THE INDIVIDUALISM OF ORWELL'S THINKING

Cleusa Vieira de Aguiar
— UFMG —

The polarisation between individual and social environment, from the viewpoint of an assertive individualism, is one of the commonplaces of Orwell criticism. In its own terms it appears as a valuable and 'rugged individualism'[1], but more critically it can be seen as a limiting 'bourgeois individualism'[2].

Caudwell describes the essentially illusory nature of this mode of thought and the associated conception of freedom:

> "The bourgeois believes that liberty consists in absence of social organisation; that liberty is a negative quality, a deprivation of existing obstacles to it; and not a positive quality, the reward of endeavour and wisdom. This belief is itself the result of bourgeois social relations. As a result of it, the bourgeois intellectual is unconscious of the causality that makes his consciousness what it is... He refuses to see that his own limited liberty; the captivity of the worker, and all the contradictions of developing bourgeois relations — pacifism, fascism, war, hate, cruelty, ... are bound in one net of causality, that each is influenced by each, and that therefore it is fallacious to suppose a simple effort of the will of the free man, without knowledge of the

> causes, will banish fascism, war and slumps ... we have shown that the individual is never free. He can only attain freedom by social cooperation ... If, therefore, he wishes to stop poverty, war, and misery, he must do it, not by passive resistance, but by using social relations. But in order to use social relations he must understand them."[3]

This account both reminds us of Orwell's anarchist sympathies and explains how in a particular historical situation[4] an assertive individualism turns into a deterministic view of social forces and a pessimistic attitude to the possibility of social change. It is the intention of this article to look at ways in which these attitudes control and find expression in some of Orwell's fiction where the passive and frustrated individual, forced by a sense of impotence and isolation into a rebellious assertion of his own individuality, provides a dominant and recurring motif.

Although the degree of their self-consciousness and articulateness varies, Flory, Gordon Comstock and Dorothy Hare all enact a resistance to the immediate social environment which is fundamentally escapist and individualist in intention and effect and is always finally defeated. Underlying this narrative pattern is a parallel and controlling movement of endorsement and then final withdrawal of social criticism. We can examine in turn the critical insights of each book, their limitations and withdrawal, and then consider the aspects of Orwell's thought which determine this pattern.

In Burmese Days the distance of the setting from English society and the bitterness of Orwell's own experience in Burma[5] make the ambivalence of his attitudes deeper and clearer. Flory's perception of the exploitation and appropriation

underlying Imperialism is Orwell's own:

> "he had grasped the truth about the English and their Empire. The Indian Empire is a despotism — benevolent no doubt, but still a despotism with theft as its final object."[6]

But this insight into the realities of a total system is immediately diminished — in relation to the actual agents of this system — to the level of a highly personal and emotional response to inessentials, to matters of 'taste':

> "And as to the English of the East, the 'sahiblog', Flory had come so to hate them from living in their society that he was quite incapable of being fair to them."[7]

This aspect of Flory's revolt enables Orwell to detach himself from his protagonist's criticism and, at the same time, to avoid any more radical or adequate critique. If Flory cannot be rational and 'fair' then Orwell implies that he himself will be. This gives him the opportunity to express a disquieting admiration of[8] and sympathy with the colonial administrator:

> "For after all, the poor devils are no worse than anybody else. They lead unenviable lives; it is a poor bargain to spend thirty years, ill-paid, in an alien country..."[9]

Orwell is quite correct in asserting that the root evil lies not with the agents of Empire but he fails to offer any further analysis of these roots in a total economic and social

structure and philosophy. Furthermore, by making the exploiters as much victims as the exploited he suggests that neither are in a position to initiate any change or improvement.

This implied inevitability and the resulting futility of any revolt is clear too in the treatment of Flory. For if the position of the rulers vis-à-vis a foreign land and people makes the exploitation much clearer it also makes any identification and cooperation with the oppressed more problematic. Orwell deliberately emphasises this point in making the Burmese Po Kyin the 'villain' in the plot which destroys Flory. Orwell's own attitude to the Burmese throughout this book and elsewhere is, in any case, ambivalent.[10]

If Flory's revolt is seen to be doomed because of its questionable basis and limited viewpoint then Orwell offers no wider viewpoint, suggests no more hopeful approach to the problems. Thus English society itself is either criticized in the same superficial terms as the English in the East or viewed nostalgically: it is never perceived as source and analogue of the exploitation and alienation experienced in Burma. Neither is the individualist nature of Flory's revolt criticized: I have suggested how the possibility of identification with the exploited is excluded, and in addition to this his isolation is seen as the cause of his revolt[11] — if he could marry Elizabeth he would have no complaint and no cause of complaint — rather than the cause of its failure. In this context his disfigurement appears, in Orwell's terms, both as sign and cause of his individual failure[12] and as the determinant of failure, given by some power outside and thus beyond the control of individual and social action alike. Since Orwell offers us no terms outside Flory's own particular form of revolt, the implication of the book as a whole is that not only this but all forms of revolt, all attempts at change, are equally futile.

The terms within which Burmese Days is conceived leave Orwell with no alternative resolution to the death of his protagonist. In A Clergyman's Daughter both the problems and the resolution are rather different but the limitations of the viewpoint and the techniques by which it is enforced are similar. Orwell gives us at the start a picture of Dorothy's life and environment as so totally devoid of any joy, values or even utility that her decision to return to it can only be explained if we believe — as I suggest Orwell intends — that there is, after all, some value if not in the life itself then in the individual's endurance of it. If we look more closely at the course of the narrative, however, we see that Dorothy has neither real choice nor critical consciousness of her situation at any point. The oppressive naturalism of the book[13] along with the circularity of its plot direct us to the conclusion that this lack of choice, this immutability of the present and immediate situation, is a feature of the real social world to which the book refers. But what this dense naturalism, this obsession with the texture and surface of social life, in fact does is to obscure from the reader — as from the Orwellian protagonist — the possibility and need of a more fundamental and total analysis of the real structure beneath this surface, and to conceal the author's very specific and deliberate manipulations of plot for the purposes of enforcing a particular social attitude.

Since the whole conception and critique of society is limited to its immediate texture, Dorothy's experience of alternative environments and ways of living must not arise from any critical consciousness of the economic and social basis of her way of life[14] — indeed the very detail and density of its realization in the book act to deny the power

of consciousness to achieve this kind of criticism. Thus her amnesia is a device used by Orwell to make alternative experience possible without necessitating such consciousness. Furthermore, this gives a dreamlike[15] — unreal — quality to the subsequent idyll in the hop-fields. This sense of unreality, together with Dorothy's uneasy awareness of her very different background — which, since she is not fully conscious of tis true nature, cannot be rejected outright — makes any identification by Dorothy with her companions impossible. The resulting ambivalence of her attitude to those around her parallels Flory's relationship with the Burmese so that, although her revolt is far less conscious than Flory's it too is seen as inevitably solitary.

Because the idyll itself turns into a nightmare on the return from country to city, and because Dorothy encounters only those with a purely negative or a cynically opportunist relation to society[16] her experience gives her no basis on which to develop either an adequate critique of that society or some viable alternative to her previous life. The experience is seen, rather, as merely destructive — of the faith which had helped her endure this life — and Orwell offers no viewpoint from which to criticize her inability to change constructively her attitude to this oppressive texture of life:

> "What she would have said was that though her faith had left her, she had not changed, could not change, did not want to change the spiritual background of her mind; that her cosmos, though it now seemed empty and meaningless, was still in a sense the Christian cosmos; that the Christian way of life was still the way that must come naturally to her."[17]

Orwell nowhere follows through the questioning of 'spiritual values that lead to such an oppressive life as Dorothy's clearly is[18] but rather uses Dorothy's inability to change to enforce the conclusion that no change is possible or even desirable:

> "She did not reflect consciously that the solution to her difficulty lay in accepting the fact that there was no solution; that if one gets on with the job that lies to hand, the ultimate purpose of the job fades into insignificance; that faith and no faith are very much the same provided that one is doing what is customary, useful and acceptable."[19]

Orwell's retreat from criticism, and participation in changing an obviously unsatisfactory environment, to the passive endurance of the status quo, his elevation of endurance to chief personal moral value, could not be more clearly articulated. Finally, we must be aware of the way the alternatives open to Dorothy are further polarised by eliminating the possibility of escape offered by marriage to Warburton through her abnormal and highly personal sexual fear and by the presentation of Warburton as a cynical exploiter of his own social position rather than a reliable critic of society.

Since Dorothy has no real critical consciousness of her situation we are allowed to sympathise with her more closely than with any of the other protagonists. But just because of this, and because neither through his construction of plot, characterization nor authorial consciousness does Orwell suggest the possibility of an effective critical

attitude, we are trapped more deeply within the limitations of the book's own viewpoint. Not only is the inevitability of a particular failure enforced but this failure is generalised to eliminate any possible escape, whilst the individual's endurance and self-sacrifice within the existing situation become virtues: failure is seen as a kind of achievement, and the only possible one.

The limitations and strategies of Keep the Aspidistra Flying are those of the earlier novels and the analysis need not be repeated[20]. I shall consider here only the basis of the limitations of Gordon's attack on the "money-world'. Two factors are involved here, both related to his viewpoint from within the fringes of that world — the declining section of the rentier class. Since Gordon's values of self-sufficiency and personal autonomy[21] are essentially the values of his class, his poverty forces him into the kind of deception and personal bad-faith Orwell describes with greater awareness elsewhere[22]. Despite a certain degree of awareness, Gordon can, in practice, neither accept nor fully reject the values which force this kind of behaviour on him:

> "There are two ways to live, he decided. You can be rich or you can deliberately refuse to be rich. You can possess money or you can despise money; the one fatal thing is to worship money and fail to get it."[23]

Just because of this ambivalence Gordon's motives become suspect, can be seen as personal rancour and envy, and Orwell is able both to detach himself from his protagonist's superficial social criticism and to avoid any more fundamental and effective analysis. This brings us to the second factor

limiting the book's social critique. For although both Gordon and Orwell himself perceive the economic background to the values and assumptions of this society, there is no sense of the economic basis of its very existence in the exploitation of other classes within the total social structure. There is thus no critical viewpoint offered on a revolt conceived in isolation from the very group — the working-class — which is in a position to develop a more radical critique of this total structure. This is made clear in Gordon's rejection and Orwell's presentation in the book, of socialism[24]. Orwell's choice of the wealthy and guilt-ridden Ravelston as the representative of socialist ideas suggests that these are generated and accepted from personal motives — as a compensation for one's complicity in the "money-world' — rather than from a true understanding of the realities of the social structure. The resulting negation of alternatives parallels the effect of the figure of Warburton in A Clergyman's Daughter.

Orwell's presentation of Gordon's final return to the milieu he had thought to reject is clearly intended to suggest that what is of value is not merely the individual's endurance of a way of life, as in Dorothy's case, but life itself. A particular and limited form of revolt is shown to fail, no alternative form is offered and so the individual is driven back into the preservation of individual moral values and the perception of 'reality' — the texture of known life as a value itself:

> "The lower middle-class people ... lived by the money-code sure enough, and yet they contrived to keep their decency. The money-code as they interpreted it was not merely cynical and hoggish.

> They had their standards, ... they 'kept themselves respectable' — kept the aspidistra flying. Besides, they were alive. They were bound up in the bundle of life."[25]

Such an astonishing withdrawal of all the book's earlier criticism can only be explained in terms of the frustration of the individual with an acute sense of his own isolation, and rests on the illusion that individual integrity can be achieved — not only by a few 'saints' but by the mass of the people — in isolation from and opposition to a society which has been shown as corrupt. We are thus brought back to Orwell's initial polarisation of individual and society and carried forward to consider his overall image of society and his view of history and social change.

The Compensatory Community and the Fear of History.

Caudwell described the phase of capitalist social development in which Orwell lived as one of simultaneously increasing organisation and disorganisation.[26] From the individualist viewpoint both appear as threats to the individual and neither can offer the basis for individual commitment. Change is seen in terms of large-scale movements beyond the will and control of the individual and actively opposed to, destructive of, his values which can only be preserved by emphasising the polarisation of the individual from the social world in which the possibility of effective individual action has been eliminated. Orwell's uncritical attitude to Dickens' retreat from social criticism and radicalism to 'change-of-heart' moralism[27] is merely the

theoretical expression of the fictional pattern we have analysed in the novels. The same retreat of the individual from social action underlies the polarisation of history to the nightmare of Nineteen Eighty-Four — a world from which individualism has been eliminated — and the nostalgic past of Coming Up for Air. Orwell nowhere shows any awareness that it is only by this very withdrawal that the nightmare is made possible because he fails to recognize, as Caudwell points out in a more general context[28], that the 'individual' emerges only within and from a total social and historical development, or that history itself is the product of collective activity and cooperation between individuals.

His viewpoint leads him into a nostalgic distortion of the past — so that even Bowling's pretence of realism in his memories of Edwardian England[29] is negated by the sentimental fallacy of security within a 'stable' society and the moral value of hard work and physical discomfort. This same fallacy also distorts the view of the present so that technological progress is facilely linked with socialism, dehumanization and moral decline[30]. But, if, in Orwell's terms, the ideal lies in the past, still the nightmare awaits us in the future so that it is still worth resisting change and any criticism of the present must remain, as we saw in the novels considered earlier, on a superficial level. In Coming Up for Air, therefore, the way Bowling seizes irrationally on the fishfilled frankfurter and the mock-Tudor tea-room as symbols of modern life deflects the reader from any more significant criticism whilst simultaneously, because of the clearly limited consciousness of his protagonist, acting to protect Orwell from charges of a superficiality which is, nonetheless, his own.

Orwell's basic dichotomy of the individual and everything

outside him, and his conception of deterministic rather than dialectic relations between the two influence not only his view of history but of social groups and society as a whole. We can consider first his attitude to the working-class and then his image of the history and contemporary state and structure of English society.

Orwell's attitudes and references to the English working-class are riddled with ambiguities. On the one hand, as the oppressed, they aroused his natural sympathy with the underdog and he was capable of resisting the deceptions by which the bourgeois can distance himself from the suffering of the poor:

> "At the back of one of the houses a young woman was kneeling on the stones, poking a stick up the leaden waste-pipe ... I had time to see everything about her – her sacking apron, her clumsy clogs, her arms reddened by the cold. She looked up as the train passed, and I was almost near enough to catch her eye ... It struck me then that we are mistaken when we say that 'It isn't the same for them as it would be for us,' and that people bred in the slums can imagine nothing but the slums. For what I saw in her face was not the ignorant suffering of an animal."[31]

Yet despite its unqualified sympathy, its attempt to overcome prejudice and establish relationship, this passage typifies the weaknesses as well as strengths of Orwell's account of the working-class. He is always the observer very much conscious of the distance between himself and his subject and therefore as much concerned with his own attitudes and

prejudices as with the subject itself. Furthermore, this technique of seizing on the significant detail is effective in drawing the reader's attention to the texture of a particular way of life but needs to be supplemented by a deeper analysis of the structure and inside experience of that life which Orwell fails to provide. Instead the social group is seen consistently from Orwell's own individualist position. It is significant that what he values most in working-class life is its home and family environment[32] and whilst this is undoubtedly a very real aspect, re-emphasised by writers like Hoggart, when coupled with Orwell's own experience of thought and consciousness developed in conscious opposition to his own social group it leads to a damaging distortion of his understanding of a total way of life. Thus he is unable to accept or conceive of individual consciousness developed within a group: his account of working-class life completely omits the collective activities embodied in clubs, cooperatives and trade unions[33]. For Orwell the working-man, almost by definition, could not be a socialist and in this way he denied a whole class any access to a critical consciousness of their own condition. It is this distortion which made it possible for him also to express anger at what he saw — from the outside — as the passivity of the English working-class[34] in the face of real social injustices; to represent them as mindless 'proles' and to use the highly ambivalent analogy with domestic animals.

Like his conception of the individual withdrawn from social action, Orwell's way of seeing the working-class — as a stable and homogeneous mass subject to manipulation from above and incapable of developing the consciousness or collective weapons necessary to win any degree of self-determination — is itself a precondition for maintaining or

worsening the situation he abhors;[35] the use of Orwell by post-war conservatism illustrates this. For Orwell himself, however, this image was not a tool of manipulation but a necessity arising from his total image of English society; his 'myth of England'.[36] The sense of personal isolation, so strongly felt through all his work, frequently gives rise to a compensating need for community and since he was unable to feel the necessary identification with any particular class within his society he chose — albeit unconsciously — to create an image of a unified English society in which, despite its faults, he could find much to admire. In order to maintain this illusion of homogeneity he adopts a particular viewpoint: thus in "The English People" he describes his subject as a foreign observer might see it;[37] in The Lion and The Unicorn internal differences are subordinated to the need for unity created by war. The real distortions involved in such an image are much clearer in The Road to Wigan Pier where the evidence of vast differences in economic conditions, work, social environment and opportunities recorded in the first section[38] are facilely reduced to matters of taste, to inessentials, in the second part.[39] Here it is Orwell's denial of any group consciousness of the working-class situation which has made the trick possible: if there is any opposition in interests and way of life, he implies, the working-class themselves have, as yet, no awareness of this and the effort of the bourgeois must be to prevent the development of such awareness by removing glaring social injustices.[40]

From this viewpoint the socialist intellectual is seen as a threat to a stable and basically sound social structure and the venom of Orwell's attack on such critics is explained. The 'myth' distorts both the history of English society[41] seen now as a consoling continuity free of significant internal

conflicts, and its present structure: to see England as "a family with the wrong members in control"[42] is to obscure the real nature of a class society and social dominance. If the English upper-classes are criticized not for the fact of their dominance but for the inefficiency with which they carry it out, then any improvement, in these terms, will be along the lines not of increasing democracy but of a more efficient and benevolent totalitarianism.

In Spain Orwell found and then saw destroyed a community fighting for a radical social change, through an increase of freedom and injustice. Having lost this, his urgent need to 'belong' in the only other known society he could accept[43], even with reservations, made him compromise his own critical consciousness. This forced upon him a distorted and unduly pessimistic image of the English working-class, turned him against revolutionary socialism and, ironically, into a spokesman of advanced capitalism and fundamentally totalitarian forms of government.

NOTES

[1] This is the uncritical attitude of George Woodcock, The Crystal Spirit: a study of George Orwell (Jonathan Cape, 1967).

[2] As it is by, for example, Williams, Eagleton and — to a lesser extent — Hoggart; Raymond Williams, Orwell (Fontana, 1971), Terry Eagleton, "George Orwell and the Lower Middle-class Novel" in Exiles and Emigrés: studies in modern literature (Chatto & Windus, 1970), Richard Hoggart, George Orwell and The Road to Wigan Pier (Penguin Books, 1973).

[3] Caudwell, "Liberty, a Study in Bourgeois Illusion" Further Studies in a Dying Culture pp. 217-8.

[4] The relevant aspects of this situation are the development, on the one hand, of a monolithic state in Russia and, on the other, of the fascist movement and fascist states in Europe; at home Orwell was concerned about the manipulation of the individual practiced by developing techniques in advertising and the very clear dependance of the individual on large scale economic organisation demonstrated by the slump.

[5] Orwell describes this experience in the second part of The Road to Wigan Pier (Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 123-30.

The most important essay devoted to his Burmese years is probably "Shooting an Elephant" Inside the Whale and other essays (Penguin Books, 1962).

[6] Burmese Days (Penguin Books, 1967), p. 65. See also the essays mentioned above and Orwell's support for Indian

independance in The Lion and the Unicorn (Secker & Warburg, 1941), pp. 105-8.
Orwell's most important insight into the imperialist situation is that, by the very fact of his rule, the ruler is equally at the mercy of the ruled: this is especially clear in "Shooting an Elephant". Orwell does not, however, as Caudwell does, make the further point that this is true of all forms of domination and coercion:

> "Where did he (the bourgeois) err? He erred because he did not see that his dominating relation to society was a determining relation, which determined him as much as he determined it." Further Studies, p. 159.

[7] Burmese Days, p. 65. Eagleton, op. cit., p. 79 quotes a further example from this novel:

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

[8] This respect is articulated clearly in the essay on "Rudyard Kipling" Critical Essays (Secker & Warburg, 1960). It is revealed too by the parenthesis "benevolent, no doubt," in the earlier quotation from this novel.

[9] Burmese Days, p. 65.

[10] It is interesting to note that a far more effective criticism of imperialism exists, potentially, in the figure of the Indian doctor Veraswami who is forced to reject his own culture in the pursuit of acceptance by a system of rule which his very failure shows to be corrupt. Yet within the book, the general ambivalence of the attitude towards the Asians and the lack of depth in the characterization of Veraswami qualify this criticism. In comparison with, for example, Forster's Aziz, the doctor is a comic cardboard figure.

[11] Burmese Days, pp. 169-70.

[12] Flory's constantly emphasised moral weakness and physical ugliness, furthermore, act also to detach and distance us from his critical attacks.

[13] Eagleton accurately describes the ideological, the class, implications and background of naturalism:

> "... the class-bearings of English naturalism are significant. The ethos of English naturalism, from Gissing and Bennett to Wells and Orwell, is distinctively lower middle-class. The English naturalist novel, in its main tendencies, emerges at a point of vulnerable insecurity within the lower middle-class, wedged painfully between the working class on the one hand and the dominant social class on the other, but unable to identify with either ... It is a world intelligent enough to feel acutely the meanness of its own typical experience, but powerless to transcend it; a world

> suspicious alike of the sophisticated manners of its rulers and the uncouthness of its working class inferiors. It knows its own life to be trivialised and demeaning, ... yet it values the solid realism of its own behaviour ..." op. cit. pp. 72-3.

The deadening effect of such a naturalistically protrayed environment is particularly clear in A Clergyman's Daughter, the form of consciousness which emerges from this social world as described by Eagleton is illustrated in the figure of George Bowling in Coming Up for Air.

[14] The dense and oppressive texture of the environment portrayed acts also to limit the reader's critical consciousness and power to achieve a more adequate viewpoint on the society in question. In this way, Orwell's unfavourable treatment of the rector is also significant since the reader is invited to infer that, had he been less objectionable, Dorothy's situation might have been less awful.

[15] Eagleton, op. cit., p. 91.

[16] This negative relation is also that of the tramps Orwell himself lived with as described in Down and Out in Paris and London.

[17] A Clergyman's Daughter (Secker & Warburg, 1960), p. 308.

[18] Orwell's ambivalent attitude to religion is discussed by Voorhees, op. cit.

[19] A Clergyman's Daughter, p. 319.

[20] Thus Gordon's criticism of his society, like Flory's

is articulated but inadequate and Orwell uses the unpleasant aspects of Gordon's tone and character to detach himself from the criticism without pressing further to a more adequate critique: the character is the shield behind which he can voice his own most unintelligent criticism and his inability to transcend this by a more total viewpoint. Here too, as in the other two novels, the failure of a specific and highly individualist revolt is used to negate the possibility of any revolt.

[21] The quotation from Caudwell in this paper suggests how far this very sense of autonomy is illusory. Caudwell also suggests, in Studies in a Dying Culture, ch. 5, that the bourgeois rebel's isolation is a product of his bad-faith: his unwillingness to dirty his own hands by involvement in any effective action.

[22] Down and Out in Paris and London (Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 15-19. But here too there is no awareness of the particular ideological causes of this response to and behaviour in poverty.

[23] Keep the Aspidistra Flying (Penguin Books, 1962), p. 50.

[24] Keep the Aspidistra Flying, p. 92. The passage in which Gordon rejects socialism also illustrates Orwell's attitude to Ravelston, his 'representative' socialist.

[25] Keep the Aspidistra Flying, p. 255.

[20] Further Studies in a Dying Culture, p. 121.

> "Capitalist economy, as it develops its contradictions, reveals, as at opposed poles, on

> the one hand the organisation of labour in the factory, in the trust, in the monopoly; on the other hand the disorganisation of labour in the competition between these units."

[27] "Charles Dickens" Critical Essays, pp. 56-60.

[28] Further Studies in a Dying Culture, pp. 128-131. For example:

> "Bourgeois culture is constantly proclaiming man the individual against the organisation, and is continually involving itself in contradiction, for all the qualities it calls 'individual', so far from being antagonistic to organisation are generated by it, and the very state which it claims to be produced by organisation — featureless, unfree man — is man as he exists if robbed of organisation."

[29] For example, at pp. 73-4: Coming Up for Air (Penguin Books, 1962).

[30] This complex of ideas dominates Coming Up for Air where the choice between past and future is polarised as that between "blue-bottles or bombers." It is also articulated in The Road to Wigan Pier, pp. 163-184.

[31] The Road to Wigan Pier, pp. 16-17.

[32]

> "Curiously enough it is not the triumphs of modern engineering, nor the radio, nor the cinematograph,

> nor the five thousand novels which are published yearly, nor the crowds at Ascot and the Eton and Harrow match, but the memory of working-class interiors — especially as I sometimes saw them in my childhood before the war, when England was still prosperous — that reminds me that our age has not been altogether a bad one to live in."
> The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 105.

Orwell here characteristically retreats to nostalgia in order to forget the real condition of the "working-class interiors" he has seen and described in the course of this journey.

[33] Thus all mention of the trade-unionists and working-class socialists Orwell refers to in the "Wigan Pier Diary" Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters, vol. I, is omitted from the book itself. This puts Orwell's reputation as an 'honest broker' into question.

[34] He can only say that

> "during the past dozen years the English working class have grown servile with a rather horrifying rapidity" Wigan Pier, p. 111.

because he automatically excludes any individual with a critical consciousness of social organisation or an understanding of socialism, from the working class:

> "It is of course true that plenty of people of working class origin are Socialists of the theoretical bookish type. But they are never people who have remained working men." Wigan Pier, p. 155.

The same ideas run through the essay "The English People", Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters, vol. 3.

[35] Orwell's way of seeing here is closely linked to the conception of society in terms of "masses", the genesis and implications of which are analysed by Williams in the Conclusion to Culture and Society.

[36] The term originates with Williams: Orwell, ch. 2.

[37] Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters, vol. 3 (Penguin Books, 1970), p. 15.

[38] The enormous gap is indeed implicit in the very conception of a report on one group to the members of another.

[39] The Road to Wigan Pier, pp. 201-204.

[40] We might add that capitalist society has all too readily and successfully followed Orwell's advice.

[41] Thus in "The English People" Orwell insists that the situation as he sees it is part of a historical continuity in England and infers from this that substantial change is not only unlikely but undesirable.

[42] "The English People".

[43] The Viewpoint of the returning traveller — returning from a country torn by civil war — is one which almost inevitably tends towards idealizing distortion. In Orwell's account here the element of nostalgia is also clear:

"And then England — southern England, probably the

sleekest landscape in the world. It is difficult when you pass that way, especially when you are peacefully recovering from sea-sickness with the plush cushions of a boat-train carriage under your bum, to believe that anything is really happening anywhere ... Down here it was still the England I had known in my childhood: the railway-cuttings smothered in wild flowers, the deep meadows where the great shining horses browse and meditate, the slow-moving streams bordered by willows, the green bosoms of the elms, the larkspurs in the cottage gardens; and then the huge peaceful wilderness of outer London, the barges on the miry river, the familiar streets, the posters telling of cricket-matches and Royal weddings, the men in bowler hats, the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, the red buses, the blue policemen — all sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England, from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar of bombs."

Homage to Catalonia (Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 220-221.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Works by George Orwell.

Down and Out in Paris and London (Penguin Books, 1974).
A Clergyman's Daughter (Secker & Warburg, 1960).
Burmese Days (Penguin Books, 1967).
Keep the Aspidistra Flying (Penguin Books, 1962).
The Road to Wigan Pier (Penguin Books, 1962).
Homage to Catalonia (Penguin Books, 1966).
The Lion and the Unicorn (Secker & Warburg, 1941).
Critical Essays (Secker & Warburg, 1960).
Inside the Whale and other essays (Penguin Books, 1962).
Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters, vol. 1, (Secker & Warburg, 1968).
Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters, vol. 3, (Penguin Books, 1970).

B. Other sources.

C. Caudwell, Illusion and Reality: a study of the sources of poetry (Lawrence & Wishart, 1946).
Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture (N. Y. and London, Monthly Review Press, 1971).

T. Eagleton, Exiles and Emigrés: studies in modern literature (Chatto & Windus, 1970).

R. Hoggart, "George Orwell and The Road to Wigan Pier" Speaking to Each Other vol. 2 (Penguin Books, 1973).

R. Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (Penguin Books, 1968).
Orwell (Fontana, 1971).

R. Hoggart, "George Orwell and The Road to Wigan Pier." Speaking to Each Other vol. 2 (Penguin Books, 1973).

R. Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (Penguin Books, 1968). Orwell (Fontana, 1971).