

THE POLITICS OF GEORGE ORWELL

(1903-1950):

FROM TORY
ANARCHISM TO
NATIONAL
SOCIALISM AND
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HALF WAY BACK

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25 Chapter Chambers, Esterbrooke Street,
London SW1P 4NN
www.libertarian.co.uk
email: admin@libertarian.co.uk

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Martin Tyrrell studied philosophy and psychology at Queen's University, Belfast in the 1980s, and has a PhD in social psychology. He has had articles published in, among others, the *Salisbury Review*, *Liberty*, *Philosophy Now* and *Critical Review*.

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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY



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INTRODUCTION

Sheer egoism; an enthusiasm for the aesthetic; a desire to put the truth on record; political purpose. George Orwell's 1946 essay *Why I Write*¹ proposes that there is some mix of these four in every author. Orwell himself identifies political purpose as the strongest of his own literary motivations. He concludes the essay with the bold claim that all of his "serious" writing over the past ten years "has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic Socialism".² When this political stance has been missing, he goes on to say, his books have been "lifeless"; his prose "purple"; his adjectives "decorative"; his sentences "without meaning"; his output, "humbug generally".³ Fittingly, then, it is as a political writer, a socialist, that Orwell is remembered. Even in *Why I Write*, however, he admits to another, much less altruistic motivation: sheer egoism. "All writers", Orwell claims, "are vain, selfish and lazy, moved by the same instinct that makes a baby squall for attention".⁴ It is this selfish streak which marks them down as different. Being selfish, they retain their individuality while others around them blend into a dowdy, self-effacing conformity. By the age of thirty there are, he says, clear lines of demarcation already appearing between "the minority of gifted, wilful people" of which writers are a part and the rest, "smothered under drudgery".⁵ But that is not the only reason why Orwell believes writers to be privileged. *Why I Write* retells how its author, lonely and unpopular as a child, found refuge first in the fictions of his own imagination and then in fiction proper. Here was a private world where old scores could be settled, failures reversed and a cold, unloving and unlovely adult world taken to task.⁶

Although *Why I Write* lists four writerly motivations, Orwell himself dwells on just the two I have mentioned: egoism and socialism. They sit uneasily together, the one individualist, the other collectivist. What is more, notwithstanding his own claims to the contrary, Orwell tends to write best

not merely when he is at his least socialist, but when he is actively critical of socialism. The sceptical essay *The Road to Wigan Pier*⁷ is a great deal better than the transparent polemic of *Homage to Catalonia*⁸ while Orwell himself later found the doctrinaire wartime tract *The Lion and the Unicorn*⁹ too embarrassing to reissue.¹⁰ As for his most famous works — *Animal Farm*¹¹ and *Nineteen Eighty-four*¹² — they surely comfort only the more deluded of his admirers on the Left. In these two Cold War parables, socialists shrewdly manipulate, deceive and mobilise their followers, a mindless rabble over-fond of marathon chants of "Four legs good, two legs bad" or of the daily catharsis of the Two Minutes' Hate.

If the political purpose avowed in *Why I Write* is missing from much of Orwell's better writings, what can be said about sheer egoism? Here there is plenty. No great political theorist and certainly no novelist, Orwell gradually mastered a type of writing that has come to dominate the journalism of the second half of the twentieth century. Well-read; opinionated, sometimes to the point of crankishness; eloquent and pithy but also, and frequently, quite superficial in his pronouncements, Orwell was a natural *columnist*. His writings, particularly the essays and journalism first published in collected form in the late 1960s, reveal a consistent *personality*, not a consistent political perspective. Positions held with ranting confidence one year are repudiated with equally confident ranting the next with the author himself spending time as the very things which, almost immediately after, would set him off: a pillar of imperialism; a pacifist; an Anglo-Catholic; a decidedly bourgeois socialist; a jingo; a sneak for British Intelligence. And those whose minds failed to change in tandem with his own would soon discover that Orwell rarely begged to differ; his disagreement was, invariably, intemperate.

In this essay I want to look at how Orwell, the egoistic, aspirant author of the 1930s, who styled himself a Tory an-

archist evolved into the singularly bellicose national socialist of the first few years of the Second World War. But I intend to describe, too, how, almost as quickly, he moved away from that position, and to examine what I believe influenced the change. And I want to consider his quaintly patronising (some might say offensive) view of the working class. Above all, however, I hope to show that what is constant in and integral to Orwell's work is not the political vision. In his politics, Orwell is derivative and underdeveloped. In this respect at least, *Why I Write* is a comprehensively misinformative piece. Politically, its author is of not account, or, leastways, is of no account to the furtherance of socialism. Like Oscar Wilde,¹³ who also dallied with the Left, it is as a voice, an ego, that he finally impresses. Orwell draws us in and makes himself and his obsessions interesting to us. He fascinates; makes us want to read more; to adopt his prejudices and perspectives, his loves and hates; to have him as our guide and mentor. It is only when his ego is suppressed by political pressures that he produces "humbug generally".

ORWELL, CLASS AND CONFORMITY

Most people, Orwell said, gradually succumb to lives of bland conformity. Beyond thirty, they scarcely live at all. Not so writers. Driven by a profound faith in their own value, writers remain defiantly themselves. No amount of mundane drudgery can constrain them; they are free. Free above all from a middle class which Orwell, no Marxist, defines more by ethos and culture than by income.¹⁴ Income, in fact, is entirely secondary. To Orwell, middle class is a state of mind, not a financial status. A snob down on his luck is, he suggests, *more* of a snob, not less. If suddenly impoverished, a bourgeois will talk up the differences between himself and those who have always been poor while a slightly or relatively impoverished patrician family will frequently struggle to maintain a lifestyle it can barely, if at all, afford: servants will be retained, for example, and children put into full-time private education. In keeping up appearances, families of this type can finish up living at a lower standard of living than their incomes might have allowed them and at a *lower* standard of living than the working class they disdain. Orwell always maintained that his own had been such a family and this is also the background of Dorothy Hare in *A Clergyman's Daughter*¹⁵ and Gordon Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra flying*.¹⁶ It is a world of genteel poverty where life is sacrificed to respectability and the aim is to see "every young man in England nailed down in the coffin of a 'good' job".¹⁷

In the plight of such downwardly mobile middle class, Orwell recognises only pathos, not arguments for socialism. The would-be poet Gordon Comstock — one of the most autobiographical of his fictional characters — is no revolutionary out for change. Embarking upon his ill-starred defection from a family in which nothing ever happens, he aspires, not to overturn society, but to find a *different* and more conducive role for himself within it. Socialism is something he sarcastically and vehemently rejects along the way. Work, not money, is his enemy. It is the *salaried* middle class that Gordon disdains; the suburban clerks with their villas in Metroland, their Bovex, Kangaroo Burgundy, and the BBC Home Service. But at base, the *salaried* middle class is simply the working class on better wages, smothered under a different class of drudgery, but smo-

thered under all the same. Gordon's is, finally, an entirely personal revolt. He wants to write, not agitate for socialism or for anything else. Orwell too. It is the mundane that they each disavow, the prospect of a life that largely ceases at age thirty. It is only from this perspective that *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* can be read as a kind of tragedy. Gordon's "failure" — a well-paid job, a house, a family of his own, a future — is entirely relative. It is failure only by the most dilettante of standards. In the 1930s, several million Englishmen would have seen such a failure as success beyond their wildest expectations.

Orwell himself was still in his twenties when he threw over his own "good job" with the Imperial Police Service and began to distance himself mentally at least, from the middle class, its culture and its values. But not its comforts. His family background afforded him the opportunity to tide over the early, impecunious phase of his literary career while the poverty he underwent for *Down and Out in Paris and London*¹⁸ was, in the end, a fairly refined sort of destitution; a recreational rather than a necessary vagrancy. Always the possibility existed for the author's return to the relative privilege of his family. It is in this context that Orwell's harangues against the middle class need to be seen. Being largely free from the need to earn a living left him time to pour scorn on those who were not.

Scorn indeed. Characteristic of much of Orwell's early writing is a kind of a revulsion for life as it is lived by the overwhelming majority of people. Class politics is a figleaf covering this mild misanthropy. The world is, in reality, not neatly divided into working and middle classes. Orwell himself later recognised that class distinctions were becoming increasingly blurred¹⁹ and undoubtedly the middle class as it is portrayed in his early writings with its servants, private educations and aristocratic pretensions is quite atypical of the middle class in general. It is almost a caricature. In practice, there is no great discontinuity of values, aspirations and culture between the working and middle classes; between people on high and low incomes. As economies grow, incomes rise and prices fall, and increasing numbers of people can afford a lifestyle previously associated with the rich alone. And in all times and places, most people on lower incomes have aspired to live like those on higher incomes. For Orwell, that is a suspect aspiration. In *The Spike*,²⁰ an early piece of reportage, he is quite without sympathy when he meets a carpenter who is destitute for want of a set of tools. Here, Orwell contrives to see, not a man angry at having lost his livelihood but merely "the pew renter who sleeps in every English workman".²¹ And elsewhere, the author complains that "as soon as a working man gets an official post in the Trade Union or goes into Labour politics, he becomes middle class whether he will or no".²² Contrast this with Orwell's almost rosy view of extreme poverty as a kind of privilege, a liberation from the burden of bourgeois expectation. The destitute, Orwell writes, have "given up trying to be normal or decent. Poverty frees them from ordinary standards of behaviour, just as money frees people from work".²³ They have eschewed not only work and incomes, but also any taint of allegedly middle class aspiration. If the result is a leisured class, then it is one which anyone can join but only a few can ever leave. (Orwell would later criticise the socialism of Oscar Wilde. Nonetheless, a comparison of these two is of some interest for Wilde, equally dismissive of the virtuous poor, goes a

stage further than Orwell, recommending theft over mere vagrancy: “As for begging”, he wrote, “it is safer to beg than to take but it is finer to take than to beg.”²⁴)

Destitution is not, in the end, an ideal for living. Anyone can become destitute, real achievement is less easily arranged and Orwell himself was frequently unsure as to whether he had made the necessary arrangements. Michael Shelden’s biography²⁵ begins by citing his self-deprecating entry in *Twentieth Century Authors*.²⁶ Rereading Orwell for this essay, I was reminded how so many of his central characters fail. A sudden burst of doomed dissent in a conforming world is his fiction’s strongest theme. It is something John Flory, Dorothy Hare, Gordon Comstock, George Bowling and Winston Smith have in common. And it is not all they have in common.

“At fifty everyone has the face he deserves” is the final entry in a notebook Orwell kept during the last year of his life²⁷ and physical attractiveness and youth, on the one hand, and physical unattractiveness and age, on the other are recurrent obsessions in his work. In *Burmese Days*,²⁸ Flory’s birthmarked face has “a battered, woebegone look ...”;²⁹ in *A Clergyman’s Daughter*, Dorothy has “a thin, blonde, unremarkable kind of face”;³⁰ in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, Gordon is “twenty-nine and rather moth-eaten already”;³¹ George Bowling begins *Coming up for Air*³² overweight and with his first set of false teeth. Orwell’s writings are full of descriptions of this kind. The physical imperfections of his central characters imply more fundamental flaws. Their very unattractiveness signals in advance that they will not succeed. They are farcical; banal.

It is not only the central characters in his fiction who are ill-favoured. Orwell had a good, if unsympathetic eye for the grotesque. He describes a whole world of physical and spiritual disfigurement. In *A Clergyman’s Daughter*, for instance, it stretches from Knype Hill to the girls’ private school where Dorothy is, for a time, employed. There is Miss Beaver, for example, whose “soul seemed to have withered”;³³ and Mrs Creevy, who has “something discoloured about her whole appearance”;³⁴ and the girls at Ringwood House Academy who are “dull-looking, lethargic children with bad complexions”;³⁵ and their parents: sickly, ugly specimens; philistine and faintly disgusting: the greengrocer’s “dried up shrewish wife”³⁶ or the commercial traveller across whose bald head “some strips of rather nasty-looking damp hair were carelessly plastered”.³⁷ Likewise, in *Coming up for Air*, Katie, a childhood acquaintance of Bowling’s, marries a tinker and is a “wrinkled up hag of a woman”³⁸ at twenty-seven.

In contrast to all of this is the world of the super rich. In *Such, Such were the Joys*,³⁹ Orwell recalls his particular envy at those who, having been born to affluence could, thereby be both rich and young. Better that, he reckoned, than “something in the City”, well-heeled eventually but also fat and old and obsolescent. In the 1930s, Orwell’s world was especially fatalistic comprising a successful attractive few alongside many doomed, disfigured aspirants. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* has scarcely begun and there is a “moneyed young beast” with silk smooth skin, the kind which goes with a five figure income. Confident, erudite, part of “a coterie of moneyed highbrows”,⁴⁰ he is everything the gauche, imitative Comstock is not. “Envy” Orwell wrote “is a horrible thing. There is no elevating it into tra-

gedy. It is more than merely painful, it is disgusting”.⁴¹ And his own pre-war output is not without it.

Keep the Aspidistra Flying is particularly interesting in this respect for, in dwelling on Gordon Comstock’s anxieties as to his literary abilities, it hints at some of Orwell’s own. In accounting for his lack of success, Gordon oscillates between two distinct positions. Sometimes, he attributes it to his having neither money nor connections. Here, literature is a business of cliques and conspiracies from which he has been excluded. The *Primrose Quarterly*, for instance, is described as being “one of those poisonous literary papers in which the fashionable Nancy Boy and the Professional Roman Catholic walk *bras dessus, bras dessous*”.⁴² In the same vein, Gordon’s own book *Mice* — largely unread and long ago remaindered — is mentioned as being “a sneaky little foolscap octavo”⁴³ as though it were a subversive act. A single reviewer’s comment that the collection represents “a welcome relief from the Sitwell school”⁴⁴ enhances the idea that Gordon is challenging an unfair establishment on meagre resources. Appropriately, it is the *California Quarterly* — American and therefore beyond the conspiracy — which pays Gordon the one cheque he receives for his writing.

At other times, however, Comstock is much less conspiratorial. He recognises that there is a much more mundane reason why he is not being published: “The *Primrose Quarterly* would never print his poems. He wasn’t up to their standard”;⁴⁵ “He knew in his bones that he was no good and his poems were no good. If he lived to be a thousand, he would never write a line worth reading.”⁴⁶ We the readers see plenty of evidence as to why, in the long run, this is likely to be true. Mentally, Gordon has already abandoned the whole idea of being a writer. He is merely going through the motions: a little touching up here, a little redrafting there, a few moments reflection on the unfulfilled promise of the occasional line. He is “quite certain” that *London Pleasures*, his decidedly Eliot flavoured magnum opus, will never even be finished. As a body of work, his poems “made him sick”.⁴⁷ One which he writes during the time period of the book he regards as being, on different occasions, “not bad, not bad at all”;⁴⁸ full of “awful mechanical emptiness”;⁴⁹ “tripe”; “muck”; and “hollow as an empty bis-cuit tin”.⁵⁰

Orwell had similar doubts. Michael Shelden notes how, even in the last year of his life, he was plagued by a deep sense of failure and inadequacy.⁵¹ “Every book is a failure”⁵² he complains in *Why I Write*. He certainly thought so of his early efforts. At one stage, he too was writing “a long poem describing a day in London”.⁵³ Perhaps this work, like Gordon’s *London Pleasures* (for which it is clearly the model) also finished up down a metropolitan drain. Orwell had no more faith in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. So little, in fact, that he requested that his agent Leonard Moore have it published pseudonymously (hence, eventually, “George Orwell” and not Eric Blair⁵⁴). As for *Burmese Days*, he told Brenda Salkeld that it “depresses me horribly”⁵⁵ and later that he was “sick of the sight of it”.⁵⁶ Of *A Clergyman’s Daughter*, he would write to Brenda of his unhappiness “struggling in the entrails of that dreadful book”⁵⁷ and complain how “whole wads of it are so awful that I really don’t know what to do with them”.⁵⁸

Orwell would write two more novels before the outbreak of war in 1939 — *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* itself (better by far than its predecessors but scarcely the “work of art”⁵⁹ he had hoped to produce) and *Coming up for Air* (spoilt by a shallow, revolutionary socialism). *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* ends with a writer gradually coming to terms with his own failure. Unsuccessful as a poet, Gordon Comstock becomes, instead, an advertising copywriter. The egoist thereby accommodates himself within the mundane; the misanthrope, among the objects of his misanthropy. In a sense, Orwell too gave up literature for a job in advertising, advertising the policies of a government at war. As I shall try to show later, *Nineteen Eighty-four*, his most substantial and memorable work of fiction, recants this latter phase. First, however, I want to look at how Orwell saw the working class and show how little his contempt for the middle class was balanced out by any positive view of its alleged antithesis.

ORWELL’S WORKING CLASS

“It seems to be a most frightful thing, the suddenness with which some women go to pieces after they’re married. It’s as if they were strung up to do just that one thing and the instant they’ve done it they wither off like a flower that’s set its seed. What really gets me down is the dreary attitude towards life that it implies ... They don’t want to have a good time, they merely want to slump into middle age as quickly as possible. After the frightful battle of getting her man to the altar, the woman kind of relaxes, and all her youth, looks, energy and joy of life vanish overnight. It was like that with Hilda ... within only about three years she’d settled down into a depressed, lifeless middle-aged frump.”⁶⁰

It is in a decidedly different frame of mind that, three years later, Orwell expounds upon Donald McGill, he of the saucy, innuendo-laden postcards still sold at English seaside towns. In *The Art of Donald McGill*⁶¹ Orwell takes issue with something like the kind of narcissism that had motivated the central characters of his early fiction and which, he would later claim, lay at the base of his own career. Whereas, he writes, middle class people actively strive to stall the ageing process, holding onto their youth at all costs, people from the working class more readily accept encroaching decrepitude. To Orwell, this reflects a qualitative difference. The middle class is lull of self-obsessives, keen to keep young and beautiful and to go on seeing for themselves a life after marriage and childbirth. Orwell commends the working class for being, in contrast, resigned to the inevitability “that youth and adventure — almost, indeed, individual life — end with marriage”.⁶² (I am reminded here of Woody Allen’s childhood reminiscence, *Radio Days*, in which his mother, scarcely into her thirties, can say with confidence that her own life is “already ruined”.) In *The Art of Donald McGill*, Orwell seems to disdain the very act of will that made him and others want to write, to achieve. Instead, the ideal is, quite literally, selflessness. The “moneyed young beasts” — prototypical “beautiful people” — are no longer objects of envy, but contempt. If the working class is praised, romanticised and made exemplary, then it is for showing the very characteristics that Orwell, in more typical mood, detested. Consider *The Road to Wigan Pier*, a book which, though it

includes passages full of sympathy for the poor and underprivileged, also evinces disgust and contempt. Of the lodging house above a tripe shop where Orwell had a brief stay, he recalls only “dirt, smells, vile food and stagnant, meaningless decay”.⁶³ Mr Brooker, though he handles tripe all day, is never clean while Mrs Brooker is “a soft mound of fat and self-pity”⁶⁴ who goes around wiping her mouth with bits of old newspaper. Orwell, for all his talk of the “binweed” of snobbery, finds these working class decidedly alien, “like black beetles in an endless muddle of slovened jobs and mean grievances”.⁶⁵

Or consider *Animal Farm*. In that book, the cart horses Boxer and Clover are Orwell’s idealised working class. But mental ability is not part of the ideal. Boxer, for example, though large and powerful, has “a somewhat stupid appearance” and is “not of first-rate intelligence”.⁶⁶ Incapable of writing even his own name, he accepts without hesitation the pigs’ mendacious propaganda: “Comrade Napoleon is always right.” Dutiful, his dedication is at last pathetic, not tragic. Clover is little better: a “stout, motherly mare”,⁶⁷ of a kind with the women in the Donald McGill cartoons who care nothing for the passing of what youth, attractiveness and ambition they might once have had. This horse, Orwell tells us with (unintentional) humour, has lost her figure. Mollie, another mare, is her opposite. Vain, flirtatious and individualistic rather than selfless, she eventually “defects” to a neighbouring farm. (In this characterisation Orwell, a lifelong misogynist, unconsciously falls into the derogatory usage in which all women are “mares”: either “brood mares” — fat and docile — or “dozey mares” — girlish and sexually “easy”.) The sheep and other lesser creatures, the mass of the animals, are still more mindless, content to chant “Four legs good, two legs bad”. These, the “working class” animals are clearly incapable of self-government. Only the pigs can rule, and, as it turns out, a government of pigs is, if anything, worse than one of men. Alone among the animals, it is Benjamin the donkey, Orwell’s satire of his own individuality, who impresses. In this respect, at least, *Animal Farm* represents the triumph of its author’s ego over his socialism.

The *Animal Farm* view of the working class is carried over into *Nineteen Eighty-four*. To Winston, the “proles”, that is to say four fifths of the Oceanian population, are the only hope for the future. But the hope is hopeless. Exploited and disempowered, Airstrip One’s working classes follow a crude patriotism. Untroubled by the Party, they do not trouble it. Drifting “like cattle turned loose upon the plains of Argentina”, they decline rapidly from “a brief blossoming period of beauty and sexual desire” to become “middle aged at thirty”. Worn out by hard work, domestic chores and looking after children, they die at sixty. Films, football, beer and gambling “filled up the horizon of their minds”. They are easily amused. “To keep them in control was not difficult”⁶⁸ writes Orwell. The working class he imagined and praised in *The Art of Donald McGill* — a class typified by its conformity, resignation and lack of narcissism — is disparaged in *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-four* for showing exactly the same characteristics. In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, comments Raymond Williams,⁶⁹ Orwell sees in eighty-five per cent of the Oceanian population nothing but “an apathetic mass”.⁷⁰ In making the Party label these people “proles”, he feels that Orwell betrays at least a little of his own attitude. His working class “is the world of

working people before 1914 as seen by prep-school boys".⁷¹ How telling, says Williams, that he satirises its revolution as a "rising of the animals".⁷²

In Williams' opinion, Orwell's is a "stale revolutionary romanticism",⁷³ the result of some momentary revulsion from his own class. The working class, as it is depicted in Orwell's books, tends to be the same, somnambulant collective. What changes is the way in which the author responds to its character. Sometimes, it is to be pitied (*Animal Farm, Nineteen Eighty-four*); sometimes, ridiculed for comic effect (*The Road to Wigan Pier*); and, sometimes, made use of (*The Art of Donald McGill* and other essays from the early phase of the war). Little in his writing suggests that the working class is going to pull off any lasting, desirable socialist revolution. On the contrary, and paradoxically, it is the very characteristics the Orwell of the early war years praises in the working class — obedience, patriotism, fatalism, lack of individual ambition — that he subsequently looks upon as key prerequisites for dictatorial government, particularly if the government in question is socialist. I shall return to this theme shortly. For the moment, however, I want to look at what Orwell understood by socialism. When I claimed previously that he was no political theorist, I meant that, politically, his writings were derivative, fickle and underdeveloped. None of this has inhibited academic discussion of Orwell as a serious political theoretician or, more absurd again, talk of "Orwellian socialism".⁷⁴

ORWELL ON CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM

Orwell's stance on socialism would shift several times, invariably moving to the very positions of which he had just previously been so dismissive. Many of his books take, more or less, the outlook opposed in their immediate predecessor. Take *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. This is the first of the novels in which there is any mention of socialism but what mention there is is hostile. The only committed socialist in the book is Philip Ravelston and, at base, Ravelston's socialism is insincere, fraudulent. Gordon Comstock, agnostic and self-serving, meets his friend's commitment with wounding, bitter sarcasm. Socialism, he says, will mean "Four hours a day in a model factory, tightening up bolt number 6003. Rations served out in grease-proof paper at the communal kitchen. Community hikes from Marx Hostel to Lenin Hostel and back. Free abortion-clinics on all the corners."⁷⁵ (Condemnation of abortion and, indeed, all methods of birth control is a regular Orwell sermon.⁷⁶) In *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, socialism is either humbug or naivety. Orwell, like Clemenceau, sees it as a folly of youth, all heart and no head. "Every intelligent boy of sixteen is a Socialist", he wrote, "at that age one does not see the hook sticking out of the rather stodgy bait."⁷⁷

The anti-politics (Tory anarchism) of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* has given way by the time of the next book — *The Road to Wigan Pier* — to a gradualist socialism proposed with some eloquence by an author still dismissive of the more doctrinaire positions of the intellectuals and the committed. But in the book after that — *Homage to Catalonia* — Orwell has a doctrinaire position of his own. Where *The Road to Wigan Pier* ends with a call to socialists to cease "bourgeois baiting" and build instead a kind of popular front, *Homage to Catalonia* repudiates such broad alliances. In the latter book, capitalism is fascism; capital-

ists, fascists, so there can be no common ground between socialists and capitalists, QED. Dismissive of nationalism and militarism until 1939, Orwell would spend the early war years advocating a distinctly national socialism, the better that his country might win. And the post-war years would see him satirize and denounce this collectivist position just when, with the 1945 Labour landslide, its chances of being realised were considerable. By the year of his death (1950), Orwell was, at most, a nominal socialist, more sceptical than ever.

In his review of Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*⁷⁸ Orwell concludes that Wilde's understanding of socialism — a moneyless commonwealth in which the role of the state has withered to one of mere redistribution of goods — was at base naive as perhaps it was. But Orwell is wrong to imply that this pristine ideal was in some way eccentric. It was, in fact, precisely how most nineteenth century socialists, Marx included, envisaged post-capitalist society. And it was how a (very) slightly younger Orwell had himself seen it. Parts of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, for instance, depict the alleged injustices of capitalism as, primarily, a matter of maladministration which socialism will correct. In this book, socialism is a kind of mutual co-operation, "a fair share of the provisions" in return for a "fair share of the work", a position "so blatantly obvious" as to make opposition appear founded on "some corrupt motive for clinging to the present system".⁷⁹ As if to drive this last point home, Orwell uses a simile. The world, he says, is like a kind of raft with "plenty" of resources aboard out of which the needs of the people it is carrying can be met.⁸⁰

This image of a raft is thoroughly appropriate. On economics, Orwell is all at sea. Elsewhere in the same book, for example, he proposes that the wealth of England depends upon the fact that a hundred million Indians are kept in conditions of virtual starvation so that Indian misery balances English luxury like the credit and debit sides of a double entry ledger. Every time, claims Orwell, a person eats a plate of strawberries and cream or steps into a taxi, he affects this iniquitous equation, adding to his own pleasures by either consciously or inadvertently diminishing those of somebody else. Affluence, he implies, can be enjoyed only at the expense of others. Thus are the evils of Empire and the comforts of middle and even working class life inextricably and causally connected. Without the Empire, Orwell writes, the English standard of living would quickly decline. In a post-imperial era, he says, not only would English people have to work harder, they would have to satisfy themselves on a diet that consisted mainly of herrings and potatoes. These, he suggests, are facts which no leftist dares admit.⁸¹

It would be more accurate to say that they are not facts at all. For a would-be critic of capitalism, Orwell is selective. He does not even consider trade, the voluntary exchange of goods and services — from strawberries to cream; from taxi rides to everything else. It is trade — deals agreed day in, day out, on a local, national and international scale and not colonialism — which fills a capitalist economy. It does not appear to have occurred to him that some countries have managed to maintain reasonable standards of living with either token colonial empires or without colonial empires at all. Even in the 1930s, there were already many such places: all of Scandinavia, for instance, not to mention Swit-

zeland, much of Eastern Europe, the United States, and the British dominions. And even if Orwell had looked at England and England alone, he would have seen that many of its key capital and consumer goods — food, clothes, cars, aircraft, ships, steel, coal, banking, insurance, medical services — were produced at home. Colonies were amassed principally for reasons of political prestige, not economic gain. Any net transfer of resources was typically *to* rather than *from* the Empire. (Similar transfers to the erstwhile European colonial empires continue to this day. They are called “aid”.) Orwell would retain this simplistic view of the sources of capitalist affluence until the late 1940s. After the war, for instance, he doubted that the Attlee government would be able to deliver on its electoral promises of social reform *and* decolonisation believing that, if reform was to be financed, the colonies and their imagined wealth would need to be retained.⁸²

Orwell continued to define socialism as a society without a market economy well into the war years. In *The Lion and the Unicorn*, for example, he sees war as a clear indication that capitalism is sub-optimal, creating waste (unemployment, surpluses) in time of peace and shortfalls in time of war and he is quite explicit as to how socialism will overcome such weaknesses. Under socialism, he says, the State (and it *is* the State) will calculate “Society’s” needs and then try to meet them. The only limits it will face will be resource constraints on labour and raw materials. As for money, no longer will it be “a mysterious and all-powerful thing”,⁸³ merely a kind of ration-ticket, the number of tickets in circulation corresponding to the number of goods.

Orwell is here clearly influenced by the ration coupons issued by the wartime British Government. But he seems unaware that those same coupons circulated and traded like a kind of second currency and that beyond rationing there was a thriving black market. In fact, he is in general quite unmoved by any of the more common objections to the practicality of socialism. Dismissing the suggestion that human nature and socialism are incompatible, for instance, he sets out an almost childlike case. Air and water are his examples. There are, he says, enough of each of these for everyone. As if this itself were not questionable enough, he goes on to propose that this alleged state of superabundance is one which can be attained for all goods and services. “If”, he argues, “they were made plentiful, as they so easily (*sic*) might be, there is no reason to think that the supposed acquisitive instincts of the human being could not be bred out in a couple of generations”.⁸⁴ Ill-considered, underanalysed remarks like this indicate the depth of Orwell’s political thinking which is little depth at all. It is difficult to conclude which is on balance the more naive: Orwell’s *The Lion and the Unicorn* or Wilde’s *The Soul of Man*.

SOCIALISM, WAR AND TOTALITARIANISM

In *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-four*, socialism descends into totalitarianism (and remains there) largely on account of the character of the working class. And this is where Orwell gives clear, if unintended, comfort to “the Right”. Broadly, there are two kinds of argument against socialism. Arguments like those of Ludwig von Mises,⁸⁵ which hold socialism to be inherently impossible; and arguments like those of William Mallock⁸⁶ which propose that socialism, however ideal and workable, will fail because so-

cialists have made an over generous assessment of human nature, ignoring the extent to which it is acquisitive and self-serving. Orwell provides a new twist on this latter. He accepts, as I have shown, that socialism, even radical, post-market socialism, is entirely feasible and he accepts as well that human nature is not necessarily selfish. But he also proposes, as I intend to show, that socialism is not inherently liberal or democratic and that, under socialism, the mass of the people will offer no resistance however totalitarian the government might prove to be. To Orwell, socialism is both a workable and superior alternative to the market and that is precisely why it is a problem. Under socialism, Orwell suggests, people will be lulled by the material comforts and certainties on offer into accepting a diminution in their personal and political freedom. An increasingly powerful government will be looked upon as small price to pay for a more equitable share of the total social product and the potential for such a government to act in a dictatorial and capricious manner will be overlooked. “I don’t believe”, Orwell wrote in 1941, “that the ordinary man cares a damn about the totalitarianism of our economy. I don’t believe economic liberty has much appeal any longer.”⁸⁷ At around the same time, he noted in the essay *Literature and Totalitarianism*⁸⁸ that the advent of a planned economy meant the end as well of individual economic liberty, the freedom of the individual “to do what he likes, to choose his own work, to move to and from across the surface of the earth”. In this later essay, Orwell suspects that even freedom of thought is set to go. Socialism, he proposes, far from being some moralised liberalism could well prove to be definitively totalitarian. In the end, Orwell simply hopes that in countries with a strong liberal tradition, socialism might develop in a non-totalitarian fashion. Some have been tempted to see in the author’s own socialism, precisely such a development.⁸⁹ I cannot go along with that. Orwell’s socialism, such as it is, is at its most distinctive and coherent — *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *The English People*⁹⁰ — indisputably more totalitarian than liberal.

It is at these wartime propagandist writings that I now want to look. They advocate a form of socialism closely attuned to the needs of a nation-state at war, a socialism that was both a realistic and feasible proposition in 1941. In its overtly nationalistic and militaristic appeal this was quite at odds with the pacifist internationalism Orwell had espoused immediately before the British declaration of war in 1939 when he had believed that any forthcoming war would be little different from previous conflicts, particularly the earlier world war of 1914-18. At the time, he dismissed talk of “fascism” as a kind of official pre-war blackguarding of the prospective enemy.⁹¹ To Orwell in 1939, “fascism” was merely another, harder style of capitalism and any of its alleged injustices were to him of no matter. He could readily (and quite accurately) identify comparable injustices closer to home; injustices arising from colonialism, for instance.⁹² Only with the outbreak of war did Orwell change. The essay title *My Country Right or Left*⁹³ sums up his new position. With war in progress, he became unquestioningly partisan in the interest of his own country and abandoned all of his pre-war reservations. That this was a purely nationalistic response cannot be in serious dispute. Orwell himself admits it, writing how, for him “The long drilling in patriotism which the middle classes go through had done its work.” “Once England was in a serious jam”, he continued,

“it would be impossible for me to sabotage ...”⁹⁴ Having reverted to the nationalism of his prep-school days and uninfluenced by the position he had held only months, if not weeks, before, Orwell then began to develop a fresh political position, the gist of which was as follows: In order for “England” to win the war, both the market economy and the kinds of class division to which it allegedly gives rise will have to go. Market liberalism, with its emphasis on individual consumption, permits resources to be allocated to all kinds of luxuries (and necessities) and thereby away from the war effort while class distinctions fragment the nation. A planned economy, however, will ensure that the correct amounts of each resource are deployed in ways which maximise the potential of the state to wage war. There will be no top hats, turned-up trousers, gourmet meals or silk underwear so long as there are Germans to bomb. A heightened sense of nationality and national solidarity will ensure that few object to this guns for butter trade-off.

Orwell, as I said, had earlier doubted the potential for socialism to deliver even a reasonable standard of living, merely, at worst case, a diet of herrings and potatoes. It was the military power of German national socialism that impressed him otherwise. The Luftwaffe convinced him of the superiority of socialist planning over capitalism. He hoped that others might be convinced as well. Nazism, he concluded, was a genuinely revolutionary doctrine.⁹⁵ With its own national socialism, he believed, Britain could win the war and enter the peace as a powerful national socialist state. It was in furtherance of this line of argument that he became a propagandist.

Orwell’s national socialism is entirely totalitarian. It envisages most areas of everyday life under state control. In the socialist commonwealth that Orwell has in mind, people might be wearing “dyed battledress”⁹⁶ or eating communally in canteens of the type which had set Gordon Comstock sneering.⁹⁷ Certainly, the economy will be collectivised with farmers and shopkeepers re-designated, not as free-standing businessmen but employees of a Government corporation.⁹⁸ And the state will foster a rising birthrate regardless of how this impacts upon the lives and the freedoms of its citizens.⁹⁹ Cockney, or perhaps some Northern dialect, will be made the new, classless standard;¹⁰⁰ the educational system will encourage a sense of local pride; and the state, through selective funding here and selective taxation there, will regenerate rural at the expense of urban areas.¹⁰¹ Colleagues at the BBC later recalled how the Old Etonian had affected a Cockney accent¹⁰² while even Orwell’s potboilers of this time have a nationalist subtext. In a series of articles for the *Evening Standard*, he sings the praises of English cooking,¹⁰³ the English pub¹⁰⁴ and “a nice cup of tea”.¹⁰⁵

Orwell anticipated minimal opposition to *The Lion and the Unicorn* programme expecting (and eagerly anticipating) that only the rich would “squeal”.¹⁰⁶ Believing that an increased sense of duty among the general population would facilitate its coming to pass, he saw a basis for such a sentiment already present in the resignation of the working class on the one hand (cf. *The Art of Donald McGill*) and in the patriotism that had been schooled into the bourgeoisie on the other. “The patriotism of the middle class”, he told *Partisan Review* in 1941, “is a thing to be made use of.”¹⁰⁷ Intellectuals, on the other hand, were suspect; too clever by

half. Clever enough in 1940 to see that Germany might well win and to recognise that the surest way to end the war was to lose it. Contrast that with the reaction of those too poor and undereducated to rationalise away decades of national propaganda.¹⁰⁸ Here, Orwell wrote in *Wells, Hitler and the World State*,¹⁰⁹ were people moved by passions which actually counted for something in the world; emotions which “liberal intellectuals have destroyed so completely in themselves as to have lost all power of action”.¹¹⁰ Orwell lists them without comment, without irony and without shame: “racial pride”, “leader worship”, “love of war” and “the ingrained feeling of the English-speaking peoples that they are superior to foreigners”.¹¹¹ *The Lion and the Unicorn* elaborates on this later theme. Compared with other Europeans, the English are distinctive. They are more gentle, less warlike, less liable to jingoistic propaganda, better.¹¹² Significantly, the pamphlet is subtitled *Socialism and the English Genius*.

All of this indicates something of the extent to which Orwell, in awe of German national socialism, sought to create a British variant. His review of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*¹¹³ is well worth noting in this respect if only for its disturbing ambivalence. Here, Hitler is bad, of course. Orwell says that were he to get close enough to the Fuhrer, he would kill him. Significantly, however, he also admits that he has never been able to dislike the German leader. On the contrary, he finds “something deeply appealing about him”.¹¹⁴ Hitler, says Orwell, is the martyr, the victim fighting against destiny. He cannot win yet he deserves to. If he hates the world, then it is not without reason. He is like the doomed central characters of Orwell’s early fiction, he even has a “pathetic, dog-like face”.¹¹⁵ He is John Flory, Gordon Comstock or Dorothy Hare. He is George Orwell.

“Fascism” is nowadays a term without precise meaning and it was already becoming so in Orwell’s time. Today it is equated with anti-Semitism and, more generally, with racism. But the prototype fascism, that of Mussolini, had little of either of these. As for Nazi Germany, it was hardly unique in operating a discriminatory social policy in the the 1930s. Discriminatory social policies were not what made it fascist. In the 1930s, for example, Germany’s treatment its Jewish minority was only slightly more harsh than the way in which certain of the United States treated their Black minorities. While *official* policy in the latter, American situation was much more tolerant, there was often considerably less day to day tolerance. And many who were officially obliged to be tolerant were unofficially quite the reverse.

The equation of fascism with a radical, supremacist and discriminatory social policy obscures the fact that it was also a political and economic philosophy derived largely from the left and dominated by former socialists like Mussolini or Sorel. The Corporate State owes much to the anarchist doctrine of syndicalism while Nazi Germany, as Orwell noted, operated a planned economy. What was novel in Nazism was its abandonment of socialist internationalism and its attempt to base a revolutionary movement upon older national loyalties and sentiments. What is more, Nazism was not spontaneous. It was a directive rather than a grass roots revolutionary movement, manipulating an existing national tradition (not to mention traditional national prejudices). Nationalism has usually proposed the total nationalisation of much of everyday life (including economic life through pro-

tectionism). In Germany, as in Russia, a modified, reinvented socialism entered the realm of practical politics as a form of nationalism and Orwell hoped that it might do so in Britain too. In German fascism he recognised a viable and successful form of socialism; one which, in its military aspect, had had no difficulty cutting through liberal democracies like France and the Netherlands. In doing so, it settled some of his own scores by making the rich uncomfortable, unsettling the City and putting much of the pre-war Left into eclipse. Some of his diary entries during the early phases of the Blitz revisit the misanthropy of his early works. “How much rubbish this war will sweep away”, he wrote, “if only we can hang on throughout the Summer. So much of the good of modern life is actually evil that it is questionable whether on balance war does harm.”¹¹⁶ This is the voice of Gordon Comstock who, full of spleen at a world of money, advertising and privilege ardently desires to hear “the whole western world go up in a roar of high explosives”.¹¹⁷ Some of Orwell’s own wartime writings are only a little less nihilistic. At times it is as if socialism and the war are to him ultimately, like writing itself, as much a means by which to get even as anything else.

ORWELL, HAYEK AND THE COLD WAR

During the later years of the war, Orwell began to draw back from what he had written in its opening stages. Towards the end of 1942, he confided to George Woodcock that he was being used by the BBC and that his hope was that his time there had made the Corporation’s propaganda “slightly less disgusting than it might otherwise have been”.¹¹⁸ Less than a year later he had resigned his position, publicly admitting that the war had offered less revolutionary socialist potential than he had imagined and that what little there was was now gone.¹¹⁹ As the war drew to a close, he would go back to the moral equivalences he had made before it began describing the post-war settlement in Germany as “monstrous”¹²⁰ and seeing in the Allies’ prosecution of Nazi war criminals only humbug and double standards.¹²¹ Seven years after he wrote *The Lion and the Unicorn* he would, in the dark world of *Nineteen Eighty-four*, depict the kind of society to which the implementation of the programme contained in that pamphlet might have led. In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, the dictatorship operates a system which is formally socialist but which relies upon a permanent state of global conflict; ongoing, surreptitious monitoring of the entire population; direct physical repression; propaganda, much of it nationalistic; and an elaborate apparatus of censorship.

W. J. West¹²² is surely correct in seeing in this clear echoes of Orwell’s own, first-hand experiences of Britain’s wartime apparatus of state. It too had its censorship, its surveillance, its propagandist media and its more directly repressive structures such as the detention centre at Ham Common. But West draws few parallels between what is advocated in *The Lion and the Unicorn* and what is condemned in Orwell’s final novel. And although West discusses many of the books and writers that influenced the creation of *Nineteen Eighty-four*, Friedrich Hayek is one writer he does not consider; one significant oversight.

Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*¹²³ proposes, like Orwell’s *Literature and Totalitarianism*, that socialism is not “inherently democratic” and that, if the full panoply of state power is

exercised for the furtherance of democratic socialism, the potential is there for the gradual erosion of the democratic in favour of the socialistic leading ultimately to a totalitarian regime of Nazi or Soviet scope. Orwell reviewed *The Road to Serfdom* in 1943 deciding that, “in the negative part of Professor Hayek’s argument there is a great deal of truth”.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, he concludes that there exists in capitalism the potential for a tyranny worse than that of the state. Colonialism is, he says, one aspect of that tyranny; war and monopolisation, others. But colonialism, as I said above, is finally a triumph of politics over economics. To the extent that it is tyranny, it is a tyranny of the state and not the market. As for war, one thing war is not is trade. War is destructive of the goodwill, the people, the markets and the infrastructure on which trade depends. And Orwell himself recognised that capitalism, with its emphasis on personal consumption, would not facilitate a viable war effort.¹²⁵ He himself, as I have shown, played a part in trying to drum up a more suitably national collectivist mindset and, in place of the market, he recommended comprehensive nationalisation and central planning. These, he suggested, were superior bases from which to fight. Finally, there is the market’s alleged tendency towards monopolisation (“The trouble with competitions is that somebody wins them”¹²⁶). Orwell sees this as capitalism’s greatest threat to freedom. And then again, he himself proposed the kind of monopoly no capitalist could ever hope to realise advocating, in the early 1940s, just one big firm — the state.

Hillaire Belloc is the author who connects Hayek and Orwell. “It must be about thirty years”, Orwell wrote, “since Mr Hillaire Belloc, in his book *The Servile State* foretold with astonishing accuracy the things that are happening now”.¹²⁷ Hayek makes a similar observation: “It is not yet thirty years since Mr Hillaire Belloc explained that ‘the effect of socialist doctrine on capitalist society is to produce a third thing different from either of its two begetters — to wit, the servile state’”.¹²⁸ And it is with a quotation from Belloc that the seventh chapter of *The Road to Serfdom* begins: “The control of the production of wealth is the control of human life itself.”¹²⁹ That is to say, a government which encroaches upon the economic freedoms of its citizens will inevitably encroach upon all of their other freedoms as well. “Economic control”, Hayek wrote, “is not merely control of a sector of human life which can be separated from the rest; it is the control of the means for all our ends”¹³⁰ (emphasis added). And since the ends are affected by the beliefs, values and aspirations that go to the heart of any person’s identity, these too must be controlled. The logic of planning is thus that nothing can be left to chance, every freedom must be sacrificed to the plan. Even leisure time “has to be spent in the way ordained by authority.”¹³¹

What must Orwell have thought when he first read *The Road to Serfdom*? Whatever his reservations, I think that what he accepted of Hayek was ultimately more significant than what he rejected for, in the long run, what he accepted seems to have had the greater influence on his writing. As Robert Nozick has commented, “Intellectual honesty has its dangers; arguments read perhaps at first in curious fascination may come to convince and even to seem natural and intuitive.”¹³² Perhaps this was how *The Road to Serfdom* was for Orwell, gradually eclipsing much of his own previous outlook. The kind of socialism Hayek attacks is pre-

cisely the kind Orwell had been advocating — war socialism with a strong nationalist undertow and with economic freedoms sacrificed to some alleged, centrally determined, common good. Significantly, at around the time he was reading Hayek, Orwell also began to abandon first his nationalism (in *Notes on Nationalism*,¹³³ for instance) then much of his socialism. *Nineteen Eighty-four* completes the abandonment. It maps out an entirely statist tyranny in which the regime, in its role as central economic planner, determines, as Hayek supposed it would, the way in which its citizens spend even their leisure time. In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, solitude — “ownlife” — is frowned upon. Time off work must be spent in the collective pleasures established by officialdom. What is more, there is, in Big Brother a version of Hayek’s archetypal dictator who thrives off “the docile and the gullible”,¹³⁴ off people who are prepared to swallow “a ready-made system of values if it is only drummed into their ears sufficiently loudly and sufficiently frequently”.¹³⁵ (Echoes of “Four legs good, two legs bad”.) In Orwell’s Oceania, everything has been politicised, even gin and cigarettes. Nationalist as well as socialist, the Oceanian regime shows what Hayek calls “the narrow particularism of the totalitarian”.¹³⁶ What is more, just as Hayek’s envisaged dictatorship retains in peacetime forms of organisation developed for war so in Orwell’s book is a permanent state of war over a few insignificant colonies one of the bases on which the government’s continued rule depends. There is even a suggestion that there is no war at all and that a bogus state of war is being maintained merely so as to provide some rationale for the retention by the state of its elaborate powers.

Hayek did not make Orwell a liberal but he did make him disillusioned with the kind of system he had been advocating for much of the early part of the war. Lukewarm to the Labour victory of 1945,^{137,138} he became obsessed at the prospect of a Communist takeover using the Labour Party as a kind of Trojan Horse.¹³⁹ To Orwell, the mid to late 1940s were a period of growing government empowerment and political interference against a backdrop of widespread public indifference.¹⁴⁰ The English, Orwell believed, had been happier during the war when they had become “entirely habituated to a planned, regimented sort of life ...”.¹⁴¹ Anarchists and pacifists whom he had blackguarded throughout the war years would, after 1945, be championed as victims of Communism.¹⁴² With Herbert Read and George Woodcock, he established the Freedom Defence Committee to protect what he saw as the diminishing citizens’ rights of post-war Britain. At the same time, Konni Zilliacus and others (Orson Welles, Paul Robeson, Sean O’Casey) would provide a whole new list of people to defame.¹⁴³ Imagining Communists and crypto-Communists everywhere, Orwell even offered to name the names for British Intelligence.¹⁴⁴ It was in this context that he wrote and published his two best-known works — *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-four* — key Cold War texts which, like Hayek’s own, have been used to undermine, not only, or even principally totalitarianism, but democratic socialism as well.

CONCLUSIONS

One of Orwell’s childhood acquaintances, Humphrey Dakin, subsequently recalled him as “a rather nasty little fat boy with a constant grievance”.¹⁴⁵ In early adulthood,

those grievances were no less constant. Orwell seems to have been an especially angry young man; a man with spleen to spare. Women, Scots, Anglo and Roman Catholics, homosexuals, pacifists, nudists, middle class socialists, vegetarians or, indeed, people who wore shorts or sandals or who drank fruit juice in preference to tea or beer could rouse his indignation. Even the generally sympathetic Bernard Crick admits that this kind of “firing at such broad and ambiguous targets is not the nicest aspect of Orwell”.¹⁴⁶ At times, in fact, it must have seemed as inadvisable to be his friend as his enemy. Sir Richard Rees, for instance, who first published Orwell in *Adelphi* endures, unflatteringly satirized as Philip Ravelston in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*; Victor Gollancz is on the receiving end of the ill-tempered spiel that finishes *The Road to Wigan Pier*; Gollancz’ Left Book Club out of which Orwell profited handsomely, is abused in *Coming up for Air*. Others who had been going along with him would suddenly find that he had changed direction and was trying to run them down. George Woodcock, Max Plowman, Alex Comfort, John Middleton Murry, all would be blackguarded in public then soothed in private correspondence for not having joined Orwell in renouncing pacifism and embracing the war effort. Orwell was a man who knew how to nurse a grudge. Ill-tempered harangue was his medium, his art, his song.

It is in this context that I believe that his socialism needs to be seen for sometimes it appears to be as much an aspect of the author’s own disgruntlement as anything else. Even at his most socialist — in the propagandist writings from the opening years of the Second World War — Orwell has an obvious chip on his shoulder. It is in these latter essays that he is conspicuously hostile towards the defeatist intellectual minority of which he had so recently and cantankerously been a part. Instead, and resolutely, he aligned with a working class in which he perceives nothing to commend but unquestioning docility and xenophobia. In *The Lion and the Unicorn* and elsewhere he is the populist warmonger peddling socialist hopes he himself soon disbelieved. It is in these writings that the erstwhile “Tory anarchist” who had previously ridiculed the innocuous conformity of others and who would subsequently praise selfishness and egoism, eulogises and encourages an ascetic wartime solidarity. Under this veritable national socialism Orwell cheerfully predicts that the war will be won, the poor will prosper, the rich will “squeal” and the City of London will be made to smile on the wrong side of its face and all at the cost of economic liberty, democracy and other, little-valued freedoms.

These writings of the early 1940s are the closest Orwell comes to a coherent and consistent political purpose. Elsewhere, and contrary to his own claims in *Why I Write*, he displays no long-term, practicable vision. *The Lion and the Unicorn* is Orwell’s socialism at its most unambiguous and *Nineteen Eighty-four* is his most coherently anti-socialist work. But the socialism that *Nineteen Eighty-four* opposes is essentially the socialism that *The Lion and the Unicorn* espouses. In effect, therefore, the socialism that Orwell was eventually most against is the socialism he was once most enthusiastically for. And he was most against it when, under the 1945-51 Attlee government, something like it was coming into vogue.

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58. Letter to Brenda Salkeld, September 1934, in *ibid.*, p. 163.
59. Letter to Brenda Salkeld, 16 February 1935, in *ibid.*, p. 172.
60. *Coming up for Air*, p. 136.
61. *The Art of Donald McGill* [1941] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 2).
62. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
63. *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p. 12.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
66. *Animal Farm*, p. 6.
67. Loc. cit.
68. *Nineteen Eighty-four*, p. 60.
69. Raymond Williams, *Orwell*, Fontana, Glasgow, 1971.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
71. Loc. cit.
72. Loc. cit.
73. Loc. cit.
74. Stephen Ingle, *George Orwell: A Political Life*, Manchester University Press, 1993.
75. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, p. 95.
76. See *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p. 105 and *The English People* [1947] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 3), p. 49.
77. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, p. 48.
78. Review of *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* by Oscar Wilde in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 4).
79. *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p. 150.
80. Loc. cit.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
82. London Letter [to the US journal *Partisan Review*, Fall 1945] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 3).
83. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, p. 105.
84. *As I Please* column [*Tribune*, 21 July 1944] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 3), p. 222.
85. Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis*, 1981 [1922, 1932], Liberty Classics, Indianapolis.
86. William H. Mallock, *A Critical Examination of Socialism*, 1907, Harper, New York.

87. London Letter [*Partisan Review*, July/August] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 2), pp. 145-6.
88. *Literature and Totalitarianism* [1941] in *ibid.*, p. 162.
89. E.g., Ingle, op. cit., especially Chapters 3 and 6.
90. *The English People* [1947] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 3). This essay is very similar in its political content to *The Lion and the Unicorn* and was commissioned in 1943. It did not appear however, until four years later by which time Orwell's own views had changed. It is unclear why it was delayed but the reasons might well be quite mundane. Commissioned as part of the Britain in Pictures series, it might have been delayed due to the costs of producing an illustrated book during wartime shortages. W. J. West (*The Larger Evils*, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1992) notes the delay in the publication of this essay in the context of a discussion on Orwell's experience of censorship with regard to his own writings. This implies a political motive in the delay. West does not specify which aspects of the book might have prompted this but it might have been due to the fact that it is mildly critical of the Soviet Union.
91. Letter to Geoffrey Gorer, 20 January 1939, in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 1), p. 421.
92. *Not Counting Niggers* [1939] in *ibid.*
93. *My Country Right or Left* [1940] in *ibid.*
94. *Ibid.*, p. 591.
95. Review of *The Totalitarian Enemy* by Frank Borkenau [1940] in *ibid.* (Volume 2).
96. *As I Please* [*Tribune*, 4 February 1944] in *ibid.* (Volume 3), p. 111.
97. London Letter [*Partisan Review*, July/August, 1941] in *ibid.* (Volume 2) p. 145.
98. Loc. cit.
99. *The English People*, pp. 48-50.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
102. Crick, op. cit., p. 419n. William Empson recalled Orwell informing an Indian script writer that "The fact that you're black and I'm white has nudding whatever to do wiv it."
103. *In Defence of English Cooking* [1945] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 3).
104. *The Moon Under Water* [1946] in *ibid.*
105. *A Nice Cup of Tea* [1946] in *ibid.*
106. London Letter [*Partisan Review*, July/August 1941] in *ibid.* (Volume 2), p. 145.
107. London Letter [*Partisan Review*, March/April 1941] in *ibid.* (Volume 2), p. 68.
108. *James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution* [1946] in *ibid.* (Volume 4), pp. 206-7.
109. *Wells, Hitler and the World State* [1941] in *ibid.* (Volume 2).
110. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
111. Loc. cit.
112. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, pp. 76-83.
113. Review of *Mein Kampf* [1940] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 2).
114. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
115. Loc. cit.
116. Wartime diary entry for 14 June 1940 in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 2), p. 396.
117. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, p. 26.
118. Letter to George Woodcock, 2 December 1942, in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 2), p. 307.
119. *Letter from England* [*Partisan Review*, March/April 1943] in *ibid.* (Volume 2).
120. *Revenge is Sour* [1945] in *ibid.* (Volume 4), p. 21.
121. *As I Please* [*Tribune*, 12 January 1945] in *ibid.* (Volume 3), pp. 361-2.
122. W. J. West, *The Larger Evils: Nineteen Eighty-four, The Truth Behind The Satire*, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1992.
123. Friederich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, Ark, London, 1986 [1944].
124. Review of *The Road to Serfdom* by Friedrich Hayek [1943] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 3), p. 143.
125. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, pp. 103-4.
126. Review of *The Road to Serfdom*, p. 143.
127. *Notes on the Way* [1940] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 2), pp. 31-32.
128. Hayek, op. cit., p. 10n.
129. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 66.
130. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
131. *Ibid.*, p. 75n.
132. Robert Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986 [1974], p. ix.
133. *Notes on Nationalism* [1945] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 3).
134. Hayek, op. cit., p. 103.
135. Loc. cit.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
137. London Letter [*Partisan Review*, Summer 1945] in Orwell and Angus, op. cit. (Volume 3).
138. London Letter [*Partisan Review*, Fall 1945] in *ibid.*
139. London Letter [*Partisan Review*, Summer 1946] in *ibid.* (Volume 4).
140. Letter to George Woodcock, 23 March, 1948, in *ibid.*
141. London Letter [*Partisan Review*, Summer 1945] in *ibid.* (Volume 3), p. 435.
142. *Freedom of the Park* [1945] in *ibid.* (Volume 4).
143. Sheldon, op. cit., p. 468. The list also included Cecil Day Lewis, Tom Driberg, Kingsley Martin, Michael Redgrave, George Bernard Shaw and even J. B. Priestly. Several of these seem unlikely Communists. Their inclusion might have been more personally than politically motivated.
144. Letter to Celia Kirwan, 6 April 1949, *The Guardian*, 10 July 1996. Celia Kirwan came to know Orwell through her sister Maimaine Koestler. She was a member of Whitehall's Secret Information Research Department. One of the IRD's strategies was to engage writers known to be hostile to Communism to produce anti-Communist literature. Orwell seems to have been approached to this end. However, at the time he was too ill to assist and suggested others who might help. But he did offer the following. "I could ... give you a list of journalists and writers who, in my opinion, are crypto-Communists, fellow travellers and inclined that way and should not be trusted as propagandists."
145. Ingle, op. cit., p. 3.
146. Crick, op. cit. p. 362.