オーエルと政治

Orwell and Politics

George Orwell, born in 1903, may be known for his early book *Burmese Days* with its exotic Colonial setting reminiscent of Kipling and E. M. Forster, but what catapulted him to fame and made his position secure as a writer of international stature was without a doubt his 1949 masterpiece *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. From its publication the book was a sensational success and from 1953 to 1956 as many as three film and television adaptions of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* were produced. As the year 1984 approached, the Orwell fever reached its climax and as John Rodden attests the book became a ubiqutious phenomenon during the early 1980s in "classrooms and academic journals, in the press, and on airwaves."[1] However, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not the only important work of Orwell's. In addition he wrote a number of other books and essays and by the time he died of tuberculosis in 1950 he had published such significant works as *Animal Farm*, *Coming Up for Air*, *Homage to Catalonia* and *Inside the Whale*. Among others, what is noteworthy is the amount of reviews and critiques he contributed to journals and magazines. In fact in little less than twenty years he wrote more than seven hundred articles, most of which were politically oriented. The sheer bulk of his journalistic output indicates (especially in the light of his visit to the economically depressed coalmining areas of England to investigate the working and living conditions of the people there and his active participation in the Spanish Civil War to fight for the Republican cause) his responsiveness to and deep interest in the contemporaty social, economic and political issues. It can even be argued, for instance, that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* could never have been written without World War Ⅱ and the consequent Cold War. In this paper, I will examine the general subjects of Orwell's major writings and try to define the predominant attitude or spirit that runs through them all.

One of Orwell's main concerns is class. Born in a poor middle-class family he encountered various problems and prejudices arising from the hierarchical structure inherent in English society. For instance, through his school days at Crossgates he experienced discrimination by the school master Sym who divided his pupils into three groups—aristocratic or millionaire sons, ordinary suburban rich and the relatively poor of the remainder of children. Invariably placed at the bottom according to Sym's categorization, Orwell was forced to recognize the existence of social hierarchy in his early childhood.[2] Because of his experience at Crossgates he becomes extremely sensitive to middle-class snobbery. Pretentiousness of parents in sending their offspring to a socially acceptable school despite their inadequate income, thus plunging them into a group of children whose worth is determined by their economic background indeed becomes his favorite subject later in life.[3] In fact vain attempts of the bourgeoisie to cling to their "genteel values" are repeatedly pointed out in Orwell's writings. In *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, for instance, Gordon Comstock, a middle-class man himself, is sent to a school where he suffers humiliation because of his economically inferior family background. The resemblance between Gordon and Orwell becomes clear if we compare a passage from *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* with another from *The Road to Wigan Pier*, which is Orwell's thinly disguised autobiography.

> The Comstocks belonged to the most dismal of all classes, the middle-middle class, the landless gentry. In their miserable poverty they had not even the snobbish consolation of regarding themselves as an 'old' family fallen on evil days, for they were not an 'old' family at all, merely one of those families which rose on the wave of Victorian prosperity and then sank again faster than the wave itself. (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, 39)

> I was born into what you might describe as the lower-upper-middle class [nearly the lowest of the middle class]. The upper-middle class, which had its heyday in the 'eighties and 'nineties, with Kipling as its poet laureate, was a sort of mound of wreckage left behind when the tide of Victorian prosperity receded. (*The Road to Wigan Pier*, 113)

For Orwell economic issues are indeed intertwined with class issues. For example, he writes in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* that "a middle-class man is obliged to live for years on end in a style that would be scorned by a jobbing plumber" simply because he wants to send his son to "the right kind of school (that is, a public shool or an imitation of one)" (43) while the rest of the family members are deprived of their educational opportunities. However, the consequences of receiving such an education are formidable. For instance, after spending his susceptible years in a snobbish school Comstock develops a "crawling reverence for money" and becomes disdainful of his family and relatives for their impecunious condition.

> The first effect of all this [snobbery in public school] was to give him a crawling reverence for money. In those days he actually hated his poverty-stricken relatives—his father and mother, Julia, everybody. He hated them for their dingy homes, their dowdiness, their joyless attitude to life, their endless worrying and groaning over threepences and sixpences. (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, 45)

The fact that poverty affects creativity of Gordon the poet also emphasizes how far reaching an effect money has over individuals who happen to belong to a poor class. Contrariwise, the change in people brought about by money is also indicative of its power. When Comstock receives ten pounds from the *Californian Review*, for instance, he feels transformed as if he had become "a different person":

> It was queer how different you felt with all that money in your pocket. Not opulent, merely, but reassured, revivified, reborn. He felt a different person from what he had been yesterday. He was a different person. He was no longer the downtrodden wretch who made secret cups of tea over the oil stove at 31 Willowbed Road. He was Gordon Comstock, the poet, famous on both sides of the Atlantic. Publications: *Mice* (1932), *London Pleasures* (1935). He thought with perfect confidence of *London Pleasures* now. In three months it should see the light. (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, 171)

With the regaining of self-confidence he is filled with intellectual, imaginative energy to such a degree that Comstock is ready to discard his inferiority complex that has been circumscribing his mental horizon up to the moment. In this sense, money indeed lubricates "the wheel—wheels of thought as well as wheels of taxis." (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, 179) The link between money and class consciousness is also stressed in the dichotomy between Comstock and Ravelston. Ravelston is a character who despite his upper-class origin espouses a democratic ideology. In order to "meet the working class on equal terms," he convinces himself that "he was fond of pubs, especially low-class pubs," because pubs are proletarian. (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, 95) However, Ravelston's egalitarian posture is merely intellectual and is not accompanied by realistic considerations, further revealing his aristocratic tendencies despite his avowal that he is a genuine believer in liberal democracy. Since Ravelston's friendship with Gordon is founded on a fiction of their financial parity, there is always tension.

> When he and Ravelston met it was always agreed, with silent manoeuvrings, that they should do nothing that involved spending money, beyond the shilling or so one spends in a pub. In this way the fiction was kept up that there was no serious difference in their incomes. (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, 89-90)

Their mutual recognition of hypocrisy in maintaining such an artificial relationship gives further prominence to the inseverable nexus between money and class.

Orwell's socio-economic consciousness is apparent from the beginning of his writing career. As we

have seen, in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* the concept of income is assigned a special importance as to be inseparably connected to the development of one's personality (104) while poverty is associated with dehumanizing hunger and filth as well as atrophy of imagination. Orwell deals with the same issue in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. The story, based on his own experience in Paris during 1928-9 when he lived in the "slum, with its dirt and its queer lives," (5) vividly conveys sentiments of the impoverished class.

> You discover what it is like to be hungry. With bread and margarine in your belly, you go out and look into the shop windows. Everywhere there is food insulting you in huge, wasteful piles; whole dead pigs, baskets of hot loaves, great yellow blocks of butter, strings of sausages, mountains of potatoes, vast Gruyére cheeses like grindstones. A snivelleng self-pity comes over you at the sight of so much food. You plan to grab a loaf and run, swallowing it before they catch you; and you refrain, from pure funk. (*Down and Out in Paris and London*, 15)

We can argue here that hunger generates a condition which is conducive to an anti-social behavior or at least an abnormal mental state. (The logic is reminiscent of Bernard Shaw. In fact Orwell does not seem to disagree with him on some of the social implications of poverty.) The effect of moneylessness is also discernible when Orwell declares that the demanding work load and monotonous duties of an unskilled laborer are only fit for an unthinking automaton. In real life Orwell worked as a "plonger" (a low-wage, long-hour menial job) and found the mechanical repetition of dishwashing ideal for a slave mentality. Thus one of the consequences of poverty can be deduced as depersonalization. A similar pernicious effect of poverty is also treated in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and it is described as bearing some link to human isolation. For instance, because of his pecuniary plight Gordon cannot go to Crichton with Flaxman and nobody informs him of the changed date of the tea party presumably because his indigent state makes him an insignificant member of the group; his girlfriend is reluctant to spend a night with him for she is not sure if Gordon is able to cope with its consequences.[1] Indeed the issue of poverty is recurrent in many of Orwell's writings before *Homage to Catalonia*. The protagonist's mingling with a group of tramps in *A Clergyman's Daughter* can be cited as another evidence of Orwell's deep concern with this subject.

Autobiographically, Orwell initially associated with the poor because of an economic necessity, but gradually his superficial relation with the underprivileged class gave way to his deep interest in their economic deprivation.

> I sometimes lived for months on end amongst the poor and half-criminal elements who inhabit the worst parts of the poorer quarters, or take to the streets, begging and stealing. At that time I associated with them through lack of money, but later their way of life interested me very much for its own sake. (*Animal Farm*, 110)

This is a considerable shift in attitude for Orwell who has been raised to regard lower classes as ill-natured barbarians destined to be his enemies. Also at this time he becomes acquainted with the subhuman living conditions of the oppressed workers living in the economically depressed industrial areas of northern England. Following his criticism in *Down and Out in Paris and London* of the "two cosmopolitan centres of materialistic civilization" that generate "social outcasts, economically wretched, mentally weak and physically decrepit,"[5] his direct contact with the oppressed classes of his country provides a further stimulus to tackle the social issues of his days. The more shocking the conditions he finds there to exist, the more strongly is his sense of justice and equality aroused.

> The almost bare living-room of a cottage in a little mining village, where the whole family was out of work and everyone seemed to be underfed; and the big family of grown-up sons and daughters sprawling aimlessly about, all strangely alike with red hair, splendid bones and pinched faces ruined

by malnutrition and idleness; and one tall son sitting by the fireplace, too listless even to notice the entry of a stranger, and slowly peeling a sticky sock from a bare foot. A dreadful room in Wigan where all the furniture seemed to be made of packing cases and barrel staves and was coming to pieces at that···· (*The Road to Wigan Pier*, 54-55)

Here we can infer the intensity of Orwell's indignation at social injustice from his effort to create a maximum impact in portraying the scandalizing living standard of the miners. In fact what is most conspicuous in *The Road to Wigan Pier* is Orwell's indictment of the social system that seeks to prolong the dichotomous economic structure of the exploiter and the exploited in which the subjugated class is perpetually at the mercy of rapaious industrialists. (Generally, however, the indignatory tone is muted by the seemingly objective presentation of his numbers. Nevertheless, Orwell constructs his polemical work in such a way that the reader is inevitably led to subvert the surface meaning of the text—a ploy which obviously succeeded in attracting many working-class readers to his cause of social amelioration.[6]) It is also interesting to note that unemployment, as well as poverty in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, contributes to the status quo by depriving the poor workers of their "peaceful" time to exercise their mind and project themselves into a different situation, for the realization of a better society depends on their ability to conceptualize it beforehand.

... there is no doubt about the deadening, debilitating effect of unemployment upon everybody, married or single, and upon men more than upon women. ... to write books you need not only comfort and solitude—and solitude is never easy to attain in a working-class home—you also need peace of mind. You can't settle to anything, you can't command the spirit of hope in which anything has got to be created, with that dull evil cloud of unemployment hanging over you. (*The Road to Wigan Pier*, 75-76)

Working-class issues viewed within the capitalist context are closely related to Orwell's adoption of socialist ideology. Two reasons can be cited for his affiliation with the socialist cause. One of them is historical. The decade of 1930s when *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* were written saw "unemployment and industrial decay and hunger marchers" occupying a prominent place in the economic landscape of England. Appropriately described as constituting the "Auden landscape,"[7] the period with its labor problems was ripe for giving rise to such left-wing magazines as *New Signature* (1932), *New Country* (1933) and the establishment of an organization with a similar ideological orientation, the British section of the Writers' International. Considering these circumstances, it does not seem so difficult to define his left-leaning as a historical phenomenon. The other reason for his sympathy with the socialist ethos can be derived from his love of fairness and democratic spirit. For example, despite his childhood prejudice against the working class, nurtured by his own class for the purpose of perpetuating class stratification, Orwell was able to overcome the cultural conditioning by attributing filth and squalor of the poor to oppression and tyranny of the hypocritical capitalist society. His confirmation as a moralist-reformist writer after his first-hand experience of the atrocious environment of the workers in Lancashire and Yorkshire even indicates his solidarity with the oppressed class of his country. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* we can see that his experience with miners provides him with proof of the existence of an unfair social structure and Orwell's discovery in its turn becomes basis for his support of a socialist ideology as an alternative or even a solution to capitalist oppression.

I wanted to see what mass-unemployment is like at its worst, partly in order to see the most typical section of the English working class at close quarters. This was necessary to me as part of my approach to Socialism. For before you can be sure whether you are genuinely in favour of Socialism,

> you have got to decide whether things at present are tolerable or not tolerable, and you have got to take up a definite attitude on the terribly difficult issue of class. (113)

Since Orwell shares the idealistic revolutionary spirit with Ravelston, which dictates abrogation of materialistic values permeating the capitalist world, his conviction as an anti-establishment writer seems inevitable. (Interestingly enough he clearly distinguishes capitalism and democracy claiming that they are incompatible with one another—an attitude which is demonstrated in his rebuke of the then American ambassador in London, Joseph P. Kennedy.[8]) However, Orwell's antagonism to a materialistic ideology is modified by the appearance of fascism as a tangible threat to individual freedom, forcing him to make a compromise with the lesser of the two evils. He is to pursue a socialism accomodated to his own vision of the just world.

Before we proceed to the discussion of Orwell's Socialism, it is pertinent to take up the issues of imperialism and colonialism, which are in fact closely related to those of capitalism. Orwell regards colonialism, which is a manifestation of imperialism in the form of economic exploitation by the strong in the less powerful countries, as an assertion of Westerners' privileges and superior status as something unarguably established. For instance, Ellis, a jingoistic timber merchant in *Burmese Days*, rationalizes subjugation of the Burmese as conforming to the timeless laws and thus constituting an inalienable right of the Europeans.

> Good God, what are we supposed to be doing in this country? If we aren't going to rule, why the devil don't we clear out ? Here we are, supposed to be governing a set of damn black swine who've been slaves since the beginning of history, and instead of ruling them in the only way you silly b—s take it for granted. There's Flory, makes his best pal of a black *babu* who calls himself a doctor because he's done two years at an Indian so-called university. And you, Westfield, proud as Punch of your knock-kneed, bribe-taking cowards of policemen. And there's Maxwell, spends his time running after Eurasian tarts. (*Burmese Days*, 22)

Even Macgregor, a relatively liberal sahib, perceives the inherent inequality between Europeans and Orientals as a foundation for developing an amicable relationship between the two. For him like others in the colony, essential disparity between the two is a premise without which no "correct" inter-racial understanding is possible. Macgregor's hypocrisy is easy to detect in the following excerpt.

> Mr Macgregor stiffened at the word 'nigger', which is discountenanced in India. He had no prejudice against Orientals; indeed, he was deeply fond of them. Provided they were given no freedom he thought them the most charming people alive. It always pained him to see them wantonly insulted. (28)

Indeed Macgregor's amorality only stresses the deep-rooted dialectic of the dominant and the dominated that exists in the colonial mentality of Europeans. Maxwell's murder by the natives in revenge for their relative who has been shot to death by the former is an excellent case that unmasks the Conradian benevolent lawgivers and cultural torchbearers by bringing up the issue of inequal value of life between whites and blacks. The consensus among the European population in Burma on the killing of Maxwell is that not a thousand Burman lives can compensate for the death of one white man, and the agreement is reached without a majority of them actually feeling for Maxwell's death.

> ... the unforgivable had happened—a white man had been killed. When that happens, a sort of shudder runs through the English of the East. Eight hundred people, possibly, are murdered every year in Burma; they matter nothing; but the murder of a white man is a monstrosity, a sacrilege. Poor Maxwell would be avenged, that was certain. But only a servant or two, and the Forest Ranger who

had brought in his body, and who had been fond of him, shed any tears for his death. (247-48)

If anybody makes an attempt to bridge the gap between the two groups, he is promptly punished for violating a taboo and jeopardizing the dialectical structure necessary for preserving colonial peace. If we look at the response of Elizabeth Lackersteen (who in a sense personifies the spirit of capitalism with her opportunistic and materialistic tendencies) to Flory, the most egalitarian of the characters in *Burmese Days* who transcends the dichotomous relationship by objectively evaluating the natives according to the standards that lie outside the Occidental cultural categories, it becomes evident that the system is quick to isolate such a figure as aberrant and, even worse, dangerous to the equilibrium that is maintained only on the assumption of genetic inferiority of the natives.

> ... she perceived that Flory, when he spoke of the 'natives', spoke nearly always *in favour* of them. He was forever praising Burmese customs and the Burmese character; he even went so far as to contrast them favourably with the English. It disquieted her. After all, natives were natives—interesting, no doubt, but finally only a 'subject' people, an inferior people with black faces. His attitude was a little *too* tolerant. Nor had he grasped, yet, in what way he was antagonising her. He so wanted her to love Burma as he loved it, not to look at it with the dull, incurious eyes of a memsahib! He had forgotten that most people can be at ease in a foreign country only when they are disparaging the inhabitants. (*Burmese Days*, 121)

Thus Flory is gradually drawn back to the network of dominant values according to a pattern Raymond Williams describes as typically Orwellian.[9] However, the tragedy of Flory is that he resists reassimilation. In the confrontation between the individual and the whole the only way a person can assert himself while justifying his idiosyncratic position is death.

As Flory's subversive views indicate, not everyone is genuinely convinced of the justness of the ruler-ruled dialectic. On the contrary, Orwell indicates that nobody really believes in the system maintained by a myth that what is taking place in colonies is to the mutual advantage of both Europeans and Orientals.

> I was in the Indian Police five years, and by the end of that time I hated the imperialism I was serving with a bitterness which I probably cannot make clear. In the free air of England that kind of thing is not fully intelligible. In order to hate imperialism you have got to be part of it. Seen from the outside the British rule in India appears—indeed, it *is*—benevolent and even necessary; and so no doubt are the French rule in Morocco and the Dutch rule in Borneo, for people usually govern foreigners better than they govern themselves. But it is not possible to be part of such a system without recognising it as an unjustifiable tyranny. Even the thickest-skinned Anglo-Indian is aware of this. Every 'native' face he sees in the street brings home to him his monstrous intrusion. And the majority of Anglo-Indians, intermittently at least, are not nearly so complacent about their position as people in England believe. From the most unexpected people, from gin-pickled old scoundrels high up in the Government service, I have heard some such remark as: 'Of course we've no right in this blasted country at all. Only now we're here for God's sake let's stay here'. The truth is that no modern man, in his heart of hearts, believes that it is right to invade a foreign country and hold the population down by force. Foreign oppression is a much more obvious, understandable evil than economic oppression. (*The Road to Wigan Pier*, 134-35)

Orwell admits, however, that exploitation of colonies is a necessary condition for insuring prosperity of a capitalist country like England. What Orwell criticizes here is Westerners' hypocrisy to rationalize the dichotomous structure of the ruler and the ruled despite their awareness of its moral wrongness. For

instance, he quickly perceives the inconsistency of the so-called progressive left-wingers who enjoy material benefits derived from subjugation of the colonized countries while at the same time accusing the government of continued colonial oppression.

> Under the capitalist system, in order that England may live in comparative comfort, a hundred million Indians must live on the verge of starvation—an evil state of affairs, but you acquiesce in it every time you step into a taxi or eat a plate of strawberries and cream. The alternative is to throw the Empire overboard and reduce England to a cold and unimportant little island where we should all have to work very hard and live mainly on herrings and potatoes. That is the very last thing that any left-winger wants. Yet the left-winger continues to feel that he has no moral responsibility for imperialism. He is perfectly ready to accept the products of Empire and to save his soul by sneering at the people who hold the Empire together. (*The Road to Wigan Pier*, 148)

If we compare the issues of class and imperialism/colonialism here, we find an analogy between the dialectic patterns that exist in England and Burma. It is true that in the colonies the kind of class stratification Orwell noted in his childhood does not develop and "the all-important thing was not whether you had been to one of the right schools but whether your skin was technically white." (*The Road to Wigan Pier*, 132) But if we focus on the dialectic of the oppressor and the oppressed, whether it is economic or racial, the argument to place the two issues on the same plane is defensible. In fact the continuity between the two issues is noted by Orwell himself when he describes the circumstances of his departure from the Indian Police in 1927.

> I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate.... I had reduced everything to the simple theory that the oppressed are always right and the oppressors are always wrong: a mistaken theory, but the natural result of being one of the oppressors yourself. I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants .... At that time failure seemed to me to be the only virtue. Every suspicion of self-advancement, even to 'succeed' in life to the extent of making a few hundreds a year, seemed to me spiritually ugly, a species of bullying.
>
> It was in this way that my thoughts turned towards the English working class. It was the first time that I had ever been really aware of the working class, and to begin with it was only because they supplied an analogy. They were the symbolic victims of injustice, playing the same part in England as the Burmese played in Burma. (*The Road to Wigan Pier*, 138)

We find another analogy between class and colonial issues in Orwell. Orwell presumably overcomes class prejudice in his early childhood and achieves sympathetic identification with lower classes. However, in reality he retains his middle-class bias throughout his life and deals with the class-related issues only with detachment without actually absorbing the lower-class values. If we call this Orwell's dual stance on the question of social stratification, we also find a similar feature in his attitude to imperialism.[10] On the one hand he expresses resentment against inherent unfairness of imperialism as is manifested in his Burmese writings, but on the other hand, Orwell in fact is found to be endued with racial hatred for the natives, revealing his imperialistic tendencies:

> I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in *saecula saeculorum*, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into

a Buddhist priest's guts. (*A Collection of Essays*, 149)

In this context it even becomes possible to deduce that while denouncing middle classes as profiting from colonial exploitation, Orwell actually gives his tacit consent to an unreasonable system that makes such injustice possible. Furthermore, exhibiting Kiplingesque advocacy of imperialism, Orwell even resembles Ellis in *Burmese Days*, particularly when he remarks that underdeveloped countries such as India and Africa are incapable of governing themselves and thus granting them independence is senseless—a hard-line conservative tendency which becomes conspicuous towards the latter half of Orwell's career. For instance, dismissing any hopeful prospect for anti-imperialism, he writes:

> In the age of tank and the bombing plane, backward agricultural countries like India and the African colonies can no more be independent than can a cat or dog.[11]

This Orwellian paradox, which constitutes the writer's distinctive characteristic, reveals that Orwell, seemingly possessing cosmopolitan, liberal views, in fact judges colonial issues by narrow European standards.[12] His belief that the absence of trade unions and Marxism in Asia disqualifies it as an independent region, further betrays his valorization of Occidental perspectives, and considering his use of Western values as a basis for his ideological justification for the evil practices in Asia, it can be argued that he is as hypocritical as the other left-wing intellectuals whom he accuses.

Indeed, the Orwellian paradox threatens to expose Orwell as a hypocrite whose true identity is a conservative bigot. However, his indignation at unfairness and oppression generated by capitalism and imperialism is nevertheless genuine. Let us return to the question of Orwell's socialism that epitomizes his democratic spirit. After his visit to the coalmining region in northern England, he becomes concerned with the infernal working and living conditions of the miners, and consequently he begins to take an increasing interest in socialism.[13] His left-leaning at this stage is however not motivated by his adoption of a clear-cut ideology but mainly by his sympathy with the oppressed class and by his inherent sense of justice.

> Up to 1930 I did not on the whole look upon myself as a Socialist. In fact I had as yet no clearly defined political views. I became pro-Socialist more out of disgust with the way the poorer section of the industrial workers were oppressed and neglected than out of any theoretical admiration for a planned society. (*The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Ⅲ, 403)

In fact up to 1936—the year he left for Spain to fight on the Republican side—Orwell conducts his social criticism from a humanitarian perspective and focuses mainly on such practical matters as the improvement of inhuman working conditions while only minimally emphasizing the doctrinal aspect of socialism. What occasions Orwell to take up the socialist cause more seriously is his participation in the Spanish Civil War as can be inferred from his letter to Cyril Connolly in which he writes: "I ... at last really believe in socialism which I never did before." (*The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Ⅰ, 548) In Spain Orwell initially expected to join the Communist Party (PSUC) based in Madrid, but by some quirk of fate he became affiliated with the Anarchist (POUM) branch of the Republican army headquartered in Barcelona.[14] Orwell was impressed by the POUM militias' ardor to create a society in which each individual was not subjugated to the whole as merely a dispensable cogwheel but rather regarded as an integral part of a community in which freedom from oppression and fundamental equality among members were guaranteed.

> ... there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom. Human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine. In the barbers' shops were Anarchist notices (the barbers were mostly Anarchists) solemnly explaining that barbers were no longer slaves. (*Homage to Catalonia*,4)

Besides his endorsement of the nonhierarchical militias, what is conspicuous in Orwell's experience with the POUM is his attempt to postulate socialism as a political theory opposed to capitalism and define the ideological project of socialism as an endeavor to abolish evils of capitalism in solidarity with lower classes.

> I had dropped more or less by chance into the only community of any size in Western Europe where political consciousness and disbelief in capitalism were more normal than their opposites. Up here in Aragón one was among tens of thousands of peolpe, mainly though not entirely of working-class origin, all living at the same level and mingling on terms of equality. In theory it was perfect equality, and even in practice it was not far from it. There is a sense in which it would be true to say that one was experiencing a foretaste of Socialism, by which I mean that the prevailing mental atmosphere was that of Socialism. Many of the normal motives of civilised life—snobbishness, money-grubbing, fear of the boss, etc.—had simply ceased to exist. The ordinary class-division of society had disappeared to an extent that is almost unthinkable in the money-tainted air of England; there was no one there except the peasants and ourselves, and no one owned anyone else as his master. (*Homage to Catalonia*,83)

It is clear here that the issues of Socialism and class in Orwell converge. And if we interpret capitalism as comprehending enslavement of colonial population for economic exploitation, which is indeed a facet of imperialism, Orwell's Socialism can also provide a theoretical ground for attacking colonialism.

Orwell's egalitarian Socialism is essentially a counterbalance to any tyranny that threatens individual rights, particularly freedom. As an ideological program diametrically opposed to Socialism Orwell posits totalitarianism. Of the various evils found in the ultimate totalitarian state of Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (which clearly reflects Hitlerian Germany), the most pernicious is its ceaseless attempt to control its citizens. The Oceanian Party, for instance, introduces "telescreen" in an effort to minimize the time each person can have exclusively to himself. This twentieth-century version of Bentham's panopticon, which Vita Fortunati characterizes as "a kind of parody of the religious metaphor of the omnipresent Eye of God,"[15] can be dimmed but never completely shut off. The Party uses the telescreen not only to keep its citizens under surveillance but also to achieve its ideological goal INGSOC (derived from English Socialism) and to tighten its "Thought Control," an important concept for preventing rebellious acts by forestalling the occurrence of unorthodox ideas. The "Two Minutes Hate" can be viewed in this context. Repeatedly played at fixed times daily, the propaganda program incapacitates people from doubting Party slogans, turning them into passive automatons capable of only mechanical responses somewhat resembling those of Pavlof's animals.

> A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology [i. e. he who repeats words automatically] has gone some distance towards turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself. If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church. (*A Collection of Essays*, 166)

Pursuant to INGSOC, the Party also adopts a concept of advanced Thought Control, Doublethink. According to it the connection between the Saussurean signifiant-signifie is severed and instead an alternative linguistic relationship is established to facilitate ideological manipulation, enabling the Party to erode epistemological foundations of each individual and making him susceptible to Party indoctrination. The principle of Doublethink or Thought Control also applies to the Party's scheme to tamper with Oceanian history. Oceania is presumably in a state of perpetual warfare with either one of

Eurasia or Eastasia. However, since its enemy has been in fact changing (although the belligerence between Oceania and its supposed enemy remains unabated because of the endless war game they are engaged in),[16] the Party surreptitiously alters historical facts in order to make them conform to its official view. If the same principle is applied to another domain, mathematics, even a simple equation starts reflecting the Party philosophy.

> In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it. It was inevitable that they should make that claim sooner or later: the logic of their position demanded it. Not merely the validity of experience, but the very existence of external reality, was tacitly denied by their philosophy. The heresy of heresies was common sense. And what was terrifying was not that they would kill you for thinking otherwise, but that they might be right. For, after all, how do we know that two and two make four? Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable—what then? ... The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command. (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 83-84)

The Party also introduces Newspeak, a version of Doublethink, to control the mind of Oceanian citizens. Newspeak is a use of language conceived in opposition to Oldspeak and a product of the duplicitous Party which aims to subvert conventional semantics and thus to cultivate a mental condition amenable to the Party's axiological bias. A version of Newspeak is exemplified by the names of the Oceanian ministries. For instance, despite their names the Ministry of Love and Ministry of Plenty are functionally the inverse of what their names indicate, the former in reality being engaged in torture and the latter scarcities. And if we look at Oceanian slogans such as "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," and "Ignorance is Strength" the ubiquity of this linguistic dislocation is striking. What the phenomenon of Newspeak evidences is the kind of ideologically heteronomous society the Party is seeking to maintain, because if people cannot think for themselves and if "Oceania is the world of no-difference, of the interchangeability of terms" the Party can easily prevent dialectical clashes from occurring both in the people's mind and in actuality.[17] In other words, Newspeak or Thought Control is not only central to the preservation of social stability based on the Oceanian principle that "Orthodoxy is unconscious" (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 56) but also essential to producing citizens incapable of rebelling against the Party. Since both heterodoxical ideas and deeds are placed on the same plane by the Party, Newspeak (a kind of logopnobia) is also a logical consequence of the project of totalitarian control.[18] Winston's punishment can be seen in this context. Although his case is an example of the party's failure to drain the mind content of an individual, it contrariwise brings attention to the Party's objective to eliminate common sense and to create a thought vacuum to be filled with Party ideology by means of Newspeak or Thought Control. Thus Oceania interpreted as a totalitarian dystopia Orwell perceived as emerging in twentieth-century Europe, particularly in the wake of World War Ⅱ, is a state in which the Party works only to retain its power to suppress individual freedom and in which Newspeak is a dreadful means to control not only the thoughts and emotions of the people but also their actions.

As we have seen, most of Orwell's works are related to the contemporary sociopolitical issues. *Burmese Days* deals with the decline of British imperialism and *Down and Out in Paris and London*, *A Clergyman's Daughter*, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (all written during the Depression) treat the question of poverty and *Homage to Catalonia* results from his experience of the Spanish Civil War; *Coming Up for Air* precedes World War Ⅱ merely by three months and *Animal Farm* comes out only a few days after Hiroshima; and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* goes into print at the height of the Cold War.[19] Indeed, as Patrick

Reilly and Bernard Crick observe it is beyond a doubt that Orwell is one of the finest political writers in English literature. The difficulty in assessing Orwell, however, lies in how Orwell the novelist and the polemicist reconcile with each other. Since the question is relevant to the overall evaluation of his works, I will briefly dwell on it.

Orwell's writing activity is strongly influenced by his view on language. For him language is a medium for clear and simple representation of concepts and any other use of it is an intolerable act that can be construed as hiding some insincere or even dangerous motives behind it. This doctrine of Orwell's linguistic plain representation is based on his belief that language, being "an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought" (*The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Ⅳ, 139), should be as transparent as possible. Besides his insistence on linguistic transparency, Orwell also perceives a correlation between language and the spirit of the age or Zeitgeist, considering that the two mutually reflect the state they are in in an unfaltering way. For instance he cites Germany, Russia and Italy, countries where a totalitarian ideology has enslaved people, and attributes the decline of their languages to their political system. England is also included in the same category and deemed as suffering from linguistic corruption. In fact, Orwell laments that in most modern states words which should be used for transmission of unadulterated thought are craftily engineered for political purposes and often at a high degree of abstraction.[21]

Confronting such reality, Orwell in a way is forced to define a writer as someone with a political mission to "push the world in a certain direction, to alter other peole's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after."[22] Here the aforementioned question comes back with a vengeance: How does Orwell reconcile the political, didactic purpose with aesthetic one? Since the accomplishment of most of Orwell's objectives is predicated upon the precedence of polemics over aesthetics, his attempt to harmonize the two seems to be doomed from the start. Evidence for the difficulty of resolving the dialectic is not far to seek. Orwell states that all "art is propaganda" though he denies the reverse (*A Collection of Essays*, 90) and asserts that his project is to

> make political writing into an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice.... I write it [a work of art] because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. (*A Collection of Essays*, 314–15)

And interestingly enough, to know one's political bias, according to Orwell, helps maintain one's "aesthetic and intellectual integrity." (*A Collection of Essays*, 314) However, if one is engaged in the act of writing for a propaganda purpose, it is doubtful whether Orwell's principle of the transparent language can be adhered to, for taking a partisan view itself implies a biased perspective and in order to persuade others the use of a non–neutral language is essential. Therefore, in the end his doctrine of plain representation and his politico–aesthetic project contradict each other. The cases of *Burmese Days* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, which Orwell dismisses later in his career as "naturalistically written" (for him a denigratory term) with full of purple passages, also stresses the illusive nature of the balance he seeks, and his confession that *Animal Farm* is one of the few works in which he is successful in fusing "political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole" (*The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Ⅰ, 7) proves that the equilibrium is after all rather difficult to attain.

Here I come to the conclusion. It is indubitable that Orwell's writings lie on the border between literature and politics. Despite his attempt to seek an equilibrium between aesthetics and polemics and

contrary to his Victorian and conservative tendency manifested in books like *Coming Up for Air*, however, what is predominant in Orwell is his radical, reformist tone. Throughout his career, during which he deals with a variety of subjects such as class and poverty in the early period, capitalism and imperialism in the middle period and totalitarianism in the late period, Orwell consistently maintains an attitude that indicates his strong indignation at social injustice and his earnestness to rouse people out of their stupor, which usually manifests itself as an appeal, either direct or indirect, to the people to remind them of the urgency of the issues he is addressing. And in the dichotomy of the individual and the system his sympathy is always with the former for in Orwell's project as a professional writer his ultimate objective is to resist any force or entity that threatens to restrict individual rights with the most potent weapon he as a writer possesses. Even his Socialism can be interpreted as originating from his recognition of the seriousness of individual crisis. Therefore, it is a fair surmise that his function as a novelist is subsumed under his role as a didactic conscience-seeker of his age. In that sense he can even be compared to Swift in a certain limited way.

Notes

[1] See John Rodden, *The Politics of Literary Reputation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), x.

[2] "Long before I had grasped the nature of my financial relationship with Sim, I had been made to understand that I was not on the same footing as most of the other boys. In effect there were three castes in the school. There was the minority with an aristocratic or millionaire background, there were the children of the ordinary suburban rich, who made up the bulk of the school, and there were a few underlings like myself, the sons of clegymen, Indian civil servants, struggling widows and the like. These poorer ones were discouraged from going in for 'extras' such as shooting and carpentry, and were humiliated over clothes and petty possessions." Quoted from George Orwell, *A Collection of Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953), p. 11.

[3] George Woodcock writes in his "George Orwell, 19th Century Liberal" that "Orwell was born into the impoverished upper-middle class, a particularly unhappy section of English society where a small income is strained to the utmost in the desperate struggle to keep up appearances, and where, for the very fact that social position is almost all these people possess, snobbery is more highly developed and class distinction more closely observed than anywhere else in the complicated hierarchy of English society." Collected in Jeffrey Meyers, ed., *George Orwell: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 236-37.

[4] " ... among the principal horrors of poverty is the crushing burden of isolation it imposes on the poor. The lack of money poisons the relations between men and between men and woman, a point driven home again and again by Orwell in his essays and the autobiographical *Down and Out in Paris and London* and by Gordon Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*." See Nicholas Guild, "In Dubious Battle: George Orwell and the Victory of the Money-God," in *George Orwell*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 79.

[5] Paras Mani Singh, *George Orwell as a Political Novelist* (Delhi: Amar Prakashan, 1987), p. 63.

[6] Richard Wollheim recognizes the effectiveness of Orwell's method but criticizes its tendency to distortion: "What makes *The Road to Wigan Pier* a piece of journalism isn't its content, nor the urgency with which it is written, nor even exactly its style. It is, rather, the particular attitude that the author adopts toward his subject matter. Whether he is writing about the condition of the working classes in the 1930's (as in the first part of the book) or about the predicament of socialism and socialists (as in the second Part), his method is the same. In each case, what he does is to pick out from the material at his disposal a number of details all of them as startling, as shocking, as arresting as possible, and then to set them down in a style that is very deliberately and very self-consciously none of these things. The method is undoubtedly effective. One would have to be very thick-skinned indeed not to be deeply discomforted by *The Road to Wigan Pier*. But the method has also its defects, and the most important of these is that it tends to distortion." From "Orwell Reconsidered" in *George Orwell*, ed. Harold Bloom, p. 63. According to Alok Rai "*The Road to Wigan Pier* was one of the most successful books ever put out by the Left Book Club and sold over 40,0000 copies." Quoted from John Lewis, *The Left Book Club* (London, 1970), p. 36. For the influence of *The Road to Wigan Pier* see Alok Rai, *Orwell and the Politics of Despair* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 67.

[7] On "the Auden Landscape" see Rai, p. 53.

[8] See Rai, pp. 157-58.

[9] See Raymond Williams, *George Orwell* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 44.

[10] Patrick Reilly notes Orwell's ambivalence towards British colonialism in *Burmese Days*. See his *George Orwell: the Age's Adversary* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 117.

[11] Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), II, 91.

[12] "Orwell had been, and in many senses was to remain, a critic of imperialism. However, when in 1943 one Robert Duval published a proposal that Burma be granted a certain measure of independence as a way of countering the appeal of Japanese propaganda, Orwell reacted sharply. Perhaps by virtue of the years that he had spent in Burma, Orwell was regarded as something of an expert on that country, and he was asked by *Tribune* to write a 'Background Note' to Duval's 'Plan'. Orwell wrote:

> Burma is a small, backward agricultural country, and to talk about making it independent is nonsense in the sense that it can never be independent. There is no more reason for turning Asia into a patchwork of comic-opera states than there is with Europe .... I suggest that even from the short-term propaganda point of view it is dangerous to transfer European slogans and habits of thought to Asiatic countries where, for example, there are no trade unions and the name of Marx has barely been heard."

Quoted from Rai, p. 108.

[13] Since he already considered himself as a kind of socialist after his initiation into Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy between the ages of seventeen and eighteen, his encounter with the poor working class can be said to have induced his reconfirmation in socialist faith.

[14] The fact that Orwell joins the POUM and not the Communist Party comes to assume particular importance later on. Although POUM and PSUC both fight on the Republican side in opposition to Franco, the internal struggle between the two groups becomes increasingly apparent. It does not take long for Orwell to pinpoint the cause of their dissension. While the POUM defines the war with Franco as a step to the realization of its ideal, i. e. achievement of an egalitarian society without hierarchical distinctions, the PSUC views centralization as the ultimate object, considering the revolutionary war by the proletarians only of secondary importance. Orwell eventually becomes aware that "Communism" propounded by the PSUC is a socio-politico-economic program mainly supported by conservative right-wingers, wealthy landlords and capitalists who have joined the party not for their sympathy with an egalitarian ideology but for their fear of Fascist rule.

[15] See "'It Makes No Difference': A Utopia of Simulation and Transparency" in *George Orwell's 1984*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 115.

[16] Daphne Patai describes the tripartite war as a game: "The eternal wars among Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia, with constantly shifting alliances that have no fundamental effect on the wars, are clearly depicted as games—as activities engaged in for their own sake but without hope of resolution. The three societies want only to prolong the game, not to arrive at an end point." See her "Gamesmanship and Androcentrism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*" in *George Orwell's 1984*, p. 52.

[17] "Orwell's Newspeak marks the final death of oppositions and heightens the elimination of dialectic. Now thought is possible only as automatic thought, which does not develop but simply repeats in a stereotypical way the party slogans. Oceania is the world of no-difference, of the interchangeability of terms: war is peace and peace is war. It is a world in which positive and negative generate and replace one another in turn. 'It does not matter whether the war is actually happening, and, since no decisive victory is possible, it does not matter whether the war is going well or badly.' The phrase which recurs in an almost obsessive manner throughout the novel is 'it (the Party) makes no difference,' or, in an alternative form, 'nothing makes a difference.' This above all emphasizes the neutralizing and homogenizing character of

Oceania society. The law of equivalence governs everything; it is a world in which dialectic has been eliminated and the sequence of contradiction, alternative and head-on clash is no longer possible." Quoted from "'It Makes No Difference': A Utopia of Simulation and Transparency" in *George Orwell's 1984*, p. 116.

[18] Roy Harris characterizes Newspeak as a fictional portrayal of logophobia. For the discussion of logophobia see "The Misunderstanding of Newspeak" in *George Orwell's 1984*, pp. 88-93.

[19] See Meyers, p. 2.

[20] "Orwell is a political thinker of genuine stature and a supreme political writer, the finest in English since Swift, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does stand towards the twentieth century much as *Leviathan* did towards the seventeenth." Quoted fom Reilly, ix. Bernard Crick, on the other hand, says "if his best work was not always directly political in the subject matter, it always exhibited political consciousness. In that sense, he is the finest political writer in English since Swift, satirist, stylist, moralist and stirrer, who influenced him so much." From his *George Orwell : A Life* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 16.

[21] According to Paul Delany, Orwell's argument in his essay "Politics and the English Language" rests on three premises. "The first is that English has been suffering a gradual decline. Most linguists agree that such a diagnosis makes little sense. Literature has its ups and downs, evidently; but the language as a whole, in its everyday use, must always be adequate to the work required of it. His second concern is that language can now be deliberately engineered for political ends; here I would only note that, if one follows Saussure, changing language through an act of individual will is much harder than Orwell imagines in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The third argument, central to Orwell's whole intellectual project, is that there has been a global shift towards 'abstraction' in language use." From "Words, Deeds and Things: Orwell's Quarrel with Language" in *George Orwell: A Reassessment*, p. 96.

[22] Orwell's four motives for writing, particularly prose: 1. "Sheer egoism" 2. "Esthetic enthusiasm" 3. "Historical impulse. Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity." 4. "Political purpose—using the word 'political' in the widest possible sense. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after." From "Why I Write" in *A Collection of Essays*, pp. 312-13.

[23] Roy Harris points out that the "doctrine of plain representation is simply linguistic utopianism." See "The Misunderstanding of Newspeak" in *George Orwell's 1984*, p. 92.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Orwell, George. *A Collection of Essays*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953.
_____. *Animal Farm*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1987.
_____. *Burmese Days*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1986.
_____. *Coming Up for Air*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1986.
_____. *Down and Out in Paris and London*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1986.
_____. *Homage to Catalonia*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1986.
_____. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1987.
_____. *Nineteen Eighty–Four*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1987.
_____. *The Road to Wigan Pier*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1986.

Secondary Sources

Bloom, Harold, ed. *George Orwell*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
_____. *George Orwell's 1984*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
Buitenhuis, Peter and Ira B. Nadel, eds. *George Orwell: A Reassessment*. London: Macmillan Press, 1988.
Crick, Bernard. *George Orwell: A Life*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1987.
Meyers, Jeffrey, ed. *George Orwell: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.
Orwell, Sonia and Ian Angus, eds. *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*. 4 vols. London: Secker & Warburg, 1968.
Rai, Alok. *Orwell and the Politics of Despair*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
Reilly, Patrick. *George Orwell: The Age's Adversary*. London: Macmillan Press, 1988.
Rodden, John. *The Politics of Literary Reputation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
Singh, Paras Mani. *George Orwell: As a Political Novelist*. Delhi: Amar Prakashan, 1987.
Williams, Raymond. *George Orwell*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

オーエルと政治

オーエルは自分の作品を芸術と政治の中間に位置付けようとしていると思われるが、社会問題への深い関心、全体主義体制への強い不信感、個人の自由への激しい執着などが彼の作品の主なテーマとなっていることを考えると必ずしも両者の完全な均衡が保たれているとは言い難い。そこでこの論文ではオーエルの作品における一貫してみられる姿勢、つまり彼の作品を最も決定的に特徴づけるものを見つけるべく分析、検討を進めてみた。