-pity, indeed rather with a strangely objective and cool-headed mind, she contemplated the pros and cons of her "dear operation". Facing the high fee of the operation and hospital stay (when Orwell had been ill, they had gotten used to paying doctors nothing as Eileen's brother made the arrangements), she was intent on choosing the cheapest solution. "[…] what worries me is that I really don't think I'm worth the money. On the other hand of course this thing will take a

longish time to kill me if left alone and it will be costing some money the whole time." (*CW*17, 96) Was this indifference towards her own life a genuine attitude of hers or one suggested by Orwell as it is implied later in the letter: "But yesterday I had a phase of thinking that it was really outrageous to spend all your money on an operation of which I know you disapprove, so Gwen rang Tribune to know whether they had means of communicating with you quickly and could get your ruling." (*CW*17, 96) Her irresolution is profound, she goes back to the need for her husband's approval, to the cost of the operation and whether to have the operation at all again and again, trying to convince herself that she has chosen the best alternative. "I only wish I could have had your approval as it were, but I think it's just hysterical. Obviously I can't go on having a tumour or rather several rapidly growing tumours. I *have* got an uneasy feeling that after all the job might have been more cheaply done somewhere else […]." (*CW*17, 97) She now owns up to having concealed her bad state of health from her husband for several reasons:

> I rather wish I'd talked it over with you before you went. I knew I had a "growth". But I wanted you to go away peacefully anyway, and I did *not* want to see Harvey Evers before the adoption was through in case it was cancer. I thought it just possible that the judge might make some enquiry about our health as we're old for parenthood and anyway it would have been an uneasy sort of thing to be producing oneself as an ideal parent a fortnight after being told that one couldn't live more than six months or something. (*CW*17, 97)

In spite of her misgivings about the length of her remaining life, she discusses in rambling passages the life they should lead and she seemingly intends to build their family life on new foundations. She urges her husband to stop living a literary life, to cut down reviewing and to write a book again. "I thought Tribune better than the BBC and I still do. Indeed I should think a municipal dustman's work more dignified and better for your future as a writer." (*CW*17, 96-97) Orwell's occupation brings her to the issue of where to settle down after the war; her hysterical outpouring about what London means to her underscores the unhappiness she experienced during the war. Bowker suggests that Eileen's unending complaint implies that they had not discussed matters central to their lives for some time.

> From my point of view I would infinitely rather live in the country on £200 than in London on any money at all. I don't think you understand what a nightmare the London life is to me. I know it is to you, but you often talk as though I *liked* it. I don't even like the things that you do. I can't stand having people all over the

> place, every meal makes me feel sick because every food has been handled by twenty dirty hands and I practically can't bear to eat anything that hasn't been boiled to clean it. I can't breathe the air, I can't think any more clearly that one would expect to in the moment of being smothered, everything that bores me happens all the time in London and the things that interest me most don't happen at all and I can't read poetry. I never could. When I lived in London before I was married I used to go away certainly once a month with a suitcase full of poetry and that consoled me until the next time – or I used to go up to Oxford and read in the Bodleian and take a punt up the Cher if it was summer or walk in Port Meadow or to Godstow if it was winter. But all these years I have felt as though I were in a mild kind of concentration camp. The place has its points of course and I could enjoy it for a week. I like going to theatres for instance. But the fact of living in London destroys any pleasure I might have in its amenities and in fact as you know I never go to a theatre. As for eating in restaurants, it's the most barbarous habit and only tolerable very occasionally when one drinks enough to enjoy barbarity. And I can't drink enough beer. […] I like the Canonbury flat but I am suicidal every time I walk as far as the bread shop, and it would be very bad for Richard once he is mobile. Indeed if the worst comes to the worst I think he'd better go to Wallington for the summer, but it would be better to find somewhere with more space because you and Richard would be too much for the cottage very soon and I don't know where his sister could go. (*CW*17, 99)

Eileen could not finish the last letter she wrote to her husband just before the operation, when she had already been injected with morphine: she was taken away to the operating room where she suffered a heart attack and died under the anaesthetic. Orwell's explanation of Eileen's death to some of his friends implies that he had a bad conscience. He was apparently unaware of the contradiction inherent in his account to Lydia: "As you know she had been ill for some time past and it was finally diagnosed that she had a growth which must be removed." To soothe his remorse he continued: "[…] the operation was not supposed to be a very serious one, but she seems to have died as soon as she was given the anaesthetic, and, apparently, as a result of the anaesthetic." (*CW*17, 118) He informs Anthony Powell with much the same words: "Eileen is dead. She died very suddenly and unexpectedly on March 29th during an operation which was not supposed to be very serious. I was over here (in Paris) and had no expectation of anything going wrong, which indeed nobody seems to have had." (*CW*17, 124) It is intriguing to ask who Orwell possibly had in mind when referring to "nobody". Considering that Eileen's brother died in 1940, her mother half a year later, and it was his sister-in-law, Gwen O'Shaughnessy, with whom she lived at the family home during the last months of her life and who – being a doctor – apparently pulled

strings to arrange for Eileen's operation, there were not many people in Eileen's immediate surroundings who could have warned Orwell of the gravity of her illness. Even if Eileen concealed from him the exact nature of her illness, as Crick concludes, it was imperceptive not to have seen that her health was in serious condition. (*A Life*, 331) That "nobody seems to have had" any expectation of things going wrong is very likely self-exoneration, a device to shut out the question of his own responsibility from his awareness. To Lydia he is reticent about what Eileen's death means to him, he commemorates her only in relation to Richard.

> It was a dreadful shock and a very cruel thing to happen, because she had become so devoted to Richard and was looking forward to living a normal life in the country again as soon as the war was over. […] It is perhaps as well that Richard wasn't a bit older, because I don't think he actually misses her, at any rate he seems in very good spirits as well as health. (*CW*17, 118)

To Leonard Moore and Anthony Powell he confided his sorrow and explained that going back to the continent and being bumped about in a jeep would relieve his upset state of mind.

What is a 'literary wife' worth?

Various friends and acquaintances have described the relationship of the couple and the accounts naturally vary according to the personal impression of the witnesses, coloured by their own personalities, their different views of what constitutes a harmonious relationship, of the role of husband and wife in marriage, by their own role in the life of the couple and by the particular phase of the Blairs' life in which they were involved. Some friends – Geoffrey Gorer and Jack Common for example – found them an amorous couple. Gorer said that he had never known Orwell as happy as he was in the first year of his marriage to Eileen. The memories of Spanish comrades are without exception positive. Charles Orr, a member of the Independent Labour Party office, remembered that "[s]he just could not resist talking about Eric – her hero husband, whom she obviously loved and admired … He was still just an unknown writer … [but] … as I came to know Eric better – through Eileen – my respect grew … A man who could win a woman of such quality must have some value." (Bowker, 210) And Jack Branthwaite also spoke in superlatives: "She worshipped the ground he walked on.

She'd do anything for him. Anything Eric did, he was the greatest." (Bowker, 210) In a war of heightened spirits, a woman who escorted her husband to the battleground and who took a somewhat motherly interest in her husband's comrades by checking their mail, looking after their money and serving small surprises like tobacco, was definitely highly appreciated by men answering the call of a manly challenge. A woman serving combatants behind the front lines reinforces the conventional division of roles along gender lines: active men perform exploits for public interest while relying on the physical and psychic support of allegedly passive women in the background.

Other friends, especially some of Eileen's friends, saw the couple in quite a different light and doubted that Orwell was the right man for her. They, according to Crick, "were puzzled that such an emancipated and forceful woman was so willing to play second fiddle to what appeared to be a rather self-absorbed and gawky minor novelist." (*A Life*, 173) Lydia Jackson was definitely one of the sceptical friends. Her view of the Blairs was more penetrating than the foregoing male perspectives, though hers was not objective either. Her close relation with Eileen and Orwell's unwelcome pursuit of her must have played a part in directing her thoughts in favour of Eileen and against Orwell.

> My impression was that he was taking her very much for granted. Any man, I thought, ought to treasure such a wife – most attractive to look at, highly intelligent, an amusing and witty talker, an excellent cook. Yet I did not detect any fond glances, or small gestures of attention from him to her. Eileen did all the work, prepared the meals and served them, and answered the shop bell when it rang. (Bowker, 194)

The couple's own reflections about one another to a third party, as well as their letters to each other are scarce. Orwell's occasional references to Eileen reveal a tacit assumption of male supremacy, probably mixed with and enhanced by his status as a writer, a literary man whose work was of primary importance. Listing his likes and dislikes in his autobiographical note written for *Twentieth Century Authors*, he adds in an offhand manner that "[m]y wife's tastes fit in almost perfectly with my own." (*CEJL*2, 24) Writing to Dorothy Plowman for the first time after Eileen's death, in February 1946, almost a year after the tragic event, his grief seems to be undiminished: "I have got to go down some time to the cottage I still have there, to sort out the furniture and books, but I have been putting it off because last time I was there it was with Eileen and it

upsets me to go there." (*CW*18, 115) Yet even in his genuine grief the primacy of his own work is inherent: "It was a terrible shame that Eileen didn't live to see the publication of 'Animal Farm', which she was particularly fond of and even helped in the planning of." (*CW*18, 115) When proposing to Anne Popham, one of the several women with whom he had a try after Eileen's death, he commented on his relationship with Eileen in the following way:

> […] I have very little physical jealousy. I don't much care who sleeps with whom, it seems to me what matters is being faithful in an emotional sense. I was sometimes unfaithful to Eileen, and I also treated her very badly, and I think she treated me badly too at times, but it was a real marriage in the sense that we had been through awful struggles together and *she understood all about my work*, etc. (*CW*18, 249, emphasis added)

Eileen played the part Virginia Woolf ascribes to women in relation to men. Giving up her own dreams in life, whatever they might have been, by tying herself to an egocentric writer and abandoning her own self-advancement must have pleased Orwell's vanity. She was a flattering looking glass, "possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man twice its natural size." (Woolf, *Room*, 32) At the same time, as so many of her allusions make it clear, she was not absorbed by the man's deadly serious games, but kept a distance and could laugh mockingly but generously at his vanities. As Woolf demanded of Mary Carmichael, Eileen kept her integrity and independence to go behind the man and describe the spot "the size of a shilling at the back of the head which one can never see for oneself."

> A true picture of man as a whole can never be painted until a woman has described that spot the size of a shilling. […] Be truthful, one would say, and the result is bound to be amazingly interesting. Comedy is bound to be enriched. New facts are bound to be discovered. (*Room*, 82)

Orwell's Spanish writings, for example, all the heroism and extremely serious politics included, are checked and should be complemented by Eileen's references to Spain. Answering her sister-in-law's letter, Eileen wrote in 1938:

> I was rather cheered to hear about Humphrey's dugout. Eric has been on the point of constructing one for two years, though the plans received rather a check after he did construct one in Spain & it fell down on his & his companions' heads two days later, not under any kind of bombardment but just from the force of gravity. But the dugout has generally been by way of light relief; his specialities are concentration camps & the famine. He buried some potatoes against the famine &

> they might have been very useful if they hadn't gone mouldy at once. (*CW*11, 205-6)

Of course Eileen had no literary pretensions, she was no more that a clever woman who was given the possibility of discernment afforded to the excluded. When she wrote her private letters, she could not have anticipated their future publicity. Her remarks on Orwell and their life together show him in a different light, one which diverges from the canonical view found in the overwhelmingly male literary criticism, and which lacks the malice and scorn which was inherent in the feminist criticism of him. Her letters pull him back to the ground on which humans walk from the pedestal towards which he was headed and in which he was assisted by the glorification bestowed by male audiences.

After Eileen

In the years following Eileen's death he made desperate efforts to find a partner and proposed rashly to several women: Sonia Brownell, Celia Kirwan, and Anne Popham. In his letter of proposal to Anne Popham, who was more than a dozen years younger than Orwell and who had lost her lover in the war, he offered a quasi-marriage contract:

> You asked me what attracted me to you in the first place. You are very beautiful, as no doubt you well know, but that wasn't quite all. I do so want someone who will share what is left of my life, and my work. It isn't so much a question of someone to sleep with, though of course I want that too, sometimes. You say you wouldn't be likely to love me. I don't see how you could be expected to. You are young and fresh and you have had someone you really loved and who would set up a standard I couldn't compete with. If you still feel you can start again and you want a handsome young man who can give you a lot of children, then I am no good to you. What I am really asking you is whether you would like to be the widow of a literary man. If things remain more or less as they are there is a certain amount of fun in this, as you would probably get royalties coming in and you might find it interesting to edit unpublished stuff etc. […] You are young and healthy, and you deserve somebody better than me: on the other hand if you don't find such a person, and if you think of yourself as essentially a widow, then you might do worse – ie. supposing I am not actually disgusting to you. If I can live another ten years I think I have another three worth-while books in me, besides a lot of odds and ends, but I want peace and quiet and someone to be fond of me. (*CW*18, 248-9)

Orwell here is basically demanding love and fondness in exchange for royalties. If not "disgusting", Anne Popham did not find his person or personality attractive and felt a sense of unease at his advances. (*CW*18, 136, n1) Inviting her to stay at Jura, he felt the need to make clear that he did not want her to go there to be his mistress. Enticing her with the possibility of wonderful walks on the uninhabited island, he adds: "Don't think I'll make love to you against your will. You know I am civilised." (*CW*18, 250) Crick acutely observes that the, probably unconscious, device of the letter to try to make the reader feel guilty is reminiscent of his letters to Eleanor and Brenda. He crosses the divide between self-knowledge and self-pity. "What he wanted was, of course, all very sensible, a mother for Richard and for himself a mistress, housekeeper, nurse and a literary executor, with the compensation for his wife, if he did live longer than might be the case, that she would inherit a good income […]." (Crick, *A Life*, 336) With Anne Popham and Celia Kirwan he knocked on the wrong door, it was Sonia Brownell, who accepted such a business contract to marry a best selling, dying novelist.

In the last months of his life he got in touch with many of his "glamorous girlfriends", a phrase Mrs Miranda Wood, the woman who rented Orwell's Canonbury flat in London while he was in Jura, applied to express her amusement at Orwell's emotional life. (*CW*20, 306) Beside the long procession of one-time lovers, Jacintha Buddicom, Brenda Salkeld, Lydia Jackson, Celia Kirwan, several probably less important passing fancies are suggested by some letters in the twentieth volume of *The Collected Works*. Ruth Graves, learning of Orwell's severe illness, offers to get him anything medical science could provide and remembers with fondness her evenings in Paris with the "very good talk of a tall young man in a wide-brimmed pair of Breton hats, who was as kind as he was keen of mind." (*CW*20, 150) Una Marson, who was a producer in the West-Indies section of the BBC, writes in 1949 to Orwell from Jamaica, her home island, in the awareness that "you have some little interest in me and must be wondering a bit." She closes her letter by encouraging Orwell to get Creech Jones, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, to send him out to write a book on the West Indies. "You would love Jamaica, politics apart." (*CW*20, 79)

In the foregoing two chapters I examined Orwell's attitude to women, femininity and feminism both in his work and in his life, focusing on his non-fictional writings of

the 40s and on his personal relationship with women, particularly his marriage to Eileen O'Shaughnessy. I regard the sense of primacy of his work, his habit of degrading femaleness and femininity, as well as his low opinion of women's capacities as the concomitant of a polarised notion of genders. The imperative to comply with the socially sanctioned norms of traditional masculinity brings with itself the idea of active involvement in public affairs and the relegation of women to the home and the family. Both the writings examined and his relationships with women reflect such an andocentric outlook – Lydia Jackson called it "masculine conceit," while D.J. Taylor put it more cautiously: he did not consider women a "force in life."

His attitude to women in life and his attitude to women on paper, that is author and work do comply and form a Foucauldian unity, which, more than anything else, justifies feminist criticism of Orwell. With respect to the work the discourse on Orwell tended to ignore the relevance of Orwell's conservative concept of gender with reference to the ad hoc nature of condemning remarks on women and femininity and to the priority of historical and social issues other than feminism, such as totalitarianism, economic crisis, decolonisation etc. As far as his life is concerned, the discourse on Orwell's relationship with women, especially with his wife, remains a primarily male-oriented one that confers the role of a supportive and self-sacrificing wife on Eileen O'Shaughnessy, while her letters attest that she was a witty, smart and independent woman who was both pleased and annoyed by her husband's vanity as a writer. Whereas the totalitarian discourse on Orwell links the author's obsession with totalitarianism to lived experiences, his emphatic masculinity and traditional concept of gender has rarely been presumed to be linked to his personal relationship with women, especially to the neglect of his wife.

In the last chapter I will examine what are the implications of Orwell's polarised notion of genders if it gets support from nationalism. It will be seen that "when the pinch comes", i.e. during the Second World War, Orwell's prejudices against women and adherence to traditional masculinity will result in an adulation of women as mothers reminiscent of the Nazi view of women's role in society. Orwell's politics of gender point to women's marginalisation and instrumentalisation at a time of crisis, a politics that will be contrasted to the more gender progressive agenda of Woolf's *Three Guineas*.

The interplay of masculinity and patriotism

In 'Notes on Nationalism' Orwell warns of confusing nationalism with patriotism, arguing that they entail "two different and even opposing ideas." Patriotism, according to Orwell, is the "devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people." Patriotism is, in Orwell's assessment, defensive, whereas nationalism is "inseparable from the desire for power." He traces back the rise and spread of nationalism to the breakdown of patriotism and religious belief: just as monarchy is a guard against dictatorship, or organized religion against superstition, "patriotism is an inoculation against nationalism." This characteristically daring Orwellian statement might be explained by the fact that Orwell uses the notion of nationalism in a wider sense and considers communism, political Catholicism, or even pacifism to be forms of nationalism, he calls them "transferred nationalism." However, if nationalism is taken in its ordinary sense as allegiance to the imagined community of a nation, patriotism becomes inseparable from nationalism, there is no clear-cut divide where patriotism ends and nationalism begins. Patriotism, far from being a guard against, is a fertile soil for nationalism, which is, in turn, an institutionalized form of patriotism. Orwell's notion of patriotism, like his definition of nationalism, is misleading because patriotism is not only a devotion to a particular place and way of life, to the homeland, but it is transferred to its culture, to its people and institutions and thus becomes indistinguishable from nationalism. Whereas the etymology of the two words imply that patriotism is connected to the land while nationalism to the community, both notions has territorial as well as cultural, economic and political affects. Orwell's patriotic essays written during the Second World War best exemplify that innocuous or simply defensive patriotism is never free from offensive nationalism, from the "desire for power": referring to the outstanding qualities of the English people, especially to its "highly original quality" of peacefulness, Orwell in 'The English People' envisages a leading political position for England in the future. "If the English took the trouble to make their own democracy work, they would become the political leaders of western Europe, and probably some other parts of the world as well." (*CW*16, 222)

Nationalism is a major if not sweeping social force that has been and continues to be one of the most powerful ideologies since the nineteenth century. According to George Mosse, since its birth with the nation-states it often co-opted important social movements and ideologies, it "absorbed all that men thought meaningful and held dear (…) It reached out to liberalism, conservatism, and socialism; it advocated both tolerance and repression, peace and war – whatever served its purpose." (Mosse, *Nationalism*, 9) Benedict Anderson also points out that it is compatible with any political ideology but it should not be understood as a self-consciously held ideology and unlike these, for example liberalism and conservatism, left and right, it has no significant adversary. (12) As Orwell's case exemplifies, it fits well with socialism in spite of the fact that socialism should be internationalist by definition.

Seeking an explanation for the power of nationalism, especially focusing on German national socialism and not being satisfied with purely political and economic answers, Mosse argues that to a great extent nationalism relied on and was supported by middle-class respectability and it was middle-class puritan morality that gave the wider social context in which nationalism could become the most powerful and effective ideology of modern times: " … side by side with their economic activity it was above all the ideal of respectability which came to characterise their style of life." (*Nationalism*, 4) Mosse defines respectability as "`decent and correct` manners and morals" including the proper attitude towards sexuality and it is this latter element of respectability that Mosse sees as being in an intricately close relationship with the state and the nation. Directing and controlling human sexuality is vital for the health and the future of the state and the nation, therefore reproductive heterosexuality is constructed as the right kind of sexuality. Supported by religious revivals and the development of medicine as a science, middle-class respectability reinforced the distinction between normality and abnormality and relegated non-conforming sexualities like homosexuality, promiscuity, prostitution to the status of outsiders. "Nationalism and respectability assigned everyone his place in life, man and woman, normal and abnormal, native and foreigner; any confusion between these categories threatened chaos and loss of control." (Mosse, *Nationalism*, 16)

Mosse argues that the triumph of respectability and thus indirectly the appeal of nationalism has to be seen in the context of the rise of the bourgeois family as an

economic unit. Superseding larger webs of kinship, the nuclear family became the predominant form of middle-class life and traditional gender roles got conserved in it. Industrialisation brought about a division of labour within the family where "business" and "home" were no longer under one roof and which saw the man off to work and kept the woman at home with the children, i.e. everyone was assigned his or her own place within and outside the family and it was wise not to transgress one's borders. The family, however, was not as cut off from the public as the warm nest trope would suggest: it was/is a crucial place for educating and disciplining children, the future respectable citizens possibly inculcated with the right form of sexuality. What on the level of the nation was accomplished by female national symbols like Marianne, Germania, Britannia, who set the example of tranquillity, tradition and passivity for women while calling men to partake actively in public affairs and even die for the country, was supported by the family from the bottom. Nationalism and respectability in the middle-class family mutually reinforced each other: if respectability was an important soil for nationalism, nationalism back up and conserved middle-class puritan morality, including clear-cut gender roles.

The allegedly private nuclear family became the primary source of the public construction of ideal manhood and womanhood. Proper manliness and womanliness, of course, needed their countertypes, the abnormal, whether in terms of class, race or sexuality, to set themselves against. Proper masculinity could only be defined and acted out against homosexuality and decadence, proper femininity needed the "masculine" woman and the figure of the lesbian or the prostitute to establish itself. As opposed to the countertypes, respectability, i.e. proper sexuality, became a homogenising force that allowed for certain, very few attitudes and identities and excluded many other, and it destroyed the diversity of life, including the diversity of sexuality and backed up the totalising force of nationalism. During national socialism, which provided the "climax to the alliance of nationalism and respectability," there was a concerted effort to regenerate respectability, including moderation, self-restraint, control over and sublimation of sensuality, devotion to duty, patriotism, and distinct and clear gender roles.

Mosse's gender sensitive insight into the interplay of nationalism and sexuality has been rather unique among other theoreticians of nationalism. Going against the

trend of male theorists who typically examine nationalism from the standpoint of the white male, possibly European and heterosexual modern subject, some, like Miroslav Hroch, have turned attention to non-dominant groups' relation to nation-building and nationalism but the gendering of nations has remained unacknowledged. Drawing on the Andersonian definition of the nation as an "imagined political community" that bears a homogenising effect, a "deep, horizontal comradeship" that overwrites the prevailing inequalities within the nation, feminist criticism pointed out that those inequalities can be the result not only of class or race but also of gender difference. Anne McClintock particularly points out that despite "nationalisms' ideological investment in the idea of popular *unity*, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalisation of gender *difference*. No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation state." (61) While, arguing that women do participate in the oppression of women of other ethnic and economic groups, Anthias and Yuval-Davies urge us to avoid regarding national processes as representations of sexual divisions and warn of the reductionism inherent in linking the interests of the national and the interests of male subjects, they admit that women are a special focus of state concern as a social category due to their role in human reproduction. As biological and cultural/ideological reproducers of the nation, women, who have traditionally been excluded from the public domain, are denied agency and constitute, argue feminists, instruments for essentially male-defined agendas. (Anthias, 4-8)

According to Joane Nagel nationalism is "a major venue for 'accomplishing' masculinity, partly because the national state is primarily a masculine institution and partly because "the microculture of masculinity in everyday life articulates well with the demands of nationalism," e.g. honour, bravery, duty. (251-252) V. Spike Peterson also challenges the gender neutrality of the nation and nationalism, she claims that those are not simply gendered but are invested in heterosexism, i.e. the normalisation of heterosexuality. Since nationalist narratives promote the illusion of homogeneity, uniformity within the group threaten those whose identity is at odds with the projected image of homogeneous national identity and who thus share least in privilege and political representation. (Peterson, 35) Challenges to gender ordering, like the participation of women in traditionally male roles or vice versa, threaten personal

identities and promote fear of destabilisation, resulting in firm resistance to deconstruction of gender ideologies, while events complying with gender ordering, e.g. men's participation in war, have the rewarding effect of strengthening one's identity that is approved by the homogeneous majority group. War guarantees heterosexual masculinity to those taking part in it.

As opposed to Anderson, who claims that print capitalism played an essential role in the rise of nationalism by making possible the formation of reading communities in vernacular languages, McClintock suggests that, especially in our time, the illusion of a collective national identity is created though spectacle and fetishism. Nationalism, from such a perspective, is a symbolic performance of the imagined community, which "takes shape through the visible, ritual organisation of fetish objects: flags, uniforms, airplane logos, maps, anthems, national flowers, national cuisines and architectures, as well as through the organisation of collective fetish spectacle – in team sports, military displays, mass rallies, the myriad forms of popular culture, and so on." (71) Nations, furthermore, are often figured as families, Orwell's depiction of England as a family with the wrong members in control is not an exception. The family trope, McClintock points out, offers a cosy, natural figure for sanctioning social hierarchy. "Since the subordination of woman to man, child to adult, was deemed a natural fact, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature." (62) The family image legitimised hierarchy and exclusion in non-familial, affiliative social formations.

As the following analysis of Orwell's major patriotic essays and the implications of his devotion to popular culture will show, his patriotism was a venue for performing and reinforcing his own heterosexual masculinity, which involved the condemnation of other, especially homosexual identities, and the denial of women's agency within the nation. The attributes and principles he tried to live up to all his life, like bravery, action, duty, commitment, self-sacrifice, self-reliance, heroism and the readiness to take part in war ensured him a heterosexual masculine identity that complied with the traditional masculine identity promoted by nationalist narratives. The vehemence with which he attacked homosexuals implies that he needed the countertype, the "abnormal" to act out his proper, "normal" masculinity. "Decency," a favourite word of his, postulates not only morality but proper sexuality, what Mosse would call respectability.

Even his condemnation of intellectuals and devotion to "ordinary men" has gendered implications: intellectuals are passive and effeminate, whereas common men are active and masculine. By discussing women in his patriotic essays only as breeders of the nation and as prostitutes, he reduced women to be instruments of male-defined national agendas. If blind to the social difference of gender, he was sensitive to differences of class, but under the homogenising force of war-time nationalism he reduced the significance of class differences and joined the chorus emphasizing the binding force of the myth of national unity.

Making the patriotic bolt

George Orwell was not born a good patriot. Starting his career as a spokesman for the underdog, it was only natural that he should regard the looming Second World War as a game of imperialist powers played at the expense of the poor. In May 1938 he joined a debate in the columns of *New English Weekly* that had been provoked by A. Romney Green's attack on Aldous Huxley. Green accused Huxley of taking "the intolerably smug and absolutely fatal view of his brother pacifists that the abolition of war must precede other social reforms" and grouped him with C.E.M. Joad, Siegfried Sassoon, Osbert Sitwell and "the rest of our pacifist philosophers and literati." (*CW*152) Orwell joined the dispute on the side of the pacifists and claimed that the coming war was a conflict bolstering up rival imperialisms: "So long as they [people] show themselves willing to fight 'in defence of democracy', or 'against Fascism', or for any other flyblown slogan, the same trick will be played upon them again and again: 'You can't have a rise in wages *now*, because we have got to prepare for war. Guns before butter.'" (*CW*11, 153) In June 1938 he joined the Independent Labour Party and endorsed its opposition to any preparation for the coming war. It was the only party he could join, he confessed, "with at least the certainty that I would never be led up the garden path in the name of Capitalist democracy." (*CW*11, 169) In a letter to Jack Common he admitted that the idea of war was "a pure nightmare" to him. From Morocco, where he spent the winter of 1938, he instigated Herbert Read to launch underground anti-war activities and thought of mobilising the distaste for war, which he presumed existed among ordinary, decent people. To Geoffrey Gorer he explained that

"[f]ascism is after all a development of capitalism" which is liable to turn into fascism "when the pinch comes". (*CEJL*1, 284) He propounded the idea that "[f]ascism and capitalism are at bottom the same thing" and depicted the Popular Front as "an unholy alliance of the robbers and the robbed." (*CEJL*1, 305) Identifying his critical stance on the war with that of the nation at large (Patai's "voice-of-the-people stance"), he dissociated himself from fellow-intellectuals whom he labelled slogan-shouters this time. In 'Political Reflections on the Crisis' he was especially critical of left-wing intellectuals who, he assumed, were deceived by the war racket. He granted no benign category of intellectuals: "Our civilisation produces in increasing numbers two types, the gangster and the pansy. They never meet, but each is necessary to the other. Somebody in eastern Europe 'liquidates' a Trotskyist; somebody in Bloomsbury writes a justification of it." (*CW*11, 244) Intellectuals' enthusiasm for the war was, Orwell suspected, due to their exceptionally sheltered position: for them "'war' is something that happens on paper […]." (*CW*11, 244) The lack of a sense of personal danger explained their "utter irresponsibility." As always, he contrasted the attitude of intellectuals and ordinary people for the advantage of the latter: "The mass of the people are normally silent. They do not sign manifestoes, attend demonstrations, answer questionnaires or even join political parties. As a result, it is very easy to mistake a handful of slogan-shouters for the entire nation." (*CW*11, 243)

A year later, however, after he had unearthed the persevering effect of a middle-class patriotic education, he sought justification for his newly discovered identity as a patriot from the unthinking patriotism of the same mass of ordinary people. As Alok Rai observes, "[t]he silence of the silent majority allows for a certain diversity of interpretation." (87) Ordinary people now turned out to be if not vocal unconscious patriots. He discarded even the work done by Mass Observers which provided evidence proving the contrary of his wish:

> The volume of discontent, apathy, bewilderment and in general, war-weariness is probably far smaller than the Mass Observers seem to imply. […] The one thing the compilers do not seem to have encountered is the sentiment of patriotism. If one may make a guess at the reason, it is that people capable even of imagining a thing like Mass Observations are necessarily exceptional people – exceptional enough not to share the rather unthinking patriotism of the ordinary man. (*CW*12, 17)

What is more, he questioned even the methods applied by Mass Observations with the underlying assumption that he knew instinctively what ordinary people thought and how they felt since he was one of them. Orwell – it is clear – attuned the attitude of "ordinary men" to his own shift of opinion – the resulting inconsistency warns us against attributing too much validity to Orwell's casual 'opinion polls' and signals the populist direction in which Orwell's views were tending. (Rai, 89) The contradiction in his assessment reveals the reason for his tactic of frequent reference to ordinary people: he appealed to them in order to justify his own quite often extravagant opinions. The attitudes and thoughts he attributed to ordinary people – this could easily be done thanks to their silence – were simply his own attitudes and thoughts which gained weighty support once he established that ordinary people were sane and decent unlike the intellectuals. "In the general patriotism of the country," claims Orwell in 'The Lion and the Unicorn', "the intellectuals form a sort of island of dissident thought. England is perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals are ashamed of their own nationality." (*CW*12, 406) He was insistent upon identifying himself with ordinary people and in the process of presenting himself as authentically representing their voice, a difference of opinion with the intelligentsia was an invaluable asset: in doing so he was capable of announcing half-truths and immoderate generalisations with surprising firmness. When he had been propagating against war he had deplored the intellectuals en bloc for yearning for bloodshed, which he had ascribed to the softness and security of English life – when he discovered the force of patriotism, starting from the same ground, the special atmosphere of English life, he lashed out at the hedonistic outlook of pacifist intellectuals, who now seemed to be incapable of understanding such a fundamental – if irrational – emotion as patriotism. "[…] the Orwellian anti-intellectual sniping," according to Woodcock, "reveals not only the kind of man of straw which he habitually constructed to be knocked down with dazzling fist-play, but also the image of himself which he saw opposed to it in the ring." (250)

Alok Rai notes that Orwell's shift of alignment is not less comic than the communists' changing official attitude to fascism, which Orwell often deplored. Until the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, the communists assiduously worked for a Popular Front opposing fascism. The Pact conveyed the message that the conflict between Hitler and the West was an imperialist one and the communists

maintained this standpoint until Hitler attacked Russia in June 1941, whereupon they returned to the opinion that fascism was an enemy after all. Orwell went along the same curve of changing attitudes in the opposite direction, putting down the communist turnaround to cold-headed and dishonest tactic whereas he described his realignment with England as based on one of the most fundamental and ordinary emotions. Rai notes ironically that the Penguin edition of CEJL comments on this aspect of Orwell's writings as having forged "a unique literary manner from the process of thinking aloud." (87) Considering Orwell's defiant outlook, it must not have been by chance that the change in his attitude to the war was exactly the inverse of official communist policy. Especially due to his experiences in Spain and the resulting growing hostility towards communism, emotions presumably played as great a role in the development of his attitude as political speculation. Newsinger hints at the emotional factor in the shift of alignment: "[…] he would have found it considerably more difficult to support Britain in a war that was being conducted in alliance with Russia. Once the Communists had adopted an anti-war position themselves, his own change of heart became all the easier." (63)

The change of mind was, however, not a thunderbolt from the blue but a process whose signs can be followed in his writings from the autumn of 1939 through 1940. 'Inside the Whale', the seemingly odd essay with its endorsement of non-committed writing, published in March 1940, might well be the mark of a possible crisis preceding the change of heart which he publicly admitted in 'My country Right or Left'. Surveying the literary trends from the Great War up to the thirties he casts his vote for the Henry Miller-type of political passivity – at no other time in his career did he advocate disregard for public and political issues and glorify – in his own words – a "completely negative, unconstructive, amoral writer, a mere Jonah." (*CW*12, 112) As opposed to the boy-scout atmosphere of thirties leftist literature, Orwell envisages a period of quietism and presents Jonah sitting comfortably cushioned in the belly of the whale as the only possible contemporary attitude:

> The passive attitude will come back, and it will be more consciously passive than before. Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism—robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to it. Get inside the whale—or rather, admit that you are inside the whale (for you *are*, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it,

> record it. That seems to be the formula that any sensitive novelist is now likely to adopt. A novel on more positive, 'constructive' lines, and not emotionally spurious, is at present very difficult to imagine. (*CW*12, 111)

Given the depth of his despair – naming both progress and reaction "swindle" is ample proof of this in the case of a writer so committed to progress – and knowing his preoccupation with public affairs, the imperative sentence encouraging "you" to "stop fighting," "accept it, endure it, record it" reads as an attempt to convince himself rather than "you" of the justifiability of a passive attitude. Quietism, "the final, unsurpassable stage of irresponsibility", symbolised by Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, however, never became a guiding principle in his writing.[31]

In the essay Orwell argues that a lack of experience of violence and illegality explains the "brand of amoralism" which underlies Auden's light-hearted manner of speaking of "the necessary murder" in the poem 'Spain'. (*CW*12, 103-104) Reviewing Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, published in the same month, he shows signs of getting out of the crisis of non-commitment by highlighting another consequence of softness and security: the inability to understand the appeal of patriotism and military virtue. As opposed to "progressive" Western thought (the inverted commas are Orwell's, note how in this way he questions the justifiability of the term and implies a personal relationship with the reader: you and I, of course, know what it really means), totalitarian regimes are, in psychological terms, far sounder: "Hitler […] knows that human beings *don't* only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth-control, and, in general, common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags and loyalty-parades." (*CW*12, 118) It is not surprising that Orwell enlists his pet peeves on the "progressive" side and puts "struggle and self-sacrifice," on which he himself was keen all his life, on the other side of the scale.

'Notes on the Way', published at the end of March 1940 in *Time and Tide*, can already be regarded as a tentative yes to war. Though emphasising the sinister feature of British imperialism and drawing a line from the racialism inherent in imperialism to the

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[31] When on his way to Spain, Orwell dropped in on Miller in Paris. Having disputed over the attainment of peace and the necessity of self-sacrifice (Miller was of the opinion that liberty cannot be gained by war but only by acting peaceably), Miller gave Orwell his blessings and offered him a corduroy jacket, not bullet-proof but good against cold: "Take it, if you like, as my contribution to the Spanish republican cause." According to Miller's friend, Alfred Perles, Miller refrained from adding that "Orwell would have been welcome to the jacket even had he chosen to fight for the opposite side." (Perles, 145-6)

persecution of 'inferior races' under Hitler's rule, he rejects neutrality as a possible stance in war – a clever trick supporting his own change of mind: short of neutrality the only possible solutions are supporting your side or the enemy. In such a context who could disapprove the support of war. "All activities are war activities. Whether you want to or not, you are obliged to help your own side or the enemy. The Pacifists, Communists, Fascists, etc., are at this moment helping Hitler." (*CW*12, 124) Unnoticed and by a curious twist of logic, under the flag of patriotism he got very near to the communist line of argument explaining the reign of terror during the Spanish war: hampering the war against Franco by insisting on revolution equals helping Franco and it is only one step further to claim that you are in fact in Franco's pay. A month later in the columns of *New English Weekly,* apropos of Muggeridges's pessimistic book, *The Thirties*, and referencing the author's decision to join the army, he comes up with a confession foreshadowing 'My country Right or Left':

> […] I know very well what underlies these closing chapters. It is the emotion of the middle-class man, brought up in the military tradition, who finds in the moment of crisis that he is a patriot after all. It is all very well to be "advanced" and "enlightened", to snigger at Colonel Blimp and proclaim your emancipation from all traditional loyalties, but a time comes when the sand of the desert is sodden red and what have I done for thee, England, my England? As I was brought up in this tradition myself I can recognise it under strange disguises, and also sympathise with it, for even at its stupidest and most sentimental it is a comelier thing than the shallow self-righteousness of the left-wing intelligentsia. (*CW*12, 151-2)

The confession is not yet explicit but disguised under the depiction of another person's attitude but henceforth he clearly dissociates himself from the pacifist-minded-because-hedonistic-in-outlook intellectuals and thereby paves the way for his grand confession. (See, for example, his criticism of C.E.M. Joad's *Journey Through the War Mind*, in which he argues that the present situation calls for a recognition of the importance of patriotism and fanaticism, something sensible and good-tempered intellectuals like C.E.M. Joad are unable to do. *CW*12, 178-9)

Awaking to the fruits of a patriotic middle-class education

Published in the autumn of 1940, 'My Country Right or Left' heralds the major change in Orwell's views. It opens with an overview of the pacifist attitude of Orwell's

generation during and after the Great War. Inviting the reader to browse their memories of the 1914-18 war, he takes the reader on a sort of guided tour: his memories of the war. By addressing the reader as "you" in the opening sentences Orwell establishes an atmosphere of intimacy and by supporting his idea of loaded memories with his own experiences related in the first person he assures the reader that "you" and "me" think about war essentially similarly, "[…] if you disentangle your real memories from their later accretions, you find that it was not usually the big events that stirred you at the time." He then switches to the first person when he relates the prosaic effects of war on his perception – thus suggesting that "you" and "me" are in the same boat: he gets the reader to see that war is primarily a tiresome rather than a touching experience for those not actively taking part in the fight.[32] Moving on to the point of pacifist reaction among the young, he situates himself as one of the anti-war young, "we," who were just "too young" to take part in the war and who, in rebellion against the previous generation, "they," wrote it off as "a meaningless slaughter." Indifference towards the war and even despising it were considered by the young signs of enlightenment. "For years after the war," claims Orwell on behalf of "we," "to have any knowledge of or interest in military matters, even to know which end of a gun the bullet comes out of, was suspect in 'enlightened' circles." (*CW*12, 270) But in the sketch of this pacifist reaction he anticipates his newly developed critical stance with an argument that henceforth became a permanent and basic pillar of his criticism of pacifism: "Ours was the one-eyed pacifism that is peculiar to sheltered countries with strong navies."[33] (*CW*12, 270)

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[32] Ringbom also points out that Orwell's reader is not a passive receiver but an individual prompted to take an active part in the communication. "The implied reader is supposed to answer questions, look up matters, remember things, and so on." (48) The imperatives, questions to the reader and the frequent use of the pronouns 'you', 'one' and 'I' as well as the colloquial style all contribute to the impression of a personal relationship between author and reader.

[33] As another argument against pacifism he claimed that it was essentially a disguised form of power worship, and stressed that by hampering the war effort pacifism necessarily supported fascism, in consequence it was objectively pro-fascist. This line of thought weirdly reminds one of the communist method of crushing the revolutionary forces in the Spanish Civil War, maintaining that the war against Franco had to be won before the revolution could be carried out, thus depicting the political forces (such as the POUM) that went on about the necessity of winning the revolution as factors hampering victory and thereby supporting Franco. The bulk of the war narrative of *Homage to Catalonia* is in essence a polemic disclosing the communist tactic and an attempt to clear the POUM of accusations of being "Franco's fifth column". In Orwell's arguments against pacifism, similarly to his stance against birth-control, social factors take precedence over individual conviction and needs, his way of thinking gives preference to the interests of the community and displays intolerance towards individual interests that run counter to communal ones.

In the second part of the essay he dissociates himself from the pacifist phase and contrasts it with the overwhelming influence of public school drilling in patriotism. To get the reader to accept and approve the submission to patriotic feeling in spite of all the foregoing, Orwell carefully further manipulates the reader with his use of personal pronouns. The appeal of war as a manly enterprise enthrals the "just too young", claims Orwell, who proceed from boyhood into manhood. By dropping the first person plural he carefully distances himself from his generation: *they* "became conscious of the vastness of experience *they* had missed." (emphasis added) And then in the sentence unveiling an important aspect of the willingness to partake in war he addresses the reader again: "You felt yourself a little less than a man, because you had missed it." (*CW*12, 270) The very obvious effect, beside informality, of the use of "you" where he could have employed the more formal 'one' is the approximation of the experience of "you" and "I." By the penultimate paragraph the relation of the reader and author is strengthened so much that the writer can safely employ the first person plural with reference to the reader and himself: the common experience of author and his generation is replaced by the suggested common lot of author and reader. Alienation from his contemporaries culminates in the same paragraph: by clearly distinguishing himself from those not motivated by patriotic emotions he positions himself and the reader against them, the left-wing intellectuals. "Only revolution can save England, that has been obvious for years, but now the revolution has started, and it may proceed quite quickly if only *we* can keep Hitler out. Within two years, maybe a year, if only *we* can hang on, *we* shall see changes that will surprise *the idiots* who have no foresight." (*CW*12, 272, emphasis added) The rigid categories he sets up and the ostracism of those not agreeing with him is an important tool in manipulating the reader. Jenni Calder is too compliant when she claims that instead of interfering Orwell merely guides: "He does not lay down the law about what ought to be believed, but tells what seems to be the truth in such a way that it has to be believed." (105) Roger Fowler is nearer to the truth in suggesting that Orwell's dialogic stance, not confined to this one essay, leads to "an aggressive, didactic tone recalling the teacher or the demagogue." (54)

In yielding to the delayed effect of patriotic training, emotions admittedly overrule rationality. Not doubting that the Spanish War was a deeply moving and significant phase in Orwell's life which fulfilled for a moment his longing for a humane

and egalitarian society, engendered emotions, of which he himself seems to have been unaware, also played a part in prompting him to embrace the war ideology: "I am convinced that part of the reason for the fascination that the Spanish civil war had for people of about my age was that it was so like the Great War." (*CW*12, 271) Preceding the modern mechanised warfare of the Second World War, it was a war in which individual courage and performance were still relied on, therefore trial by fire could considerably affirm one's manhood. It appears that the role of war in the confirmation of manhood and early patriotic education both worked towards the acceptance of war as "glorious" after all.

> On and off, I have been toting a rifle ever since I was ten, in preparation not only for war but for a particular kind of war, a war in which the guns rise to a frantic orgasm of sound, and at the appointed moment you clamber out of the trench, breaking your nails on the sandbags, and stumble across mud and wire into the machine-gun barrage. (*CW*12, 270-271)

Here the appeal of manliness joins hands with training in patriotism, though the latter is more apparent at first reading – manliness through the conventional association with toughness is implied in the visual and acoustic images of the latter part of the sentence.

If Orwell was rather unaware of the role of war in developing a sufficiently masculine image of himself, he was conscious of childhood indoctrination into war. "Most of the English middle class are trained for war from the cradle onwards, not technically but morally." (*CW*12, 270) Though generally regarded as a firm critic of British education as a whole, he made a distinction between preparatory and public schools and he was much more forgiving of the defects of the latter than those of the former. In the review of Stephen Spender's *The Backward Son* he depicts "prep schools" as "nasty little schools at which small boys are prepared for the public-school entrance examination. Incidentally these schools, with their money-grubbing proprietors and their staffs of underpaid hacks, are responsible for a lot of harm that it is usual to blame on the public schools." (*CW*12, 163) Faced with a left-wing critique of public schools, he made even more concession. In the review of T. C. Worsley's *Barbarians and Philistines: Democracy and the Public Schools*, written in September 1940, the same autumn as 'My Country Right or Left', the harshest criticism he cast on public schools was "the fact that the British Empire needed administrators […] set the public schools to turning out the brave, stupid, fairly decent mediocrities who are still their

typical products today." (*CW*12, 261) Orwell fended off Worsley's dismissal of public schools for their undemocratic nature with the dubious argument that as opposed to the age of reason, the age of bombers required not advocates of equal suffrage, free speech, intellectual tolerance and international cooperation, but the average public-school type, "who has at any rate not been brought up as a pacifist or a believer in the League of Nations. The brutal side of public-school life, which intellectuals always deprecate, is not a bad training for the real world." (*CW*12, 261) Which is equal to saying that in a belligerent era education should respond to the challenges of the time by pumping out sufficiently unthinking and belligerent students. Therefore, as far as training in military and patriotic virtues go, Orwell acquitted public schools of criticism, indeed, based on the foregoing there is ample reason to surmise that Orwell came to regard the cultivation of patriotism through a special emphasis on games as one of the few virtues of public schools: "[…] when the public schools have finally vanished we shall see virtues in them that are now hidden from us." (*CW*12, 262)

In passing he regretted Worsley's making fun of Sir Henry John Newbolt's celebrated poem 'Vitäi Lampada' (he gives it incorrectly as 'Lampada Vitai'). The poem, written in 1897, was cheered in the upheaval at the outbreak of World War I – schoolboys often had to learn it by heart – but lost its popularity as the war dragged on and people, as opposed to an early patriotic enthusiasm, inevitably experienced the horror and futility of war. The poem draws an eloquent parallel between sportsmanship in school games and firmness on the battlefield. In the panic of the battle, when the captain and many of the regiment are dead, "the river of death has brimmed its banks," the soldier, once a cricketer at Clifton College, is stirred to fight on for his England by calling to mind how the cricket captain used to prompt his mates not to lose heart at matches. "Play up! play up! and play the game!" is the imperative that encourages cricketer and soldier alike. The refrain of the three stanzas forms a connecting thread between school games and war and demonstrates how the empire was supported by the emphasis on sports: public-school championing of sportsmanship gained special meaning and reward in the service of the Empire. Group solidarity learned through sport, from which women at the time were excluded, could be safely relied upon the larger, actual as well as figurative, battlefield. The words repeated in the refrain,

sufficiently inculcated into youngsters at school, guide them "through life like a torch".[34]

In 'My Country Right or Left' Orwell compares 'Vitäi Lampada' and John Cornford's 'Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of Huesca' and concludes that apart from the technical differences "the emotional content of the two poems is almost the same". (*CW*12, 272) Reading the poems side by side one is embarrassed at the gross distortion of Orwell's assessment. As opposed to Newbolt's soldier who is prompted to unthinking action by remembering the adjuration of school games, the persona of Cornford's poem surveys history, past, present, and future, as well as his part in it. Far from being enthusiastic, he is cool-headed, and presents war as an inevitable phase of history, accepting reservedly that he has to face "the last fight." Whereas Newbolt's poem is devoid of any criticism of war and merely subscribes to flag waving (and apparently compels Orwell to do the same), Cornford's overview of history does not lead him to perceive war as a glorious game to play. With restrained emotions, even perhaps unwillingly, does the persona face the storming of Huesca. Orwell regarded Cornford as "public school to the core. He had changed his allegiance but not his emotions." (*CW*12, 272) His loyalty to England transmuted itself, according to Orwell, into loyalty to communism. By insisting on the public-school ethos of Cornford's poem, Orwell indirectly defends his own transformation in the opposite direction, from a socialist into a patriot. Both Orwell's favourable assessment of public-school training in patriotism and his revelation of a public-school trait in Cornford's attitude are examples of what Alok Rai terms "dislocations" precipitated by Orwell's patriotic transformation. (90) His evolution towards patriotism necessarily entailed other shifts in order to offer justification. However, as Rai notes, his shifts of viewpoint have not been accorded due critical recognition, probably because of his use of a radical rhetoric: "It appears morbidly symbolic that as a consequence of his Spanish wound, Orwell not only lost his voice briefly, he soon found another that was subtly, identifiably different." (83) Rai

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[34] In the 1920s, when Newbolt was touring Canada, he was distressed with the popularity that still surrounded 'Vitäi Lampada', which he came to dislike and expressed his regret at having created a "kind of Frankenstein's Monster" 30 years before. However, his words were ingrained in Orwell's mind as well. Newbolt's line from the poem echoes in Orwell's review of Muggeridge's *The Thirties*, in the passage, already quoted, in which he yields to the force of patriotism: "It is all very well to be "advanced" and "enlightened", to snigger at Colonel Blimp and proclaim your emancipation from all traditional loyalties, but a time comes *when the sand of the desert is sodden red* and what have I done for thee, England, my England?" (*CW*12, 151, emphasis added)

defines this new voice as "uncompromisingly militant" and the issue on which this militancy was especially vocal was the proper attitude towards the Second World War.

He informed some friends and acquaintances about his change of mind with similar resolution. Whereas in 1937, returning home from Spain, in 'Spilling the Spanish Beans' he had complained about the communist method of getting rid of troublesome persons who pointed out that "fascism and bourgeois 'democracy' are Tweedledum and Tweedledee", to Gollancz in January 1940 he wrote with equal vehemence: "The intellectuals who are at present pointing out that democracy and fascism are the same thing depress me horribly." (*CW*12, 5) Still a bit earlier, in the autumn of 1939, there was an exchange of letters between Orwell and pacifist Ethel Mannin. Unfortunately, Orwell's letters to Mannin have not survived, nonetheless her letters to him are edifying. Whereas in her letter of 20 September she expressed her enthusiasm for *Coming Up for Air*, her letter of 30 October, no doubt prompted by a letter from Orwell in the meantime, expressed bewilderment and incomprehension at his wanting to join the army. "I can't think of any reason why you should want to fight unless to get into the army and do anti-war propaganda there – but you don't indicate that. I thought you 'went of the boil in 1916,' I thought you thought it all crazy, this smashing in of Nazi faces. For the luv of Mike write a few lines to lighten our darkness. Even a p.c. if you don't feel like another letter." (*CW*11, 413)

According to Rai Orwell's use of a dream to confess patriotism may be ascribed to aesthetic effect, "a piece of self-conscious self-dramatisation". (88) "What I knew in my dream that night was that the long drilling in patriotism which the middle classes go through had done its work, and that once England was in a serious jam it would be impossible for me to sabotage." (*CW*12, 271) Shifting from analysis to approval of middle-class education, he displays ignorance of its effect on the social expectations of masculinity. David Newsome points out that in the age of imperial expansion manliness to the "muscular Christian" school meant not only being adult; the stress fell on the masculine – as opposed to the feminine – connotations of manliness and became associated with energy, courage and physical vitality. (quoted by Patai, *Mystique*, 273) As the coming war cast its shadow on the Edwardian period and increased patriotism, these ideals were further intensified. According to Newsome, the ideal of muscular Christianity degenerated into a code of living "so robust and patriotic in its demands

that it could be represented as reaching its perfection in a code of dying." (Patai, *Mystique*, 273) In 'The Lion and the Unicorn' Orwell speaks of public schools in very similar terms: there "the duty of dying for your country, if necessary, is laid down as the first and greatest of the Commandments." (*CW*12, 402) But recognition does not involve refusal. Whereas the first part of 'My Country Right or Left' offers an analysis of the war-training inherent in the middle class education of the time, it ends as an avowal of patriotic commitment to the Second World War and as an approval of patriotic education which he had set out to examine. Far from recognising the dangers inherent in patriotism and military virtues, he extols the "spiritual need" for them.

> I grew up in an atmosphere tinged with militarism, and afterwards I spent five boring years within the sound of bugles. To this day it gives me a faint feeling of sacrilege not to stand to attention during 'God save the King.' That is childish, of course, but I would sooner have had that kind of upbringing than be like the left-wing intellectuals who are so 'enlightened' that they cannot understand the most ordinary emotions. (*CW*12, 272)

Getting under the illusion of national unity: intellectuals and wealthy women, please stay outside…

In 'The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius', which appeared in February 1941, Orwell picks up the thread of the power of patriotism where he left it in 'My Country Right or Left'. Having seized the reader's attention with an incisive opener, ("As I write, highly civilised human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me."), he immediately gets to the issue of the strength of national loyalty, which he regards as one of the main driving forces of the modern world. While the observation is right, his unconditional surrender to the great power of national loyalty is, however, objectionable. He claims that "as a *positive* force there is nothing to set beside it" (emphasis added) yet only a couple of sentences before he established that the fact of serving one's country, including the duty to kill, has the power to absolve one from evil. He also acknowledges that fascism, in both Germany and Italy, could gain power mainly because it made use of the force of nationalism. Yet this recognition does not keep him back from flag-waving.

Overrun by the initial enthusiasm for war and the opportunity for a socialist revolution, the essay is full of biases and ingenuousness. As Janet Montefiore argues

about ‘Inside the Whale’ but her assessment may be extended to all of Orwell’s mature writing: it is “a pleasure to read: clear, vigorous and well written. It is also aggressive, misleading and full of holes.” (14) It is a long time ago that Orwell, returning home from France, commented ironically on patriotism as a luxury of those who can afford it. (Woodcock, 255)

> I was so pleased to be getting home, after being hard up for months in a foreign city, that England seemed to me a sort of Paradise. There are, indeed, many things in England that make you glad to get home; bathrooms, armchairs, brown bread, marmalade, beer made with veritable hops – they are all splendid, if you can pay for them. England is a very good country when you are not poor; and, of course, with a tame imbecile to look after, I was not going to be poor. The thought of not being poor made me very patriotic. (*CW*1, 127)

Almost a decade had passed since and a world war had broken out. Menaced by an external enemy he closes ranks with the nation, common lot taking precedence over differences of interest: “[…] in moments of supreme crisis the whole nation can suddenly draw together and act upon a species of instinct, really a code of conduct which is understood by almost everyone, though never formulated” (*CW*12, 393-394) – the observation, heavily loaded with categorical words, obviously pertains as much to the nation as to his own emotional state of mind. Rai observes that the myth of community might have eased the pain of departing from his former political affiliation. (94)

Looking back from 1942, Orwell acknowledged the emotional basis of political allegiance. When putting down a conversation with Herbert Read in his war-time diary, he commented on his change in attitude towards both England and Russia in peaceful and troubled times: “[d]on’t you feel quite differently towards the Russians now they are in a jam? […] For that matter I felt quite differently towards England when I saw that England was in a jam.” (*CEJL*2, 439) Doing justice to Orwell’s apparent naivety, Rai notes that after the disheartening experience of Dunkirk the sense of a wartime community was a moving experience widely shared. (92) As opposed to the popular belief of it as a “wretched time”, Julian Symons also ranks it as an especially happy period of his life: “Barriers of class and circumstances disappeared, so that London was more nearly an egalitarian city than it has ever been in the last quarter of a century.” (quoted by Rai, 92-93) Fyvel also remembers the optimism and “gigantic upheaval” that followed the fall of France. The time was especially suitable for Utopian thoughts.

While German bombs began falling on London, and England feared a German invasion, in the relative safety and convenience of Frederic Warburg's Scarlett Farm Warburg, Fyvel and Orwell discussed "how the slovenly Tory England could be transformed into an up-to-date socialist community which could inspire the world." (Fyvel, *Memoir*, 106) Newsinger not unconvincingly shows how Fyvel's ideas, put forward in his analysis of the contemporary situation, *The Malady and the Vision*, could have influenced Orwell's political thinking. Criticising the tendency to write about Orwell as if he were a "pristine thinker" without intellectual influences, he quotes Fyvel on the "idle rich" who imposed themselves on the poor and on "the real England […] whose great traditions of culture and freedom have survived the ravages of the industrial revolution and even the caste spirit and degeneration of finance capitalism" as a possible source of the themes Orwell took up himself in 'The Lion and the Unicorn.' (71) Fyvel's idea to launch a series of short books on "war aims for a better future" took shape when he and Warburg managed to persuade the reluctant Orwell, who above all wanted to join the forces, to produce the first book. 'The Lion and the Unicorn', according to Fyvel, reflects the general optimism of the dramatic year of 1940 "when England gathered herself from what seemed imminent defeat by Hitler." (*Memoir*, 111)

In his war-time pamphlet Orwell found space to dwell on the possibility, even the need, to reconcile patriotism and socialism. As opposed to his pre-war idea of war and revolution as antithetical, he now saw an immense possibility in the egalitarian spirit of war. The idea that war wiped out class privileges was put to use in presenting war and revolution as inseparable. "We cannot win the war without introducing Socialism, nor establish Socialism without winning the war. At such a time, it is possible, as it was not in the peaceful years, to be both revolutionary and realistic." (*CW*12, 421) His words unambiguously testify that he saw the situation of war-time Britain "through Spanish glasses." (Newsinger, 64) Just as the POUM had clamoured for simultaneous war and revolution, Orwell spread the idea that without a change in the fundamental structure of British society it would be unable to defeat Hitler.[35] By

[35] Newsinger also observes how Orwell's attitudes towards the Home Guard was coloured by his Spanish (and POUM) experiences. He draws attention to Orwell's article 'The Home Guard', published in December 1940 in *Tribune*, in which he encouraged the turning of the Home Guard into a quasi-revolutionary militia that could both resist the Nazi invasion and ensure the unfolding of a revolutionary situation. (69)

attributing to war the role of social catalyst (war being the "greatest of all agents of change") he reconciled the need for simultaneous war and social change, and, of course, thereby patriotism with socialist aspirations, and from then on repeated this theme over and over again. As Rai claims, "[t]he mysticism of war […] is for Orwell the necessary means of accommodating his newly discovered patriotism in his intellectual position while preserving a radical continuity." (98) He seized on war as an opportunity for social change to mask the sudden transformation of his political opinion. His perverse desire for a hard-got as opposed to an easy victory in war is, according to Rai, also to be linked with his patriotism alloyed with revolutionary socialism. In 1942 he tried to explain to Sir Stafford Cripps that an easy victory over Germany would be "a disaster pure and simple (because if the war were won as easily as that, there would have been no real upheaval here and the American millionaires would still be *in situ*)".[36] Furthermore, Orwell argued in 'The Lion and the Unicorn', it was time for the patriotism of the Blimp and the intelligence of the Bloomsbury highbrow to come together again: "The Bloomsbury highbrow, with his mechanical snigger [at the Union Jack], is as out of date as the cavalry colonel." (*CW*12, 407) The wish for the realignment of patriotism and intelligence is obviously a bulwark fending off possible criticism for simple-minded patriotism.

Though later on in an explanatory note to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* he will explain the choice of the novel's scene with the conviction that the English-speaking races are not inherently better than other nations, in 'The Lion and the Unicorn' he still claims that national character is founded on real differences of outlook and implies that what has happened in Germany (Hitler's June purge, for example) could not happen in England due to the special characteristics of English civilisation. The categorical

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[36] The quoted sentence, beside being one of the "intellectual contortions" resulting from Orwell's attempt to reconcile patriotism and socialism (Rai, 99), is also indicative of Orwell's neglect of the individual and his emphasis on community and ideas as has already been suggested in connection with 'The Story by Five Authors'. War, says Orwell in 'The Lion and the Unicorn', "brings it home to the individual that he is *not* altogether an individual." (*CW*12, 421, emphasis in the original) The loss of individual life in war does not count: "Horrible though it is, I hope the BEF is cut to pieces sooner than capitulate." (*CEJL*2, 340) The lack of significance attributed to individual life has been observed in connection with Orwell's dispute with Vera Brittain as well. He considered even the possibility of his own death as efficient propaganda. Rejecting refuge in Canada "if the worst comes to the worst" and "squealing from a safe distance", he insists on heroic death. "Better to die if necessary, and maybe even as propaganda one's death might achieve more than going abroad and living more or less unwanted on other people's charity." (*CEJL*2, 355)

announcement of his opinion is worthy of attention: "[…] in fact anyone able to use his eyes knows that the average of human behaviour differs enormously from country to country. Things that could happen in one country could not happen in another." (*CW*12, 392) Robert Pearce points out that many of the characteristics Orwell ascribes to the English are in fact his own personal traits. The English, according to Orwell, are not gifted artistically, they are not intellectual, and they abhor abstract thought and philosophy. They cling obstinately to everything that is out of date, they are a great nation of collectors. They are addicted to hobbies and spare-time activities, a manifestation of the privateness of English life. "We are a nation of flower-lovers, but also a nation of stamp-collectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, coupon-snippers, darts-players, crossword-puzzle fans." Though lacking definite religious belief, the English have retained "a deep tinge of Christian feeling." (*CW*12, 393-94) English civilisation is best characterised by gentleness, hypocrisy, reverence for constitutionalism and militarism and hatred of uniforms. It is "the only large obstacle in Hitler's path. It is a living contradiction of all the 'infallible' dogmas of Fascism." (*CW*12, 431) Orwell is convinced that whatever turn things may take, England will retain its essential characteristics.

> The gentleness, the hypocrisy, the thoughtlessness, the reverence for law and the hatred of uniforms will remain, along with the suet puddings and the misty skies. It needs some very great disaster, such as the prolonged subjugation by a foreign enemy, to destroy a national culture. The Stock Exchange will be pulled down, the horse plough will give way to the tractor, the country houses will be turned into children's holiday camps, the Eton and Harrow match will be forgotten, but England will still be England, an everlasting animal stretching into the future and the past, and, like all living things, having the power to change out of recognition and yet remain the same. (*CW*12, 409)

Rai notes the ironic similarity between Orwell's depiction of an atavistic and somewhat mystified English community and the contemporaneous evocation of *Volksgemeinschaft*, the policy that sought the creation of a racially homogeneous national community in Nazi Germany, involving the annexation of territories inhabited by ethnic Germans outside the borders of Germany and the destruction of individuals not fitting the goals of the *Reich*. According to Rai both attempt at reducing the significance of social differences: Orwell "in the naive expectation that those differences are disappearing under the stress of war," and *Volksgemeinschaft* "to

generate oppressive majorities and persecuted minorities excluded from the range of social compassion." (102)

Orwell was liable to speak for the whole nation or for the common people of the nation, whereas his point of view was shaped by his personal history and circumstances. However much he gave the impression of sharing the opinion of the general public, his was certainly only one point of view. Pacifists, towards whom he became increasingly intolerant from his patriotic turn on, saw events in a very different light. D.S. Savage's idea of Britain, as expressed in the controversy with Orwell over pacifism and war, was the opposite of Orwell's patriotic enthusiasm and trust in the nation. The use of quotation marks is indicative of a sceptical stance against Britain and the patriotic appeal generated by war.

> I am not greatly taken in by Britain's "democracy," particularly as it is gradually vanishing under the pressure of war. Certainly I would never fight and kill for such a phantasm. I do not greatly admire the part "my country" has played in world events. I consider that spiritually Britain has lost all meaning; she once stood for something, perhaps, but who can pretend that the *idea* of "Britain" now counts for anything in the world? This is not cynicism. I feel identified with my country in a deep sense, and want her to regain her meaning, her soul, if that be possible: but the unloading of a billion tons of bombs on Germany won't help this forward an inch. (*CW*13, 393)

With the emergence of patriotic emotions Orwell became admiringly aware of the appeal of irrationality. In 'Wells, Hitler and the World State' he denounced Wells for being unable to understand the force of nationalism, religious bigotry and feudal loyalty. "The energy that actually shapes the world springs from emotions – racial pride, leader-worship, religious belief, love of war – which liberal intellectuals mechanically write off as anachronisms, and which they have usually destroyed so completely in themselves as to have lost all power of action." (*CW*12, 538) In 'The Lion and the Unicorn', having established the unity of the English people based upon some general national characteristics, he ostracises the intellectuals who are devoid of those traits and therefore are the source of many troubles. Whereas the common people have retained a "deep tinge of Christian feeling" and a "deeply moral attitude to life," the intelligentsia has been infected by power-worship, the new religion of Europe. Patriotism runs like a connecting thread through the whole nation but the intelligentsia, Orwell claims, is

immune to it. No wonder that their lot is ostracism: their modernity, the internationalist upheaval of the time, is in the way of Orwell's patriotic sentiment.

> The mentality of the English left-wing intelligentsia can be studied in half a dozen weekly and monthly papers. The immediately striking thing about all these papers is their generally negative, querulous attitude, their complete lack at all times of any constructive suggestions. There is little in them except the irresponsible carping of people who have never been and never expect to be in a position of power. Another marked characteristic is the emotional shallowness of people who live in a world of ideas and have little contact with physical reality. Many intellectuals of the Left were flabbily pacifist up to 1935, shrieked for war against Germany in the years 1935-9, and then promptly cooled off when the war started. It is broadly though not precisely true that the most people who were most "anti-Fascist" during the Spanish civil war are most defeatist now. And underlying this is the really important fact about so many of the English intelligentsia—their severance from the common culture of the country. (*CW*12, 406)

In the following paragraph he goes even further, charging the left-wing press with the weakening of English morale all through the critical years before the war. The "intellectual sabotage from the Left" contributed to the perception, in fascist nations, of the English people as decadent and this prompted them to plunge into war. The spread of "shallow Leftism" with its by-product of "systematic Blimp-baiting" and the trend towards a pacifist outlook all encouraged the way to war. Clearly, these are provocative, simplifying and unselfconscious charges in the service of the author's new ideological position.[37]

Orwell refutes the assumption that patriotism is a conservative phenomenon. "Patriotism," he says, "has nothing to do with Conservatism. It is actually the opposite of Conservatism, since it is a devotion to something that is always changing and yet felt to be mystically the same." (*CW*12, 428) That changing and yet mystically same "something" is the nation, for whose conservation Orwell made considerable efforts in the first part of the essay. To refute the appeal of conservatism Orwell highlights the changing character of the nation. In as much as patriotism relies on the traditions and customs of a nation, it supports unity and sameness as opposed to change. Woodcock

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[37] Analysing the connection of Orwell's essays and the periodicals in which they appeared, the passage damning left-wing periodicals is especially interesting for Peter Marks, who points out that one of the two periodicals Orwell vilifies in 'The Lion and the Unicorn', the *New Statesman and Nation,* published his study of Charles Reade in the same month he was writing on the compatibility of socialism and the English genius. "Clearly," concludes Marks, "Orwell was not frightened to bite the hand that fed him […]" (267)

draws our attention to the trick Orwell uses to divert the reader's attention from the slippery slope he is on. By using the capital letter Orwell evokes the creed of the Conservative Party and thereby leads us away from the fact that "in the generalized, small-letter sense the entire intent of English patriotism is to *conserve* that great agglomeration of people, places, traditions and customs which is known as England." And Woodcock goes on:

> Patriotism, when it surfaced during the Second World War like a great barnacled whale from the subaqueous sleep of the Thirties, was conservative in this very sense, as well as – despite Orwell's wishes – being Conservative in the partisan sense as well, since it found its symbolic center in the charismatic personality of Winston Churchill, the arch-conserver and leading Conservative. (259)

Whereas the ostracising of intellectuals from the nation is explicit and conscious, the exclusion of women from the common people with which Orwell identifies is latent and probably unintended. Women rarely turn up in this public spirited essay, and even when they do they are endowed with negative roles and painted in a negative light. The first appearance they make is indirect through an implied distinction between masculine and feminine modes of expression. Dwelling on the unconscious patriotism of the working class, their xenophobia and abhorrence of foreign habits, Orwell claims that "nearly every Englishman of working-class origin considers it effeminate to pronounce a foreign word correctly." (*CW*12, 399) The sentence illustrates clearly that Orwell muddled the distinction between language varieties according to gender and class. Besides being aware of the relation of the varieties of English to social class, he insisted on a distinction between male and female ways of expression, between masculine and feminine language. In 'The Proletarian Writer' he denounced the aestheticism of the twenties' literature, the "over-refined type of prose" on the ground that it tended to "emasculate the language altogether." (*CEJL*2, 43) He exalted working-class speech as the opposite of the mannerisms of upper-class English. Demotic speech displayed simplicity, vitality and directness, whereas educated English, including the horrible "plummy" voice of the B.B.C., was bloodless and stilted, relying too much on ready-made phrases. Not long before his death he jotted down some indignant remarks on the repellent voices of upper-class visitors at hospital:

> […] what voices! A sort of over-fedness, a fatuous self-confidence, a constant bah-bahing of laughter abt nothing, above all a sort of heaviness & richness combined with a fundamental ill-will – people who, one instinctively feels,

> without even being able to see them, are the enemies of anything intelligent or sensitive or beautiful. No wonder everyone hates us so. (*CEJL*4, 515)

He attributed the decadence of the English language to the anachronistic class system. "'Educated' English," he claims in 'The English People', "has grown anaemic because for long past it has not been reinvigorated from below." (*CW*16, 219) Claiming that the people most likely to use concrete language and so are the ablest to create new metaphors instead of the dead ones are those in contact with physical reality, he proposes that ideal language is a joint creation of poets and manual workers. Writing good English, he contends, means a constant struggle against vagueness, obscurity, decorative adjectives, foreign expressions, and worn-out phrases. (*CW*16, 219) As regards his personal style, he consciously strove to attain that ideal. He required prose to be "like a window pane" and he shaped his language to give that illusion. "Of later years," he wrote in 'Why I Write' in 1946, "I have tried to write less picturesquely and more exactly," and he evaluated some of his earlier output as "lifeless," with "purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally." (*CW*18, 320) His viewpoint on language was closely related to his attitude towards the class system: the exaltation of demotic speech was part of the identification with and idealisation of the working class and simultaneously the refutation of his 'lower-upper-middle' class of origin. Holding the English of the working class, the source from which standard English could be enlivened, in high esteem became an integral part of his image: demotic speech of the ordinary man became the ideal for which a writer had to strive. In the context of Orwell's writings the working class came to be associated with traditional masculine values, while the upper class – due to the soft life they led – was often branded as effeminate. It follows that for Orwell demotic speech had the attributes of masculinity. As Fowler concludes:

> Demotic speech, then, is clear, visual, concrete, colloquial, popular. We can add a further attribute, vigour, if we interpret the sexual and genetic stereotypes with which Orwell slurs the upper-class accent: 'bloodless', 'anaemic', 'reinvigorate' and 'effeminate' connote lack of virility. Demotic speech is vigorous, masculine. (25)

It is not by chance that grappling with *A Clergyman's Daughter* he criticised his own style as the voice of a eunuch in comparison to Joyce's *Ulysess*. Ideal language became inextricably tied to masculine language.

When women are mentioned explicitly in the 'The Lion and the Unicorn,' they invariably symbolise the rich upper-class despots of English society. Having reviewed the positive and negative traits of English civilisation, with hypocrisy, sham democracy, and class privilege seriously threatening its reputation, Orwell comes up with an extremely sentimental conclusion. His vision of the nation as a family disregards opposing forces and interests – a defect familiar from *The Road to Wigan Pier* where he attributed to the working family a highly idealised unity.

> (England) resembles a family, a rather stuffy Victorian family, with not many black sheep in it but with all its cupboards bursting with skeletons. It has rich relations who have to be kow-towed to and poor relations who are horribly sat upon, and there is a deep conspiracy of silence about the source of the family income. It is a family in which the young are generally thwarted and most of the power is in the hands of irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts. Still, it is a family. It has its private language and its common memories, and at the approach of an enemy it closes its ranks. A family with the wrong members in control – that, perhaps, is as near as one can come to describing England in a phrase. (*CW*12, 401)

Irresponsible uncles are reproached not less than bedridden aunts, what makes the use of women as symbols of the exploiting class questionable is that in the whole forty pages of the essay women appear *only* as scapegoats. Furthermore, the chosen attributes "irresponsible" and "bedridden" imply the traditional division of gender roles, which enhances women's culpability: whereas uncles are active though in a harmful way, aunts are entirely passive, they are reduced to being absolute idlers feeding on the work of the working class. Stressing the necessity of "war communism" and equality of sacrifice he gets even more extreme and presents the gross contrasts of wealth along gender lines. While "common soldiers risk their lives for two and sixpence a day," he claims, "fat women ride about in Rolls-Royce cars, nursing Pekingees." (*CW*12, 415) Common soldiers risking their lives are, for Orwell, needless to say, an object of adoration; he held common people – common meaning preferably non university graduated lower-class people – in high esteem and for him to risk one's life was the supreme evidence of commitment combined with toughness. As opposed to this, obesity, idling about in luxury cars and caressing pets are all at the other extreme of Orwell's values: they are the object of his derision. Three pages later he reinforces the picture: "The lady in the Rolls-Royce car is more damaging to morale than a fleet of Göring's bombing-planes." (*CW*12, 418) The lady's expensive belongings, epitomised

by the luxury car, render her the incarnation of class privilege. Taylor's assessment of the essay disputable: "Written at a time of grave national crisis, 'The Lion and the Unicorn' glows with optimism, confident in the ability of men and women to improve their lot." (*The Life*, 290) Orwell disregards any positive role women might play in the crisis, what is more, ignores their very existence and uses them only as scapegoats for the sins of the upper classes. Obviously, through these negative attributes, it was not expressly women but the upper classes, whom Orwell wanted to deplore, nevertheless, it is significant that he deployed women to symbolise the monied class.

A conservatively innovative criticism of popular art

Orwell's writings on popular culture are seen by Rai as the by-product of his new ideological identity as a socialist patriot. His patriotic transformation precipitated a commitment to the mainstream society as opposed to an alternative community of socialist aspirations. (Rai, 101) After a tradition of elitist assumptions about the rigid categories of high and low culture, Orwell's initiative to study popular art seriously, and thereby bridge the gulf between the intellectual and the common man, meant a radical change in outlook. Rodden notes that though Orwell was by far not the only English intellectual in his time interested in popular culture, he was one of the few who were truly receptive and sympathetic to it. (*Politics*, 227) There is no doubt that the pioneering work done in this field was part of his rebellion against intellectuals and a manifestation of his identification with the common man – it was not least a means of manoeuvring himself into the role of being an authentic voice of the ordinary man. (Rai, 89) Incorporating popular culture in his horizon was coherent with his exaltation of the ordinary man at the expense of the intellectual: popular culture being the primary source of cultural influence for the common man, he held that all cultural phenomena deserved sociological attention. An important legacy of Orwell for popular culture criticism, says Rodden, was to demonstrate how popular art offered insight into the public mind and to alert readers to ideologies underlying such works of art. (*Politics*, 233) Having a sharp eye for political tendencies, Orwell noted that popular boys' weeklies (*The Gem* and *The Magnet*) were conservative in outlook and projected a world view of the pre-Great War era. Contemplating the importance of popular art as one of the earliest cultural

influences in many people's lives, he criticised boys' weeklies for being crammed with dubious ideologies.

> Here is the stuff that is read somewhere between the ages of twelve and eighteen by a very large proportion, perhaps by the majority, of English boys, including many who will never read anything else except newspapers; and along with it they are absorbing a set of beliefs which would be regarded as hopelessly out of date in the Central Office of the Conservative Party. All the better because this is done indirectly, there is being pumped into them the conviction that the major problems of our time do not exist, that there is nothing wrong with *laissez-faire* capitalism, that foreigners are unimportant comics and that the British Empire is a sort of charity-concern which will last forever. (*CW*12, 74)

Keen as he was on spotting conservative politics, he was unaware of the more subtle and pervasive ways popular culture conveyed other beliefs "hopelessly out of date," like gender stereotypes. Deploring *The Orwell Mystique* on the ground that preoccupation with Orwell's regressive gender politics blinds the critic to the complexity of his oeuvre and his historical situation, Rodden criticises Patai, among others, for judging 'The Art of Donald McGill' as "a flawed essay because [quoting Patai]'Orwell was not able to analyze the ideology of gender roles depicted in McGill's postcards.'" (*Politics*, 222) Whereas Patai nowhere describes the essay as "flawed," the claim that Orwell did not display any awareness of the gender ideology underlying many of the postcards' jokes is right. Part of the appeal of music hall comedies and comic postcards for Orwell was their coarseness and real vulgarity. In the review of *Applesauce* for *Time and Tide* in 1940, he insists on the importance of the continued existence of the Max Miller-type English comedian, who specialises in "utter baseness". "They express something which is valuable in our civilisation and which might drop out of it in certain circumstances." (*CW*12, 253) Beside lowness and vulgarity, their great virtue is that "their genius is entirely masculine" and "they are intensely national." Vulgarity in such terms is an exclusively masculine (perhaps even virile) virtue – "a woman cannot be low without being disgusting." (*CW*12, 253)[38] Something similar is suggested by Orwell's lament that "English humour was being 'purified' for the benefit

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[38] Besides being enchanted by its vulgarity, the variety show again reminded Orwell of "how closely knit the civilisation of England is, and how much it resembles a family, in spite of its out of date class distinctions." (*CW*12, 253)

of a new, largely feminine, public" in his 1949 review of *The English Comic Album*. (*CW*20, 12)

An analysis of the comic seaside postcards of Donald McGill, which appeared in *Horizon* in 1941 and was reprinted in *Critical Essays* in 1946, gave Orwell an opportunity to relegate men and women to their traditional tasks and roles in life. Like in 'My Country Right or Left' in which he invited the reader to join in dialogue with him on the possible, and preferable, attitude toward the Great War and England, the analysis of the postcards is launched by calling for the cooperation of the imaginary reader. "Get hold of a dozen of these things," "spread them out on a table," What do you see?" "What do these things remind you of?" "What are they so like?" are the imperatives and interrogatives marking the dialogic stance – of course answers are provided to the questions to guide the reader to the preferred point of view: "Your first impression is of overpowering vulgarity. […] Your second impression, however, is of indefinable familiarity." (*CW*13, 24) Roger Fowler notes that the orders and schoolmasterly questions suggest an "energetic interrogator who is putting great pressure on the reader to agree with Orwell's interpretation of this cultural phenomenon." (45)

After a neutral, even critical, analysis of outlook, content, typical subject matter, language and target audience of comic postcards, the essay in the second half develops into a highly subjective assessment of the virtues the postcards are intended to represent – indeed the last passages constitute an ode to, and defence of, their "overpowering vulgarity", their "ever-present obscenity" and their "utter lowness of mental atmosphere." The woman with the stuck-out behind, the voluptuous figure with the body-hugging dress and with breasts and buttocks grossly over-emphasised is a dominant, recurrent motif of the postcards even when the joke has nothing to do with sex. "There can be no doubt," concludes Orwell, "that these pictures lift the lid off a very widespread repression, natural enough in a country whose women when young tend to be slim to the point of skimpishness." (*CW*13, 27) But here Orwell makes a distinction between the McGill postcards and papers like the *Esquire* and *La Vie Parisienne*. Whereas the humour of McGill's postcards only gains meaning with a strict moral code in the background, the imaginary background of the jokes in the *Esquire* and *La Vie Parisienne* is promiscuity, "the utter breakdown of all standards." (*CW*13, 27)

Bound up with this, says Orwell, is the tendency of the well-to-do, *Esquire*-type women to prolong their youth and preserve their sexual attraction with cosmetics and the avoidance of child-bearing. As opposed to this, "youth's a stuff will not endure" is the normal attitude, the "ancient wisdom" that McGill reflects by allowing no transition figures between the honeymoon couple and the glamourless Mum and Dad. Expecting a drop in the standard of living (in 1941 with due reason) and a rise in the birth-rate, Orwell is looking forward to the retreat of young-at-forty, face-lifted ladies and the reappearance of drudges exhausted by housework and a succession of child-beds. "When it comes to the pinch," writes Orwell, "human beings are heroic. Women face childbed and the scrubbing brush, revolutionaries keep their mouths shut in the torture chamber, battleships go down with their guns still firing when their decks are awash." (*CW*13, 30) The McGill postcards, concludes Orwell, are a sort of rebellion against virtue and the seriousness of life. The Sancho Panza element in man, "the lazy, cowardly, debt-bilking adulterer" cannot entirely be suppressed and will find an outlet from time to time. "On the whole, human beings want to be good, but not too good, and not quite all the time." (*CW*13, 30)

The world Orwell envisages with overly good human beings is a sharply divided world with heroic men acting, fighting and dying glorified in the public realm and equally heroic women accomplishing their less noble task of bearing children and scrubbing with their brushes (implying the assumption that the two necessarily go hand in hand) and ending their lives quietly, deprived of any exploit deserving the attention of posterity. The McGill postcards invert this order for a moment, but, quite significantly, only with respect to men. The jokes reveal the unofficial self, whose "tastes lie towards safety, soft beds, no work, pots of beer and women with 'voluptuous' figures. He it is who punctures your fine attitudes and urges you to look after Number One, to be unfaithful to your wife, to bilk your debts, and so on and so forth." (*CW*13, 29) Apart from being self-contradictory by acknowledging a wish for promiscuity condemned in the world of the *Esquire* and *La Vie Parisienne*, rebellion is only seen from a male perspective. In the nature of the momentary wish of women facing "childbed and the scrubbing brush" Orwell was not interested, perhaps it did not occur to him that they could have such momentary wishes at all. If McGill's postcards primarily addressed men, Orwell surely did not question or even find it peculiar enough

to mention. He accepted uncritically the sexual stereotypes and gender ideology underlying the majority of such post cards.

George Woodcock in *The Crystal Spirit* shrewdly establishes a link between the McGill postcard image of worn-out housewives and the prole woman hanging out her washing in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Winston Smith feels a "mystical reverence" for the woman tormented but not crushed down by her share of life.

> The woman down there has no mind, she had only strong arms, a warm heart, and a fertile belly. He wondered how many children she had given birth to. It might easily be fifteen. She had had her momentary flowering, a year, perhaps, of wildrose beauty, and then she had suddenly swollen like a fertilized fruit and grown hard and red and coarse, and then her life had been laundering, scrubbing, darning, cooking, sweeping, polishing, mending, scrubbing, laundering, first for children, then for grandchildren, over thirty unbroken years. At the end of it she was still singing. (*CW*9, 229)

The idealisation of the self-sacrificing maternal woman affirms Orwell's adherence to a society based on sexual polarisation. As long as the woman bears and rears children, there is no risk of her interfering with the man's world and thereby threatening his privileges. Patai is right in observing that Orwell "lives in a mental space peopled largely by men, with women providing the domestic background for the activities of men, breeding and rearing the next generation, and of course valorising the masculine role by embodying a contrasting and inferiorized feminity." (*Mystique*, 249)

Procreation as a source of national vitality

Woodcock saw a possible link between Orwell's patriotism and population policy that entailed a firm stance against birth-control and abortion. "Patriots are usually interested in population" says Woodcock. (261) In *The Road to Wigan Pier* Orwell included "birth-control fanatics" in his list of cranks. Apparently he was unaware of the contradiction between his bias against birth-control and the destitution of the crowded mining families to which he was introduced. Rejecting the ahistorical approach of feminists, Rodden emphasizes the importance of assessing Orwell's views with regard to the complicated political climate of the time. Starting from and misapplying the arguments of Darwin's *The Descent of Man* to the social organism, a new secular religion coined 'eugenics' appeared and became widespread at the beginning of the 20th

century. Its mission was to see to that no more individuals were brought into the world than could be properly cared for and "those only of the best stock". (Greer, 260) Convinced that England was over-populated with the wrong kinds of people (the poor, criminals, alcoholics and the insane), the Eugenics Education Society propagated a faith in selective breeding and promoted the sterilization of 'worthless' and 'harmful' individuals. Its founding father, Francis Galton, went so far as to advice celibacy for individuals bearing hereditary defects and to persuade authorities to issue eugenic certificates to young people of the finest stock. In 1930 the Eugenic Society began propaganda for a sterilization bill, which was supported by no less a man than H.G. Wells. (Greer, 260-270) The birth-control movement was publicized by the self-promoting Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes, whose concern, according to Germaine Greer, was not the need of women but their own desire for notoriety and admiration and the success of such a money-spinning enterprise. Their deplorable eugenist ideas on the need to curtail the C3 population, their lack of medical expertise (Stopes was originally a palaeobotanist by profession) and their thirst for limelight did much harm to the birth-control movement.[39] Nevertheless, the inaptitude of the chief publicists of the contraception campaign should not discredit the movement itself. "The fight," claims Greer, "to make methods of family limitation both acceptable and reliable is worth fighting even if some of the leaders of the campaign are paranoid." (311)

Though Rodden stresses that it is vital to evaluate Orwell's stance against contraception within this larger context, it cannot at all be claimed with certainty that he was more than superficially familiar with the movement. His disparagement of "birth-control fanatics" *might* refer to Marie Stopes but that he "evidently equated the movement with Maries Stopes and Margaret Sanger" as Rodden claims, is only a conjecture, with no evidence in Orwell's texts. He never put the names of these two women or the word 'eugenics' down on paper. The awareness of his lifelong preoccupation with people of disadvantageous background invites one to surmise that familiarity with slogans promoting the curtailment of the C3 population would have set

[39] Stopes' refusal to recognise her daughter-in-law whose constitutional defect was weak eye-sight is emblematic of her ideas: "The essential is health in a potential mother and she has an inherited disease of the eyes which not only makes her wear hideous glasses so that it is horrid to look at her, but the awful curse will carry on and I have the horror of our line being so contaminated and little children with the misery of glasses … Mary and Harry are quite callous about both the wrong to their children, the wrong to my family and the eugenic crime." (Greer, 310)

his hypersensitivity to abuse in action. Stopes was shining in Britain in the 1910s and 20s, by the 30s she was fading as opposition to her extreme views hardened. By the time Orwell pronounced his anti-contraception stance, her activities – though not their effects – were a thing of the past. The only vague reference by Orwell to eugenics justifies it: "Thirty years ago, even ten or fifteen years ago, to advocate smaller families was a mark of enlightenment. The key phrases were 'surplus population' and 'the multiplication of the unfit'." (*CW*19, 82) Orwell's anti-contraception stance was not so much a demonstration against "birth-control fanatics" as a result of an essentially public-minded (and essentially conservative) way of thinking, which looked upon child-bearing mainly as a source of national vitality.

In 'The English People', which, together with 'The Lion and the Unicorn', *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* he wanted to leave out of the uniform edition of his works, he expressed anxiety about the dwindling English birth-rate. He proposed the classical remedy: encouraging child bearing through favourable economic policies, including lightened taxation.

> The philoprogenitive instinct will probably return when fairly large families are already the rule, but the first steps towards this must be economic ones. […] Any government, by a few strokes of the pen, could make childlessness as unbearable an economic burden as a big family is now: but no government has chosen to do so, because of the ignorant idea that a bigger population means more unemployed. Far more drastically than anyone has proposed hitherto, taxation will have to be graded so as to encourage child-bearing and to save women with young children from being obliged to work outside the home. (*CW*16, 223)

His proposal for child-friendly measures (kindergartens, play-grounds, bigger and more convenient flats, free education) unfortunately involved heavier punishment for abortion and a disapproval of the trend among the young to have a good time and stay young as long as possible – an argument familiar from 'The Art of Donald McGill'.

> In the England of the last thirty years it has seemed all too natural that blocks of flats should refuse tenants with children, that parks and squares should be railed off to keep the children out of them, that abortion, theoretically illegal, should be looked on as a peccadillo, and that the main aim of commercial advertising should be to popularise the idea of 'having a good time' and staying young as long as possible. (*CW*16, 223)

Patai sounds harsh when she says that Orwell's population policy "would have openly treated women as mere vehicles for fulfilling state priorities" (*Mystique*, 212) but

Orwell saw the question of procreation solely as a public issue and not one belonging to the privacy of each individual, especially, due to biology, each female. This becomes evident again in one of his As I Please columns in *Tribune* where he takes up the issue of the decreasing population.

> The downward trend has been happening for more than half a century, and some of its effects cannot be escaped from, but the worst would be avoided if the birth-rate reached and stayed at the point where the average family was four children, and not, as at present, a little over two. But this must happen within the next decade, otherwise there will not be enough women of child-bearing age to restore the situation. (*CW*19, 82)

Orwell's concern for demographically adequate breeding lacked any consideration of procreation as a private matter of individuals. He was anxious for his country in the shadow of the threateningly increasing population of Nazi Germany, and regarded birth-control and abortion as impediments to the growth of English population. The thought that these means were ways for women to control their own bodies and lives apparently never occurred to him. Orwell's proposals in 'The English People' are, according to Woodcock, "probably the most truly reactionary he ever made, including such familiar devices as the crushing penal taxation of childless people and a more rigorous repression of abortion. It shows Orwell at his most authoritarian, but it also shows an aspect of his thought which cannot be ignored." (261)

The ultimate submission to the homeland: let's save our ordinary women for motherhood

The idea for the series *Britain in Pictures*, for which Orwell produced 'The English People' in 1944, emanated from the Ministry of Information. (*CW*16, 199) That Orwell undertook the commission is a sign in itself that he was moving away from the "inflammatory stuff" of 'The Lion and the Unicorn' towards British official policy. Just as the subtitle of the earlier essay referred to its revolutionary content, the lack of such a reference in the case of 'The English People' is indicative of political moderation. After Dunkirk Orwell saw the future in terms of a categorical either/or. Seeing an immense possibility in the crisis he staked everything on that. He made it explicit: "Either we turn this war into a revolutionary war […] or we lose it, and much more besides."

(*CW*12, 428) By 1944 the hopes for a revolutionary overturn of capitalism faded and in the partnership of socialism and patriotism the latter gained more ground. The balance tipped and national survival was felt to be more important than class warfare. Therefore, though many of the themes developed in 'The Lion and the Unicorn' are repeated in 'The English People', it registers an important change in Orwell's views. (Newsinger, 108) There is no doubt that Orwell ever abandoned his genuine care for social justice and a desire for a humane and egalitarian community, the threatening spread of totalitarian aspirations nevertheless made him minimise the discrepancies and defects of English democracy and maximise its merits in comparison with negative foreign models. The point of view shifted definitively from a socially critical stance to a less critical patriotic one with the primacy of national values and class feeling slipping into the background.

Similar in structure to 'The Lion and the Unicorn', 'The English People' is made up of several thematic parts, though here the parts are even more clear-cut than in the earlier essay. The conclusion, 'The future of the English people', is based on well-defined chapters: 'The moral outlook of the English people,' 'The political outlook of the English people,' 'The English class system' and 'The English language.' All these are preceded by a general survey of the English national character under the title 'England at first glance.' The pamphlet, meeting the requirements of official propaganda, dropped the informal dialogic stance of the essays previously examined. Instead of addressing an imaginary reader, he introduces a neutral foreign observer, whose fresh and unprejudiced "probable impressions" of the country and its people are put forth. Most of the characteristics are familiar from 'The Lion and the Unicorn': artistic insensibility (supported by the surprisingly simple argument that the beautiful countryside is ruined by hideous building), a general confidence in the law, gentleness and good manners, hypocrisy, lack of intellectuality, suspicion of foreigners and foreign habits among ordinary people. Two minor traits are contemplated that were not mentioned in 'The Lion and the Unicorn': the obsession with sport and sentimentality about animals. Concerning the animal cult, he cannot resist observing that "its worst follies are committed by upper-class women" – a thought reminiscent of the ladies in Rolls Royces nursing Pekingees.

The ostracism of intellectuals from national unity is not new either. By the end of the first part, having enumerated the common traits of the nation and thereby attributing an inherent unity to it, he feels safe to exclude intellectuals. "Dislike of hysteria and 'fuss,' admiration for stubbornness, are all but universal in England, being shared by everyone except the intelligentsia." (*CW*16, 204) Orwell had by this stage in his career successfully adopted the role of the authoritative voice of the 'ordinary' or 'common' people. Identifying himself with ordinary people as opposed to the upper classes and the intelligentsia, he felt free to endow the masses with his own views. He held forth about what English people wanted with unwavering confidence:

> The great mass of the people want profound changes, but they do not want violence. They want to preserve their own standard of living, and at the same time they want to feel that they are not exploiting less fortunate peoples. If you issued a questionnaire to the whole nation, asking, "What do you want from politics?", the answer would be much the same in the overwhelming majority of cases. Substantially it would be: "Economic security, a foreign policy which will ensure peace, more social equality, and a settlement with India." (*CW*16, 210)

Intellectuals are vilified especially in the second and third parts, when dwelling on the moral and political outlook of the nation but they are written off indirectly in the chapter dealing with the English language as well: the educated English of the upper class and the B.B.C. dialect of the intelligentsia is frowned upon for its vagueness, obscurity, worn-out phrases and dead metaphors, and the heavy borrowing from Latin and Greek, while the vitality of the language, according to Orwell, rests with ordinary people who are still in contact with physical reality. Common people, intellectuals and the upper class excluded, have retained a Christian morality, which, Orwell says, is their main bulwark against the fashionable cults of the time: communism, fascism, and pacifism. Lumping these three isms together, Orwell does not feel the need to argue why he considers all three to be "forms of power-worship": he had by this time lashed out at pacifism quite enough in a peremptory manner to feel entitled to label without explaining.[40] "It is universally agreed that the working classes are far more moral than

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[40] In one of his London Letters in the spring of 1942 he wrote about the "increasing overlap between Fascism and pacifism." In the ensuing debate on pacifism and the war D.S. Savage maintained that with a politician's outlook on things, Orwell was unable to grasp the nature of pacifism. (*CW*13, 392) The source of pacifism being conscience, Savage argued that it was a moral rather than a political phenomenon. Orwell disregarded Savage's argument with the claim that "I am not interested in pacifism as a 'moral phenomenon'," and went on in black and white terms: "Pacifism is objectively pro-Fascist.

the upper classes" runs another incontestable dictum. Moral decency is coupled with a lack of intelligence, "the inability to think logically" and this happy combination saves common people from political orthodoxy.

> An ordinary Englishman, Conservative, Socialist, Catholic, Communist, or what not, almost never grasps the full logical implications of the creed he professes: almost always he utters heresies without noticing it. Orthodoxies, whether of the Right or the Left, flourish chiefly among the literary intelligentsia, the people who ought in theory to be the guardians of freedom of thought. (*CW*16, 208)

Rai notes how Orwell slips from "logical implications" to "orthodoxies," making them seem equal and thereby making logical implications the antithesis of freedom of thought: the result is the association of freedom of thought and illogicality. (105) It is not hard to see what Orwell's overall, arbitrary characterisation of the English ordinary people boils down to: by weakening the intellectual capacity of the nation, the way is open to the quite irrational force of patriotism. And indirectly, since he has an image of himself as one of the common people and not one of the intellectuals, he exempts himself from the requirement to think logically and withstand the lure of patriotism. Quite unlike what the pamphlet seems to be, the characterisation of the English people for propagandistic aims, it is an arbitrary selection of traits with the – probably unconscious – aim of supporting the appeal of patriotism. The decision to consider that "a profound, almost unconscious patriotism and an inability to think logically are the abiding features of the English character" seems not so much a characterisation of the English people as a self-defence mechanism disguising a probably acutely felt need to support his turn of mind.

The quotes in the above passage all prove Roger Fowler's claim that Orwell is often confident "to the point of authoritarianism." (54) The generalisations which in this pamphlet abound, the vocabulary tending towards negativity and hyperbole (consider e.g. "profound," "abiding," "unconscious," "inability") mark the tendentious and passionate nature of Orwell's writings. According to Fowler this emotional potential gets his personal voice very far from the ideal of prose like a window pane; instead, it leads him "'over the top', to excessive claims and stridently abusive judgements." (55) Generalisations, argues Fowler, are signs of an authoritarian attitude: "the writer claims

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This is elementary common sense. If you hamper the war-effort of one side you automatically help that of the other." (*CW*13, 396)

the universal truth of the statement s/he makes." (50) Orwell expects the reader to accept as true a series of highly disputable statements about the English people – the most prominent one being the inability to think logically. Authoritarian rhetoric is a distinctive quality of Orwell's idiolect – other important markers of his personal voice are the impression of an oral mode (through contractions, colloquialisms, paratactic syntax, short units of sentences), a predilection for demotic speech with a mundane vocabulary, negativity and exaggeration. (Fowler, 35-54) A writer insistent on the matter-of-fact truth of what he says without admitting any doubt or uncertainty – in Fowler's terms with "unmarked modality" – such a writer claims the role of authority, the possessor of wisdom. "Unmarked modality is a pervasive characteristic of Orwell's writing, and indicates confidence in his judgements; it is most obvious on the many occasions when he modalises as plain fact statements which are obviously highly subjective, partial, impressions." (Fowler, 50)

Tackling the question of puritanism, Orwell manoeuvres between the world of music-hall jokes, postcards and songs the soldiers make up, which are "anything but puritanical," and the condemnation of prostitution. He is seemingly unaware of the fundamental contradiction between the acknowledgement that in big towns "prostitution is extremely blatant" and the conviction that "almost no one in England approves of prostitution." Far from contemplating the reasons, social and economic, of this by-product of patriarchal societies, and not even commenting on the effect of war on prostitution, which by the time of writing must have been a hot if repressed issue, he oversteps the problem by endowing the public with a general abhorrence of it: "[…] it is completely unattractive and has never been really tolerated. It could not be regulated and humanised as it has been in some countries, because every English person feels it in his bones that it is wrong." (*CW*16, 207) He makes the most of what is essentially unjustifiable: instead of the carelessness of decision-makers he puts down the unregulated state of prostitution to the outstanding morals of common English people – prostitution does not need to be regulated as "every English person" knows that "it is wrong." Consequently, the phenomenon, according to this argument, is likely to disappear by itself in the future – which appears little more than sweeping the dirt under the carpet.

Just as in 'The Lion and the Unicorn', implicitly through the issues he touches on and explicitly, he speaks of a male world quite sparsely inhabited by women. Concerning spare-time activities, for example, he dwells on the unsuccessfulness of the temperance movement, on the pub as "one of the basic institutions of English life", on gambling and nothing else. The same male-centred outlook is explicit in 'Pleasure Spots' written in 1946 where to the question of what *man*'s needs are, he answers: "the highest happiness does *not* lie in relaxing, playing poker, drinking and making love simultaneously." (*CEJL*4, 80) Ironically, apart from dog-keeping upper-class ladies, the derogative branding of the upper classes as effeminate, and the spreading of utility clothing that bridge the gulf in appearance between social layers, especially in the case of women, females are mentioned only in the discussions of prostitution and the birth-rate. Just as prostitution is dealt with as an institution, with its actors/victims barely visible, surely not mentioned, the dwindling birth-rate is also seen as an abstract social phenomenon, with women hardly playing any formative part in it. In discussing the future of the English people in the last part of the essay, Orwell devotes a little more than one page to the downward curve of the birth-rate. At such length he finds space to compare nineteenth and twentieth-century birth-rates and attitudes towards children, to dwell on the alleged economic background of high vs. low birth-rates, including taxation, school-fees and housing, and even devotes a sentence to the cult of animals, which he regards as a factor working against the birth of children. Convinced that favourable economic measures encourage child bearing, he notes that taxation has to be graded so as "to save women with young children from being obliged to work outside the home" – the only time he includes women in the discussion of bearing children. Not less self-assuredly, towards the end of the pamphlet, as a kind of conclusion he summarises the "immediate necessities" of the English people and launches his recommendations with the command that "they must breed faster." (*CW*16, 227)

To retain their vitality becomes an indispensable condition for the English people to carry out the important role Orwell assigns to them in the future. Based on their outstanding qualities, for example, the "highly original quality" of "not killing one another", England is the European country likeliest to avoid the present world of chaos and dictatorship. The merit of being peaceful should put them in a leading position.

> The English are probably more capable than most peoples of making revolutionary changes without bloodshed. In England, if anywhere, it would be possible to abolish poverty without destroying liberty. If the English took the trouble to make their own democracy work, they would become the political leaders of western Europe, and probably some other parts of the world as well. They would provide the much-needed alternative to Russian authoritarianism on the one hand and American materialism on the other. (*CW*16, 222)

Making up this myth about the English people to encourage them to take an initiative in world politics, Orwell comes curiously close again to the ideology of German fascism, where the myth of the Aryan people served the ambitious plans of a dictator who aimed at conquering large parts of the world. Of course Orwell made up his propaganda against the destructive force of fascism and he envisaged a powerful England setting a good example in democracy and social equality. Nevertheless, even in the ideal world of an England-dictated peace there is not much room for women to play a positive formative role. Without the eulogies of motherhood and the exaltation of women as breeders for the nation, which was also an explicit part of German fascist ideology, the women of Orwell's world are considered only in their breeding (and the case of prostitution, pleasure providing) capacity too.

At this point one is reminded of Orwell's 1942 controversy with the pacifists in the columns of *Partisan Review*. An important objection of pacifists to the war against fascism was that war demanded a totalitarian organisation of society and England, embarking on war, was compelled to take measures of such nature in the interest of military victory. According to Comfort the fight against fascism, whatever the outcome, inevitably involved an imitation of it. "He [Hitler] puts us in a dilemma which cannot be practically rebutted, only broken away from – 'If I win, you have political fascism victorious: if you want to beat me, you must assimilate as much of its philosophy as you can, so that I am bound to win either way.'" (*CW*13, 392) In his anxiety over the dwindling birth-rate, Orwell came very close to regarding women as vehicles for maintaining and increasing the population of the nation – an idea not very far from the German assumption of women's function in the promotion of Aryan blood. Though it might seem a minor point, birth controlled (either curbed or enforced) by the state marks a tendency towards the curtailment of individual liberties and the primacy of public values over private life and values. As Comfort goes on:

> Accordingly we began feverishly jamming into our national life all the minor pieces of Fascist practise which did not include socialist methods, sitting on the Press "because this is Total War," making our soldiers jab blood bladders while loudspeakers howl propaganda at them, because the German army consisted of efficient yahoos. The only people who said that to defeat Fascism one must (a) try to understand it and (b) refuse to accept its tenets oneself were the pacifists. It looks as if Mr. Orwell and his warlike friends were being not objectively but constructively supporters of the entire philosophical apparatus which they quite genuinely detest. (*CW*13, 396)

Not many reviewers at the time noticed the shortcomings of Orwell's patriotism however. Charles Humana in 1947 pointed out that the pamphlet was very favourably reviewed: "Strangely enough, despite the party line of the various journals, they were all unanimous on this occasion. Nationalism had transcended all." (*CW*16, 228) Orwell's call for the strengthening of national unity was timely and the repudiation of violent revolution made his ideas probably more acceptable to many. By this time he had discarded the prospect of war-induced revolutionary socialism and though he retained a wish for power to be placed in the hands of the "ordinary English in the street," what remained was only a vague radicalism: "By the end of another decade it will be finally clear whether England is to survive as a great nation or not. And if the answer is to be "Yes," it is the common people who must make it so." (*CW*16, 228)

Patriotism and war from a feminist perspective: Virginia Woolf's Three Guineas

Patriotism is one of the most surprising themes running through George Orwell's work because to some extent it contradicts the received view of him as a left-wing writer. Patriotism might be presumed to have more affinity with conservative and right-wing movements than with left-wingery, but it is in no way inconsistent with an adherence to the traditional concept of masculinity. In *The Image of Man* George Mosse claims that the ideal of modern masculinity, having appeared with the rising bourgeoisie and parallel to the development of national consciousness in the nineteenth century, has hardly changed since its early days. Among attributes like will power, courage, heroism, respectability, self-sacrifice, self-restraint, and commitment to public causes, patriotism

has been an expected and respected manly virtue. (Mosse, *Image*, 3-16)[41] Though modern masculinity developed side-by-side with nationalism and nationalism has always been most inclined to adopt the masculine stereotype as a means of its self-representation, the masculine ideal was also incorporated into left-wing movements. From this perspective, if we recognise Orwell's adherence to the traditional ideal of masculinity, his patriotism as an integral part of masculinity and his devotion to socialism do not seem that irreconcilable.

Virginia Woolf in *Three Guineas* also connects patriotism and masculinity, though her perspective is slightly different. She quotes the Lord Chief Justice of England at some length as an example of what patriotism means to educated men. Describing England as the home of freedom and of democratic institutions, and the English people as being blessed, the speaker displays a belief in the superiority of the English nation – an attachment very similar to that inherent in Orwell's adulation of England during the war years. However, patriotism, argues Woolf, depends on interest. Patriotic emotions can be aroused only in those to whom the country has been generous. Patriotism ties in with power and status in society, a connection Orwell also intimated, though with respect to social class rather than gender. Having been denied rights equal to those bestowed on men in several walks of life in the past (education, property, political rights etc.), the "daughters of educated men", according to Woolf, have no interest in defending a country that they have little to thank for. Rather than restricting her thoughts to events leading to the outbreak of the Second World War, Woolf is looking at the issue of war in a wider context and examines what attributes of human nature and what social forces are responsible for wars – a difficult if not impossible undertaking, providing considerable opportunity for charges of ingenuousness. Yet the effort to distance herself from the given historical situation and look at it impartially, without the distortions fostered by national loyalty, facilitates a wider perspective than the one fettered by narrow-minded patriotism.

Unlike Woolf' s determined rejection of patriotic feeling, Orwell, having changed his mind from an anti-war stance, fully immersed himself in a newly found

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[41] It is worthy of reflection that the words 'patriarchy' and 'patriotism' have a common Latin stem 'patr-' (pater: father, patria: fatherland). In Hungarian the word patriot, 'hazafi', is clearly a male form and the female form of the word, 'honleány', is extremely rare, rather out of date and since it cannot be declined, its usage is restricted. There is no female equivalent of 'hazafias', 'hazafiasan', hazafiatlan' etc.

intimacy with the community, and this must have given him a sense of relief. Having gone through a series of failures – by choosing colonial service instead of university, then by resigning from the post, by going down and out and working himself into the literary world, his path being marked by resentful and frustrated characters, such as Gordon Comstock and George Bowling – he proved to himself as well as those around him that he was a man's man who had stood the harsh tests of life. With his self-confidence secured, he could join the community without scruples, as a full member embracing some of the accepted norms and values of that community. In his patriotic essays he made an appeal to the rather subjective qualities of English civilisation as a basis for the love of England. (The term "English civilisation" is, of course, far from neutral, it is reminiscent of ancient civilisations, thus endowing English life and culture with an outstanding quality.) The majority of the attributes like reverence for law, gentleness and hatred of militarism are positive ones with a few insignificant negative ones like hypocrisy and lack of artistic sensibility thrown in – just to remind the reader that Englishmen are not demi-gods either. Though Orwell was anxious about the use of propaganda because of his Spanish experiences and watched closely the propaganda of the Axis and Allies in the war years, he seemingly fell entirely under the spell of myth making and war propaganda in a broader sense. The fruits of moral and physical training he received at his preparatory and public schools grew ripe in the long run. He admitted as much and made a virtue of it; that this issue had wider gender implications as well he was unaware of. Hearing the sound of the bugles he rushed onto the battleground – in the Spanish war literally, in the Second World War only mentally – and he ruthlessly denounced those not willing to fight from the secure and firm stance of a manly man. During the Second World War he entirely lost objectivity and came to regard his country as a unique one – the first step of mystifying a community and an essential component of war. As Elaine Scarry puts it, "it is when a country has become to its population a fiction that war begins." (quoted by Hussey, 8) By attributing a genuine peacefulness and hatred of militarism to the nation, he got dangerously close to the standpoint of tying up love of peace versus love of war with concrete nations. The outstanding qualities of English civilisation convinced Orwell by the end of 'The English People' that England could take the lead in Europe – a form of domination in the disguise of historical necessity.

Woolf is sceptical about the legitimacy of differentiating between nations, and the idea that Englishmen are superior to men of other nations she denounces as a romantic notion. The female outsider wishing to analyse the meaning of patriotism shall – besides contemplating the position of her sex in the past – compare the arts of various nations. "When all these comparisons have been faithfully made by the use of reason, the outsider will find herself in possession of very good reasons for her indifference." (*Room*, 108) Woolf argues that patriotism is one of those "unreal loyalties" which one must get rid of. Determined to resist the various forms of manipulation of consciousness, in spite of being conscious of "some love of England", she refuses it as an irrational feeling. In her argumentation, "freedom from unreal loyalties" is an important prerequisite for avoiding the folly of war. National pride, religious pride, college pride, family pride and sex pride are forms of seduction that should be resisted. Beside "possessiveness", "brain prostitution" and "vanity", patriotism is considered by Woolf as an emotional attachment that threatens independence of mind, and that contributes to and supports the outbreak of wars. She calls for "indifference" and the need "to take no share in patriotic demonstrations, to assent to no form of national self-praise" and to withstand the "desire to impose 'our' civilisation or 'our' dominion upon other people." (*Room*, 109)

In spite of the possibilities that today's technology now offers for women in modern wars where the outcome is less dependent on the physical strength of warriors, the social institution of war, says Mark Hussey, "the ideals of valor and honor … are inextricably bound up with cultural notions of manhood and masculinity." (2) Woolf also dwells on the connection between war and masculinity but she is ambiguous about the link. At the outset she seems to be inclined to speak about instinct – "to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's" – but is cautious enough to add that "law and practice have developed that difference, whether innate or accidental." (*Room*, 6) Nevertheless, as her reasoning develops in the third part of the polemic and she gets passionate about the need for women's indifference, she lays it harder and harder on men and describes fighting as a "sex characteristic": "she cannot understand what instinct compels him, what glory, what interest, what manly satisfaction fighting provides for him." (*Room*, 107) Woolf is filled with horror at the sight of dead bodies and ruined houses in the newspapers – Orwell is convinced that the loss of individual

life is a trivial matter as long as combatants do not hate each other. For Orwell and for many of the men of his generation war was something to be experienced in order to become a manly man. War, according to Mosse, has been a genuinely masculine adventure, a public affair, in which participation is a requirement of a man's man. The Spanish War and the Second World War no doubt offered a sense of relief from the uncomfortable feeling of remorse at having missed the Great War – an experience underlying Woolf's indictment.

While Orwell remains within the boundaries of the given situation, the predicament of the Second World War, and propagates in his characteristically categorical, even "uncompromisingly militant" tone the war effort, Woolf is trying to adopt the bird's eye-view of an outsider and looks for wider and more general connections in history, including gender relations. Claiming that patriarchy and fascism are both forms of domination, she establishes a link between them. Asked by a correspondent how women could contribute to the effort to prevent war, Woolf draws attention to the parallel between women's domestic servitude and financial dependence in patriarchy and the dictatorship of fascism, which she regards as an extreme form of patriarchal domination. She claims that "the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected […] the tyrannies and servilities of one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other." (*Room*, 270) Therefore, in answering the question of her anxious correspondent, she symbolically sends one guinea to a rebuilding fund for a women's college, thereby supporting women's education which is a precondition for their independence, one to an organization engaged in promoting women's employment, thereby directly supporting women's independence and one to her correspondent, who runs a society aimed at preventing war. But in the thirties climate of growing fascism, the promotion of women's rights seemed wholly incongruous. Her audience was startled and uncomprehending, her views were considered eccentric. Quentin Bell provided some explanation for the negative response to Woolf's argument: "What really seemed wrong with the book […] was the attempt to involve a discussion of women's rights with the far more agonizing and immediate question of what we were to do in order to meet the ever-growing menace of Fascism and war. The connections between the two questions seemed tenuous and the positive suggestions wholly inadequate." (Woolf, xl)

The connection between the racism of fascism and the sexism of patriarchy is, however, no longer a point of debate. The insight that Woolf gained in her own intuitive way has stood the test of time. Sociologists have since pointed out the gendered character of the Nazi regime; an important pillar of the Nazi culture was the domestication of women. Sociologists, like George Mosse, have noted the centrality of masculinity in all forms of fascism. Dictatorships rely heavily on their patriarchal nature, Nazi Germany being a clear example. Systematically annulling the achievements of the Weimar Republic in the field of women's emancipation – by significantly lowering the number of women admissible to universities, by limiting women's newly won franchise – Nazi Germany returned to the conventional, and even more polarized, separation of male and female spheres. (Millet, 164) Based on the extremely reactionary sexual politics of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's idea that man upholds the nation as the woman upholds the family was put into practice. Equating sexuality with procreation (there was a ban on contraception and abortion – again a form of control over women), women were exalted in their capacity as mothers. According to Millet, the chivalrous eulogies of motherhood had a twofold aim: it prompted women to bring up children who loved their homeland (and who could be used for lethal state ends), and with this manoeuvre women could be kept at home and thus out of the upper levels of the labour force. (161) Expecting women to dedicate themselves to motherhood and the family, the Nazi regime was a distinctly masculine affair that excluded women from every inch of the public sphere.

Orwell's stance against birth-control and abortion is an organic part of his national loyalty. Attributing the utmost importance to public issues and disregarding the impact of those on private life, he considered the issue of procreation exclusively from the standpoint of the community, regarding women not as individuals but as vehicles for the procreation of the nation. This point of view emerges from assuming that population is a source of power, which beside Malthusianism and Eugenics, has been one of the main anti-individualistic discourses trespassing on women's reproductive rights. (Yuval-Davis, 34) Women, in Orwell's patriotic essays, are considered only as symbols of the idling and parasitic upper class, as bearers of the nation that should "breed faster", or as prostitutes, an issue that is solved by the hypocritical idea that their service will be terminated in the future due to every Englishman's conviction that prostitution is

"wrong". By endorsing the values of popular culture, an attachment to which was another consequence of the "unreal loyalty" of patriotism, he uncritically accepted its regressive gender policy.

During this period of intense patriotism he grew less critical and more tolerant of the absurdities of public school education. Though he recognised and acknowledged the immense part education played in training mentally and physically fit servants of the Empire, he failed to see how that education conformed to requirements of traditional masculinity and how those wider social requirements prescribed training. In 'Such, Such Were the Joys' he cried out at the cruelty of preparatory school and was constantly critical of the public school system, yet, having been blinded by the assumed or real injuries he got there, he never realised the fact that as a middle-class boy he had the privilege of receiving institutional education, which, for his non-middle-class non-male contemporaries was not a self-evident matter. Just as his absurd obsession with poverty prevented him from appreciating the opportunity to study on half-fees, he was equally blind to the poor quality or lack of of women's education. In spite of the attention he paid to the issue of education, both his own and English education in general, there is no trace of any thought on the education of his sisters and women overall. Characteristically enough, his biographers are also taciturn about Avril and Marjorie Blair's education. They attended the school run by the French Ursulines but that they did not go into intellectual professions was probably not by accident. As Bowker suggests, the idea in the family was that "Eric's education was more important than that of his sisters and so sacrifices had to be made to ensure him a good start in life." (28) With their inferior education the girls were compelled to make their contribution to their brothers' advancement.

For Woolf women's education was always a question of primary importance, partly because of the acutely felt lack of formal education in her own life. One of the conditions for sending the required guinea to her correspondent's anti-war society is not accidentally a simultaneous gift of a guinea to help rebuild a women's college. Women's education, a prerequisite for an independent income and thus for an independent outlook free of any influence, is in Woolf's reasoning inseparable from the question of how to prevent war. Regarding war as a male activity, women's advancement – by earning a living and ceasing to be restricted to the private realm

where their only interest is in supporting their husbands and their activities – is indispensable in avoiding war. But Woolf goes even further and sets down the requirements that education should ideally strive to adhere to. Contemporary university education, she claims, encourages competition and jealousy, "the arts of dominating other people", "the arts of ruling, of killing, of acquiring land and capital." The ultimate indictment of Oxford and Cambridge is given in the critique of the large sums paid for education, into "Arthur's Education Fund". They were wasted, Woolf concludes, since far from promoting "generosity and magnanimity," and "the cause of culture and intellectual liberty" they were spent on teaching force, possessiveness and greed. An ideal college, according to Woolf,

> […] should teach the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people's lives and minds, and the little arts of talk, of dress, of cookery that are allied with them. The aim of the new college, the cheap college, should be not to segregate and specialize, but to combine. It should explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to co-operate; discover that new combinations make good wholes in human life. (*Room*, 34)

Experiencing the competitive atmosphere of schools and not having the appropriate "guts and character" for competitions, Orwell was left suspicious of competitions throughout his life. Nevertheless, in the heat of passionate patriotism he saw the cruelty of public schools – a means of producing good servants for the Empire – in a different light. Though he admitted that it produced "brave, stupid, fairly decent mediocrities," those who went through, he thought, at least were not trained to become pacifists or believers in the League of Nations. "The brutal side of public school life […] is not a bad training for the real world." His praise of public school training is one of those shifts of outlook that Alok Rai describes as dislocations precipitated by his patriotic transformation. In the interest of the appropriate attitude to the Second World War he even showed signs of making a compromise with religion and Christianity. In 'The English People' he considered the Christian morality retained by the common people to be "the main bulwark" against political cults like fascism, communism and pacifism. That women are given little scope in this patriotic world is reaffirmed by his support of public schools and the church, both being traditional male preserves. Apropos of St Paul's notion of chastity Woolf in her endnotes to *Three Guineas* gives a fairly clever and ironic demonstration of the subjugation of women within the church,

delicately referring to the male-centred nature of religion and to the way it supports the personal and economic interest of men with the spurious reasons of nature, law and custom.

Orwell's attitude to feminism and feminity is intertwined with his clinging to a self-assertive virility. Eric Cohen likens the discourse on women without a discourse on men to clapping with one hand. (Yuval-Davis, 9) The masculine stereotype, a combination of external and internal characteristics, according to Mosse, has been more permanent and resistant to changes than the feminine one. The appropriate male body has been a central question of modern masculinity, stemming from the influence of Winckelmann. The bodies of Greek athletes have become timeless standards of male beauty, outward appearance reflecting inward virtue, noble minds and morals. The ideal type of masculinity is strengthened by the existence of the negative stereotype of man that is the opposite of what a 'real man' is. The denigration of the countertype is an important means of the strengthening of self-respect. Effeminate men and manly women, by failing to fit the standard external as well as the internal qualities of men and women, are a refuge and useful source of self-assurance for 'normal' men, and at the same time, by stepping over the boundaries of roles assigned to men and women by normative society pose a hazard to that society whose functioning depends on the acceptance and prevalence of a traditional system of values in which masculinity is a main force. (Mosse, *Image*, 12) In this sense masculinity, according to Mosse, is a conservative phenomenon and restricts individual freedom. When society begins to tolerate abnormal or unconventional manners and behaviour, like the decadence at the turn of the century, manliness "pulls in the reins", strengthens the conventional and regains its power, like in the first half of the 20th century, especially between the wars. (Mosse, *Image*, 168)

For reasons perhaps embedded in childhood but reasons that remain inevitably obscure, Orwell developed into a man much at odds with the world at large. Discontent launched him on the path of "democratic socialism" and he became a spokesman for the underdog and people living under political oppression. The fear of totalitarianism made him speak out for intellectual liberty and this fight ensured him the way to the pedestal. However, he did not recognise that beside political tyranny there are much more subtle and pervasive ways of manipulating our consciousness, the rigid delimitation of gender

roles being one such social construct. Haunted by a comprehensive sense of failure, the refuge of one hundred percent masculinity gave him self-assurance. His prejudice against women, his stance against feminism, his homophobia, mixed with hints of repressed homoeroticism, and his repulsion from effeminate and soft men are all linked to his self-assertive virility that provided reassurance in comparison with 'abnormal' behaviour. Patriotic attachment to his homeland during the war conserved and deepened his adherence to normative society, with a resulting intolerance towards phenomena and people not fitting the requirements of that society.

Conclusion

Talking about Orwell's insensitivity to the Jewish issue, Arthur Koestler once remarked to Tosco Fyvel: “Probably Orwell’s imagination was limited, as the imagination of each of us is limited. We can all produce only a limited amount of calories of indignation.” (Fyvel, *Memoir*, 182) Fyvel on the other hand thought that Orwell had more than sufficient calories of indignation and it was this inclination towards over-indignation that made him the great writer he was. However, like the Jewish issue, the gender issue did not reach Orwell's stimulus threshold either. In my dissertation, starting from and arguing for the Foucauldian unity of author and work, I presented evidences of a lack of gender sensitivity both in Orwell's life and in his non-fictional writings, and I examined the sources and consequences of his “unmitigated masculinity” that went together with prejudices against women and against forms of life that challenged the historically and socially established norms of genders, like homosexuality, feminism, pacifism.

Beyond the fact that Orwell's essays have not been examined extensively through gendered lens – Daphne Patai's feminist reading of Orwell embraces mainly his novels – a gendered critique of Orwell's non-fiction is especially imperative as Orwell's genius is said to be manifested in the genre of the essay and journalism. Since he contributed significantly to the political and social discourse of his day and still speaks to us in the present, his concept of gender needs due consideration. The andocentrism that underlies his ethos and oeuvre and that as a logical end gives way to the marginalisation of women in the propagandist pamphlets during the war has been ignored by criticism that praises his essays for being “purposeful, vigorous, often polemical, and a real attempt to see things afresh” and praises his unremitting fight for a just and egalitarian society. (Davison, *Life*, 94) As a political author whose vision of society is still relevant in our time and is held in high esteem, it should be emphasised that this vision is certainly not based on any kind of gender equality.

Examining various politically-motivated responses to Orwell’s oeuvre, I pointed out the contradictions and deficiences of these approaches. Criticism originating in political or religious ideologies ultimately fail in providing a coherent criticism based

on the unity of author and work and remain entrapped within one or another political ideology without being able to cope with Orwell's subscription to an ideology different from that of the critic. Thus, Orwell's shift from socialism to patriotism, often interpreted as a shift from left to right remains unexplained. Yet, if one scratches the surface of political ideologies and examines what fundamental human experience they embrace and build upon, it turns out that the kind of socialism and patriotism to which Orwell both subscribed do not differ from each other in terms of a fusion with masculinity. The imperative to do one's gender right and especially the urge to perform manliness prove to be strong fundamentals on which various political ideologies build, therefore, the seeming discrepancies of Orwell's oeuvre are to be accounted for best by resorting to an examination of his work and life from the aspect of gender.

Based on Judith Butler's notion of performative feminism, according to which gender is not a preexisting identity but a sedimentation of acts through time and gender performance is governed by punitive and regulatory social conventions, I reached back to signposts of Orwell's early and adolescent gender constitution and examined his reminiscence of schoolyears and a piece of juvenalia from the Eton years to see what were those factors in the early years of his gender constitution that provided him with a life-long anxiety to do his gender right. My reading of 'Such, Such Were the Joys' concerned not the issue of the roots of the nightmare totalitarian world of *Nineteen-Eighty Four,* which is said to be located in the tyrannical atmosphere experienced in childhood, but how the gendered education at public schools, the training in manliness, became internalised and, combined with an anxiety about failure, the imperative to perform heterosexual masculinity became a decisive constitutive of his personality and oeuvre.

I linked Orwell's disposition to categorisation and prejudice to a sense of gendered failure. His prejudice against ways of life that do not conform to the historically and socially established gender norms imply that he remained captive of the gendered abuses of his schoolyears: he was anxious to do his gender right and avoid punishment in the form of failure and shame for not performing masculinity and he handed down the abuses he had a share in to all who – so he surmised – did not comply with the established gender norms, thereby confirming his own gendered self. Both his social radicalism and his intolerance toward various groups of people, two phenomena

that seem to exclude each other – had roots in a sense of abuse and inadequacy. That many of his biases were gendered, like the bias against homosexuals, pacifists, fat socialists, feminists, or simply sandal-wearers and fruit-juice drinkers originated in the gendered nature of his failure.

Instead of conscious misogyny it was an all-too-anxious adherence to the dictates of traditional msculinity and the following andocentric outlook that informed his ideas and attitude to women and women's issues. In my analysis I often reflected on how critics and biographers have approached or – more often – neglected Orwell's andocentric outlook and biased attitude to women, suggesting that the majority of his critics by-passed and indirectly approved his gender-based biases. The conformity with which biographers labelled Eileen O'Shaughnessy as a supportive literary wife who played second fiddle to her husband's talent, based – no doubt – on Orwell's own treatment of his wife, speaks not only about Orwell's but about his critics' lack of gender sensitivity. Starting from the inseparability of private and public life I examined Orwell's attitude to women both in life and on paper, i.e. his personal relationship with women and his views on women in non-fictional writings, and found that in terms of gender author and work form a Foucauldian unity. This implies that a discourse on Orwell that accepts that human experience is gendered and takes into account the issue of gender both in biography and criticism leads to a coherent discourse which can cope with the tensions and contradictions of the Orwell corpus that criticism which disregards the gender issue cannot tackle.

My analysis of Orwell's turn from socialism to patriotism provides evidence for this claim. I argue that if Orwell's anxiety about masculinity is taken into account, the shift from a characteristically andocentric socialism, where the category of common man excludes the common woman, to patriotism, the bugle call which men have traditionally been obliged to answer, remains within the same trap of anxiety to perform heterosexual masculinity. Orwell's major patriotic essays and his uncritical praise of the popular culture, including its gender biases, show that his patriotism was a venue for performing and reinforcing his own heterosexual masculine identity, which was not exempt from the condemnation of other, especially homosexual identities, and the denial of women's agency within the nation. The traditional gender roles promoted by nationalist narratives complied with and reinforced his own heterosexual masculine

identity, the attributes and principles he tried to live up to all his life, like bravery, action, duty, commitment, self-sacrifice, self-reliance, heroism and the readiness to take part in public affairs and war.

Besides arguing that a gendered analysis can count for tensions and contradictions of the oeuvre, my analysis of Orwell's patriotic essays also draws attention to the consequences and materialisation of latent prejudices. Orwell's gender-biased statements that occasioned charges of misogyny are only the-tip-of-the-iceberg phenomena that signal – if they are not ignored as being insignificant and irrelevant in the entirety of the oeuvre – an all too eager adherence to the traditional notion of binary genders. Not only women fall victim to the urge to comply with and perform heterosexual masculinity but every group that threatens the historically established boundaries between the polar genders: feminists, pacifists, homosexuals. That is, if one does not by-pass these signs of the iceberg, the tension between his social sensitivity and his rigid categorisation of people, as well as other contradictions, like that between socialism and patriotism, become intelligible. The alignment of andocentrism and nationalism in Orwell's oeuvre reached a stage during the Second World War when women became unthinkable except as mothers and prostitutes – a vision of society not far from the domestication of women in the national socialist society.

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