CHAPTER V

MAJOR CRITICAL ESSAYS: A CONCENTRATED TEXTUAL SCRUTINY

The major critical essays of George Orwell on the present list are as follows:

1. Why I Write
2. Charles Dickens
3. Inside the Whale
4. Politic vs Literature: An Examination of ‘Gulliver's Travels’.

At the very outset, in *Why I Write*, we have Orwell's own statement of his prescience, of his predestination to be a writer at a very early age—from his own words, "perhaps at the age of six."\(^1\) He confesses that he had tried to abandon his inborn talents when he was about 17 and 24. But he was fully aware of trying to act against his true nature. He had no job satisfaction though he had a stint with the Imperial Police in Burma. As it were for the sake of literature he recovered from his backsliding in the nick of time. He came to himself like the prodigal son in the Bible and returned to do justice to his true instinct. To continue in the Imperial Police would be like kicking against the prick. He had gone astray from his forte, but his spirit was dissipated after an eight year vanity. Then he finally gathered up himself to

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centre in writing. His penitent soul has been accepted warmly. He returned to his forte and reconciled himself with his "true nature." 2 Hence his critical essays besides his popular novels, a few to name like 'Animal farm' and 'Nineteen-Eighty Four."

In the second paragraph of 'Why I Write,' he mentions that he has looked upon it as a great aggravation of his position of being sandwiched between two children after a gap of five years each on either side. His complaint is that being the son of a father, whom he had scarcely seen before he was eight. For this reason and other reasons best known to him he was somewhat lonely and this was responsible for his questionable mannerism which did not make him popular during his school days. He says that he had the typical lonely child's habit of making up stories and conversed with imaginary persons. From the very beginning, he has formed that his literacy aims were coupled with a sense of isolation and inferiority complex. He had known that he was gifted with a facility for words and was also graced with the power of facing unpleasant facts squarely. He says that he had felt these qualities gave him the advantage to live in his own world to make up for his daily failure. Writing enabled him to take refuge from his failures. But this big claim of revenge through his childhood and boyhood did not amount to more than six pages. Still it was not a mean achievement for a mere child of four or five only. He was quite privileged to have a doting patient mother acting like a good student, taking down dictation from a novice teacher.

2. Ibid. p. 7
The poem, Orwell distinctly remembers, was a ‘tiger with chair-like teeth’ and he thought that it was an imitation of Blake’s *Tiger, Tiger*. When he was 11, he managed a patriotic poem when the world war 1914-18 broke out. He is to say that he had also attempted bad and unfinished Georgian poems when he was a bit older. He remembers that he also had attempted a horrible flopped story. All those young teenage years, that was the total of would-be serious work that he endeavoured on paper. One is tempted to comment on Orwell’s efforts as - “Better be bad than never.” Orwell had really made an honest effort to do justice to his true nature. And that is quite admirable by any standard.

Throughout that time, i.e., upto the age of thirteen, Orwell, in a sense remained engaged in literary activities. He struggled, says, he, to produce easily and quickly what he called “the made-to-order stuff.” ³ He continues to say that apart from school work, at unusual speed he gave himself much to writing both ‘Vers ‘d occasion and semi-comic poems. He by now imitated Aristophanes by writing a whole rhyming play and also helped to edit both printed and manuscript school magazines. He admits that those magazines were the most ludicrous imitation which he had produced without much effort. He finds them a lot easier than the cheapest journalism he undertook. Side by side with all those endeavours’ he carried out subjective literary exercise for fifteen years or so. He discloses that he used to fancy himself like the Robin Hood of Sherwood forest. And soon enough his story moved from that of narcissism and more and more became objective.

³. Ibid p. 7
This habit seems to have possessed him till he was about twenty-five which he called as his non-literary years. Despite his relentless search for the suitable words he felt that he had achieved not more than the quality of meticulous and detailed description. He admits of committing the crime of plagiarism of the styles of his predecessors he admired and worshipped at different ages.

In the fourth stanza of Why I Write Orwell recollects how all of a sudden, he came to enjoy more than any man even did, the sounds and association of words from Paradise Lost -

'So hee with difficulty and labour hard,  
Moved on : with difficulty and labour he.'

At about sixteen, the sounds and words made him ecstatic and the double 'ee ' after the letter 'h' (aitch) made him ecstatic more than anything else. As for the art of description, he claims that he had possessed it already. He is quite sure as what kind of book to write at that juncture. And as he looks back, he could see that a book in the nature, and style of Burmese Days was what he exactly wanted to write at that time. He claims that his first complete novel was full of humbly, purple passenger and without life.

In this passage, Orwell gives the reason of writing his background information. He maintains that one will be able to examine a writer's purpose only after knowing something of his early development. He also believes that
the age in which a writer lives determines his subject-matter. He claims that this observation is quite true in tumultuous and revolutionary ages like his own time. He continues to assert that before one writes, one will acquire an inescapable emotional attitude first. About being emotional, Prof., J.B.S. Haldane says:

"When we are emotional about a subject, we feel a need to believe something about it, and we do not care very much whether our belief are rational." 4

Orwell states that it is the duty of a writer to subject himself to discipline so as not to kill the budding literary talent prematurely. He fears that a writer's own prejudices and perverse mood can hamper the literary growth of a writer. In his discourse on the reason for his writing, Orwell gives the need to earn a living as one of the motives for writing. Besides this, he catalogues four main motives which are in special manners responsible in every writer. He opines that these motives are existing in different degrees in every writer according to the atmosphere in which he is living. They are -

1. Sheer egoism
2. Aesthetic enthusiasm
3. Historical impulse
4. Political purpose.

Orwell observes that every book in diluted with political bias and the opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude. This view is as apt as original.

Again Orwell reiterates that the four impulses that he mentioned above are generally to be found warring against one another, tending to "fluctuate from person to person (writer)" and from time to time. 6

When he was of age which he called ‘first adult,’ Orwell set himself to consider the four motives, and for him, the first three motives vastly transcended the fourth impulse, the Political purpose. He views that if there is lasting peace at all, he in all probability, might end up as a writer of ornate and descriptive books. This might prevent him from identifying himself with his political preferences. He maintains that circumstances forced him to become a sort of pamphleteer. According to him, “an unsuitable profession” preceded this pamphleteering. But, subsequently, a baptism of poverty and the sense of failure, vanity and vexation of the spirit followed him one after the another. The following glaring questions came in front of him. How long could he kick against the prick?

After Orwell had had a stint in Burma for five years to represent imperialism, the experience increased his natural hatred of authority. For the first time in his life, he came face to face with the working class. This job in Burma gave him some understanding of the nature of imperialism. Yet these

5. Brackets mine.
7. Ibid p. 10
first hand experiences were not good enough to provide him an accurate political orientation. By the end of 1935, Hitler, the Spanish Civil War etc., followed but he was still in a dilemma. He aptly expresses his unpleasant fence-sitting in the following poem he wrote at that particular date:

A happy . . Vicar I might have been, Two hundred years ago, To preach upon eternal doom And watch my walnut grow

But born, alas, in an evil time, I missed the pleasant haven, For the hair has grown on my upper lips And the clergy are clean-shaven

And later still the times were good, We were no easy to please, We rocked our troubled thoughts to On the bosoms of the trees. All ignorant we dared to sleep own The joys now we dissemble;

The greenfinch on the apple bough could make my enemies to tremble, But girls bellies and apricots, Roached in shaded dream, Horses, ducks in flight at dawn, All there are a dream.

It is forbidden to dream again, We maim our joys or hide them; Horses are made of chromium steel And little fat man should ride them.

I am the worm who never turned, The eunuch without a harem; Between the priest and the Commissar I walk like Eugene Aram;

And the Commissar is telling my fortune While the radio plays, But the priest has promised an Austin Seven, for Duggie always pays.
I dreamed I dwelt in marble halls, And woke to find it true; I wasn't born for an age like this, Was Smith? Was Jones? Were you? 8

Orwell was in deep dilemma. But finally the Spanish war and other events in 1936-37 swayed and swung him. And he declares that his writing is clear as crystal since 1936. He could speak out now openly for democratic socialism and against the totalitarianism. Every line of serious work that he had written now directly or indirectly either attacked the evils the latter or supported the former. He observes that in a tumultuous period, under some pretext or another, every writer cannot help to indulge in writing for or against the side one takes. He asserts that the chance of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity depends upon one's consciousness of political bias.

As Orwell draws towards a conclusion of his diatribe Why I Write, he has disclosed his greatest desire throughout the past ten years. His passion, as it emerged was to make political writing into an art. He achieved this cherished dream in Animal Farm published in 1945. He admits that his starting point was always dominated by his obsession the side he takes and his acute sense of injustice. He further states that whenever he settled down to write, it was not for the sake of producing a work of art. He had written because he wanted to rattle and expose the skeletons in the political cupboards etc. some naked truths he wanted to preach. And therefore his concern was to get an audience, to be heard, to be listened to. But he also

8. Ibid. p. 10 - 11
admits that he could not write a book or even long magazine article in the absence of an aesthetic experience. So, any one who cares to scrutiny his work of propaganda will be able to smell or trace aestheticism. Besides this, Orwell also expresses that he was not able to escape from the world-view he acquired in childhood. In this essay he writes:

“So long as I remain alive and well I shall continue to feel strongly about prose style, to love the surface of the earth.” \( ^9 \)

*Coming up for Air* contains similar passages sporadically here and there. And it is immensely rewarding experience to read them all. Orwell cannot suppress the two sides of his nature, that of his likes and dislikes. They are deeply fixed in him along with the private and public activities that the age forces upon them. It appears that Orwell would love to write about nature and peaceful novels only. But, like a child, he cannot eat only the flesh or the sweetmeats only. He must touch the bones and crack them too or he must take not only the sweet pills, but take the bitter pills too.

Therefore in this paragraph, he has mentioned about his difficulty of construction and of language. He could not sit on the fence anymore between the right or the left. In this connection, he himself poses in a new way the problem of “truthfulness.” He cites his book about the *Spanish Civil War*, *Homage to Catalonia*, a frank political book. Here he could not control his language any more because he went; he saw, he understood and could not

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beat around the bush anymore. Nevertheless he has admitted that he has written the book with a certain detachment and regard for form. He confesses that in *Homage to Catalonia*, he had laboured hard to tell the truth, at the same time taking great care not to sacrifice and not to do so at the expense of his literary instincts. He states that apart from many other things the book was in defence of the Trotskyist who were accused of plotting with Franco. He doubted that such a long chapter may bore the readers to death. He confesses that a respected critic of his admonished him for having converted a good book into journalism. He has accepted the charge. What else could he do? He had seen enough the dirty work of the nature of imperialism at close quarters in Burma. Human beings, exploited by the same human beings. In Spain, he has seen and happened to know what very few people in England had been allowed to know. Newspaper reports and the facts on the spot has a gulf of difference. Here is an extract from Orwell’s own account in “Looking back on the Spanish War”:

“In spite of power politics and journalistic lying, the central issue of the war was the attempt of people like this to win the decent life which they knew to be their birthright.”

He was a pilgrim, who progressed from Burma to Spain. He went, he saw and he was angry. His honesty, his anger may have diluted a good strong book which he may not seemed to have cared a hoot!

In the last but one paragraph, Orwell discusses his language problem. This problem kept clinging to him. But he declines to discuss again to save time. But in later years, he says that he had tried to write less picturesquely and more exactly. The result of this attempt in his masterpiece, the unique political allegory *Animal Farm* (1945). Here, he has fused successfully political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole. Finally, his long cherished dream of synchronising political purpose and artistic purpose has come true. He had reconciled himself to his ingrained likes. He declares that he has not written a novel for seven years but hope to write another fairly soon. He says that he was sceptic about the success and concludes that no book is a success. But now he claims by this time that he was very clear in his mind what kind of book he wanted to write.

In the last paragraph of *Why I Write*, he states that as he looked back the last page, he could see that the motive of his writing appeared to be with the sole regard to public interest. He did not want to leave this appearance he had made as the final impression. He pronounces that all writers are vain, selfish and lazy. The very bottom of their motives is shrouded in mystery, claims Orwell. He also compares writing a book like a chronic illness. It is his opinion that if one is not driven by some irresistible demon, one will never be engaged in writing. He equates that demon to the same instinct that makes a baby yell for attention. He agrees that one can write things readable only if one constantly writes with self-detachment. He also compares good prose with a window pane. He finds, at the same time, difficult to identify
which of his motives exactly is the strongest. But he is quite sure which motive deserves to be followed up. As he recapitulates his work, he could see that he had written ornate, lifeless and humbug wherever he lacked a political idea.

In *Charles Dickens*, Orwell rates Dickens very high among the writers; he calls him a novelist worth stealing. He quotes Chesterton's Introduction to Everyman's Edition of Dickens's work in which Chesterton credits him with his own brand of medievalism. Mr. T.A. Jackson has tried spiritedly to turn him into a bloodthirsty revolutionary. The Marxists and the Catholics both claim him as almost their own but both of them declare him as a champion of the poor. Again, Orwell quotes from *Nadezha Krupskaya* whose little book mentions how Dickens's dramatized version of *The Cricket on the Hearth* was so intolerable to Lenin because of its 'middle-class' sentimentality that he promptly walked out in the middle of the scene.

As regards Dickens's position, Orwell states that Krupskaya's statement on the 'middle-class' attitude might be a truer judgement than the statements of Chesterton's and Jackson's. Orwell also thinks that the dislike of Dickens by Lenin implied by Krupskaya's remark was something unusual. He agrees that plenty of people found Dickens unreadable but quickly defends him saying that very few people seem hostile towards the general spirit of his work.
To quote Orwell:

"Some years ago Mr. Bechhofer Roberts published a full-length attack on Dickens, in the form of a novel *This Side Idolatry*, but it was merely a personal attack, concerned for the most part with Dickens’s treatment of his wife." ¹

Orwell doubts that one in a thousand Dicken’s readers of Dickens would even hear about his private life and the attack on Dickens in *This Side Idolatry* does not invalidate his work.

"All that the book (*This Side Idolatry*)² demonstrated was a writer’s literary personality has little or nothing to do with his private character." ³

To defend Dickens, Orwell says that in private life he could be just what Mr. Bechhofer Roberts has painted, an insensitive egoist. But in his published work there is implied a personality quite different from this, a personality which has won him far more friends than enemies. Even if Dickens is a bourgeois at all, Orwell still calls him a subversive writer, a radical and a true rebel. To support his judgement, Orwell quotes Gissing who was also a radical himself. He disapproved this strain in Dickens and wished it were not there in him but it never occurred to him to deny it. Though Dickens attacked the English institutions ferociously through *Oliver Twist, Hard Times, Bleak House*, and *Little Dorrit*, he did it most discreetly and the very people he attacked swallowed him hook, line and sinker and as

¹ Orwell George, *The Penguin Essays of George Orwell* © The Estate of Sonia Bronell Orwell, 1984, p. 41
a result instead of earning hatred, he has managed to become a national institution. He compares the English public with an elephant which feels a blow with a walking stick as a delightful tickling. Even before Orwell was ten years old, his schoolmasters ladled down Dickens through Orwell’s throat. Orwell observed that Dickens seems to have succeed in attacking everybody without antagonising anybody. This makes him naturally wonder whether there was something unreal in Dickens’s attack upon society. To accurately define the exact position of Dickens socially, morally and politically, Orwell started by examining what Dickens was not.

Firstly, Orwell maintains that Dickens was not a ‘proletarian writer’ as both Messrs. Chesterton and Jackson seemed to imply. He asserts that Dickens does not write about the proletariat, too. According to Orwell, if one looks for the working classes especially in English fiction, all one finds is a hole. He qualified this statement by quoting the agricultural labourer which gets a fairly good showing in fiction. More recently, in fiction, criminals, derelicts and the working class intelligentsia have been written about a great deal. Orwell refutes that the ordinary town proletarian has always been ignored by novelists. If at all they are mentioned between the covers of a book, it is more often than not by means of derogatory remarks. Orwell states that the central action in Dickens’s stories almost invariably takes place in middle-class surroundings. On close scrutiny of his novels, Orwell asserts that the London bourgeoisie and their hangers-on-lawyers, clerks, tradesman, innkeepers, small craftsmen and servants are the real people in Dickens.

2. Brackets mine.
3. Orwell George, The Penguin Essays of George Orwell © The Estate of Sonia Brownell Orwell, p. 41
There is only one negligible agricultural worker Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* and there is no portrait of an industrial worker. Orwell presumes that Dickens’s best picture of a working-class family is the Plornishes in ‘Little Dorrit’ and he insists that Peggotty does not qualify as the working class and passes judgement that Dickens, on the whole is not successful with this type of character. Any ordinary reader, if asked to identify Dickens’s proletarian characters can vouchsafe that Bill Sikes, Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp fit the bill and a burglar, a valet and a drunken midwife are not exactly a representative cross-section of the English working class.

Secondly, Orwell states that Dickens is not a ‘revolutionary writer’ in the ordinary accepted sense of the word and defines his position. He argues that Dickens was not a hole-and-corner soul saver who never imagined that one can cure pimples by cutting them off. Dickens does not believe that the world will be perfect by the amendment of a few by-laws and abolitionment of a few anomalies. Orwell finds it worthy to compare Dickens with Charles Reade who was a much better informed man and in some ways more public-spirited than Dickens. Reade really hated the abuses he could understand and showed them in a series of novels. As a result, he, according to Orwell, helped to alter public opinion on a few minor but important points. But in every page of Dickens’s work ‘a consciousness that society is wrong somewhere at the root,’ is visible and one begins to grasp Dickens’s position when one asks ‘which root.’
Orwell sees Dickens's criticism of society as almost exclusively moral. He supports his observation by saying that though Dickens attacks the law, parliamentary government, the educational system, he does not give any constructive suggestion anywhere in his work. Orwell fully agrees that the business of a novelist, or a satirist is not necessarily to make constructive suggestions and stresses that Dickens's attitude is at bottom not even destructive. He does not see any clear sign that Dickens wants to overthrow the existing order nor does he believe that it would make very much difference if it were overthrown. The whole 'message' of Dickens, according to Orwell, is that if men would behave decently the world would be decent.

In his attempt to find a few characters who do behave decently, Orwell quotes the re-current Dickens figure, the Good Rich Man, a merchant, a superhumanly kind-hearted old gentleman who acts as the fairy godmother, who 'trots' to and fro, raising his employees' wages, patting children on the head, getting debtors out of jail. He is a pure dream figure, much further from real life. Orwell thinks that even Dickens must have reflected occasionally that anyone who was so anxious to give his money away would never have acquired it in the first place. Pickwick, the Cheerybles, old Chuzzlewit, Scrooge were the identical figures, the archetype good rich men in Dickens's novels. The good rich man fades out in his middle period books like 'A Tale of Two Cities,' and 'Great Expectations.' In fact 'Great Expectations' is an attack on patronage. Again Orwell finds Dickens despondent in his books of the fifties. By that time he had grasped the helplessness of decent men (well-meaning individuals) in a corrupt society.
But as Orwell has termed Dickens's criticism of society as moral, the strain in Dickens cannot be distinguished. Hence the return of the rich man in full glory in his last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend*. In this novel, Boffin comes back as a rich man solving everybody's problem by showering money in all directions. Orwell states that Boffin even *trot* like the Cheerybles and in many ways *Our Mutual Friend* is a successful return to the earlier manners and thoughts of Dickens that seem to have come in full circle. Orwell here emphasizes individual kindliness as the panacea for all the ills and defects of the world.

Orwell charges that Dickens does not care very much for child labour as he does not mention quite much about it in his novels. Dickens, according to Orwell, gives his focus on children suffering in schools rather than in factories. The one detailed account of child labour that Dickens gives is that of little David, washing bottles in Murdstone & Grinby's Warehouse in 'David Copperfield.' Orwell maintains that this description is autobiographical as Dickens himself had worked in Warren's blacking factory in the Strand, a reflection of his own life at the age of ten. Dickens wants to forget this bitter past and he even concealed it from his wife till long after they were married. He also partly feels the whole incident to be discreditable to his parents. The following statement supports Orwell's account of Dickens in 'David Copperfield:'
"It is a matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age. A child of excellent abilities and with strong powers of observation, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt bodily or mentally, it seems wonderful to me that nobody should have made any sign in my behalf. But none was made and I became, at ten years old, a little labouring hind in the service of Murdstone & Grinby. 4

Yet again Dickens has described the rough boys among whom he worked:

"No words can express the secret agony of my would as I sunk into the companionship ...... and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my bosom." 5

Apparently, in the above words, the speaker is Dickens and not David Copperfield. Orwell quite agrees with Dickens that a gifted child should not waste ten hours a day pasting labels on bottles, but he does not say that no child ought to be condemned to such a fate. It is purely and solely upto Dickens to hold a view of this kind.

In Orwell's opinion, Dickens despises politics and has no confidence that any good can come out of parliament. Dickens has a certain right to be a sceptic as he had once been a parliamentary shorthand writer and has seen its functioning at close quarters. It was also evident that Dickens was disillusioned with his experience as he is said to be slightly hostile to the most hopeful movement of his day, trade unionism. Orwell reveals that in

5. Ibid. p. 45
the novel 'Hard Times,' trade unionism is represented as something not much better than a racket and in Dickens's eyes, it is rather a virtue not to join the union. Dickens in fact wants the workers to be decently treated but he shows no sign for them to take their destiny into their own hands by violence.

In connection with revolution, Orwell says that Dickens deals with it in a narrower sense in two of his novels *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, and in the former novel it is a case of rioting rather than revolution. Orwell charges Dickens with having a kind of sadistic pleasure in describing scenes in which the dregs of the population behave with atrocious bestiality. In *A Tale of Cities*, Dickens deals with a revolution which was really about the Reign of Terror. The whole book is dominated by the guillotine-tumbrils thundering to and fro, bloody knives, heads bouncing into the basket, and sinister old women knitting gingerly and pensively as they watch. Dickens, according to Orwell, justifies the French Revolution and puts all the blame upon the French aristocracy for their snobbish behaviour that led to their well-deserved and fitting execution. The luxurious lives of the French aristocrats while the peasants were starving, the perverted and misused resources that should have made them prosperous had led to terrible Revolution. As Dickens sees it, the French Revolution is a product of the result of centuries of oppression that have made the French peasantry subhuman. Dickens sees revolution merely as a monster that is begotten by tyranny and always ends by devouring its own instrument. In Sydney Carton's vision at the foot of the guillotine, he foresees Defarge and the other leading spirits of the Terror, all perishing under the same knife-which, in
fact, was approximately what happened. Those who use the sword, perish by the sword. Orwell says that Dickens has no hesitation in terming revolution as a monster, while the apologists of any revolution are trying to minimize horrors, Dickens tends to blow them out of proportion. Thus he gives the impression of a frenzied massacre lasting for years, but the number of deaths in the whole of the Terror was a joke compared with Napoleon’s battles. Anyway, Orwell lauds Dickens for creating in mind a special, sinister vision which has succeeded in passing on to generations of readers. He quotes Dickens coinage of words especially ‘tumbril’ that has a special horror effect-that is only a sort of farm-card, as having a murderous sound.

Orwell prescribes education as the remedy for those who hate violence and have no faith in politics. Society perhaps may be too late to reform, but if a young one is caught and taught in the nick of time there is hope. This conviction is in Dickens as can be seen in his preoccupation with his childhood. Orwell, in this essay of his credits Dickens (as the best among English writers) with having written the most poignant novel about childhood. From his own experience as a nine year old reading the novel ‘David Copperfield,’ Orwell rates Dickens as the best novelist who has shown the power of entering into the child’s point of view. He is able to stand both inside and outside the child’s mind, in such a way that the same scene can be wild burlesque or sinister reality, according to the age at which one reads it. To describe the isolation of childhood and what he himself has seen and gone through, Orwell selects the incident in which David
Copperfield is suspected of eating the mutton chops. Similarly, the same sense of isolation is depicted in the eagerly believed outrageous lies of Pip in *Great Expectations* as he returns from Miss Havisham's house and how he is at a loss to describe what he has seen there. All the isolation of a childhood is there too. And Dickens seems to possess a perception of some kind of child psychology as he accurately records the mechanisms of the child's mind, its visualising tendency, its sensitiveness to certain kinds of impression. Orwell feels that Dickens is very sensitive to the sadistic sexual element in flogging which most of his contemporaries did not. He infers from 'David Copperfield' and 'Nicholas Nickleby' how mental cruelty to a child infuriates.

In Orwell's opinion, Dickens mauls every kind of education existing in England in his times except perhaps the Universities and the public schools. Yet his criticism is neither creative nor destructive. To him to stuff little boys with Greek until they burst and the use of wax-ended cane is absolute idiocy. He also finds useless the 'modern' schools of the fifties and sixties with its gritty insistence on 'facts.' Orwell presumes that Dickens wants a moralized version of the existing thing—the old type of school, minus caning, bullying, underfeeding and less Greek.

Orwell speaks of Dickens as utterly lacking in an idea of educational reforms. He indicts Dickens as able to imagine only the moral atmosphere of good school, but nothing further. Orwell points out that Doctor Strong's school to which David Copperfield goes after the escape from Murdstone & Grinby's no other than Salem House:
"Doctor Strong's was an excellent school, as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil. It was very gravely and decorously ordered, and on a sound system, with an appeal in everything, to the honour and good faith of the boys ... which worked wonders. We all felt that we had a part in the management of the place, and in sustaining its character and dignity. Hence we soon became warmly attached to it - I am sure I did for one, and I never knew, in all my time, of any boy being otherwise-and learnt with a good will, desiring to do credit. We had noble games out of hours, and plenty of liberty, but even then, as I remember, we were well spoken of in the town, and rarely did any disgrace, by our appearance or manner, to the reputation of Doctor Strong and Doctor Strong's boys."  

What actually the boys 'learnt with a good will' Orwell was quite sure it was Doctor Blimber's curriculum, a little watered down. In spite of his attitude to society that is everywhere implied in Dickens's novels, it shocks and surprises Orwell that Dickens sent his eldest son to Eton and sent all his other children through the ordinary education mill. Gissing presumes that Dickens may have done this because of his painful consciousness of being under-educated. Orwell feels that here Gissing says this so as he is influenced by his own love of classical learning and defends Dickens that though he had little or no formal education he lost nothing by missing it, and on the whole seems to have been aware of this.

Orwell presumes that in every attack Dickens makes upon society, he is always pointing to a change of spirits rather than a change of structure. His approach is always along the moral plane. What Dickens essentially is always

6. Ibid p. 72
saying is that it is useless to change institution without 'a change of heart.'

There is more to Dickens's position otherwise he might be no more than a
cheer-up writer, a reactionary humbug. Orwell argues that a 'change of heart'
is in fact the alibi of the people who do not wish to endanger the status quo.

He defends that Dickens is not a humbug except in minor matters and the
strongest single impression one gets from his book is that of a hatred of
tyrranny. He reiterates that Dickens is not in the accepted sense a
revolutionary writer because it is certain that a merely moral criticism of
society may not be real revolutionary stuff. Orwell here defines revolution as
turning things upside down-as the politico-economic criticism which is
fashionable at that moment. He declares that Blake was not a politician, but
there is more understanding of the nature of capitalist society in a poem like
'I wander through each charter'd street' than in those quarters of Socialist
literature. And progress is a reality but it is slow and invariably
disappointing. If a tyrant is overthrown at all, a new tyrant is always there to
take over. It is a vicious circle. Therefore, in Orwell's opinion, there are
always two tenable viewpoints. One is how to improve human nature. And
the next to improve is the system. Both are complementary to each other as
they both are interdependent. Orwell says that these two appeal to different
individuals and they probably show a tendency to alternate in point of time.
The moralist and the revolutionary are constantly undermining each other.
The Holy Scriptures say that man is not made for the Sabbath, but the
Sabbath is made for man and the Son of God is also Lord of the Sabbath.

Similarly, revolution is meant for the moral human beings. But when
revolution is in the hands of immoral, senseless human beings, it tends to be
bloody and atrocious. As Orwell has said earlier, revolution, if at all is to turn things upside down; there were people in the early 50 A.D. who were termed as people who have turned the world aside down. They are none other than the twelve disciples of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Marx had exploded a hundred tons of dynamite beneath the moralist position and we are still living in the echo of that tremendous crash. Mahatma Gandhi the Father of the Nation effectively used the Beatitudes to blast the British out of the subcontinent. He used non-violence that was violent enough to drive the mighty British out from India, and the other sub-continents. We are still living in a very violent volatile world despite achieving freedom for fifty years. Orwell says that a retaliation for Marx’s explosion of hundred tons of dynamite beneath the moralist position has been planned somewhere to blast Marx at the moon with fresh dynamite. He is very gloomy that yet another like Marx or somebody will come back with more dynamite. And thus the process will continue.

Meanwhile the central problem of how to prevent power abuse remains unsolved. Dickens’s solution is for man to behave decently for a decent world may not be a humbug. Mahatma Gandhi turned the other cheek and thus turned India and the sub-continent upside down. His weapon is non-violence, taken from the Sermon on the Mount by the Lord Jesus Christ. Revolutionists may do well to follow suit and change their own hearts and nature before trying to change the world with guns and bombs. The spirit of man can never be shattered by bombs. This is one of Orwell’s main contentions.
In the second part of his criticism of Dickens, Orwell explains the social origin of Dickens. His father was a clerk in government service and he had connections with both the army and the navy through his mother. From the age of nine he was brought up in London in commercial surroundings in an atmosphere of struggling poverty. He belonged to the small urban bourgeoisie mentally. Orwell finds him an exceptionally fine specimen of the bourgeoisie with all the points highly developed. And that makes him so interesting to Orwell. Orwell points out H.G. Wells as the nearest modern equivalent of Dickens. Arnold Bennet may also be grouped with them but he was a midlander with an industrial and Anglican background. According to Orwell, the small urban bourgeoisie sees the world through middle-class eyes and everything outside those limits is comical and that is the great disadvantage and advantage of the bourgeoisie. The small urban bourgeoisie has no contact with neither industry nor the soil or with the governing classes. Wells’s novels contain his hatred of the aristocrat and his indifference to the proletarian. Wells blames kings, landowners, priests, nationalists, soldiers and scholars for all human ills. Orwell maintains that Dickens lived in a period when the bourgeoisie was really a rising class and he displays this characteristic less strongly than Wells. He is vaguely on the side of the working class and has a sort of generalized sympathy with them because they are oppressed. But he does not in reality know much about them and they come into his books chiefly as servants and comic servants. He loathes the aristocrat and unlike Wells, loathes the big bourgeoisie as well. He is also not friendly with the land-owning class and officers. All through his books he handles policemen only with friendliness.
The clan Dickens belonged to by adoption was suddenly growing rich after a couple centuries of obscurity. It was a class with no tradition of public service and not much tradition of usefulness as it had grown up mainly in the big towns out of contact with agriculture and politically impotent. In this class's experience, government was something which either interfered or persecuted. This new moneyed class is completely irresponsible and they see everything in terms of individual success. They are hardly conscious of the existence of the community. This may be compared to the present scenario of the North Eastern states and the post-British period in India. Every Dick and Harry indulged in money grabbing. Orwell exonerates Dickens from this blame of irresponsibility; still at the back of his mind there is usually a half-belief that the whole apparatus of government is unnecessary. Orwell finds this half belief of Dickens as reflective of a narrowness of vision but it is still a great advantage to him in one way as it is fatal for a caricaturist to see too much.

Orwell refutes the accusation that Dickens could not paint a gentleman and says that this allegation was quite absurd. He argues that what Dickens says against the 'gentleman' class is seldom very damaging and quotes Sir Mulbery Hawk as an example of a wretched attempt at the wicked-baronet type. Orwell prefers Harthouse in 'Hard Times' as a better example but still argues that Harthouse would be only an ordinary achievement for Trollope or Thackeray. Orwell says that Trollope's has the great advantage of having a foot in each of the two moral camps. In Orwell's opinion, Thackeray's outlook in some ways is very similar to Dickens's as he identified with the
card-playing debt-bilking aristocracy. Thackeray produces comparatively subtle types viz., Major Pendennis and Rawdon Crawley. Major Pendennis is a shallow old snob who would not sign a dishonoured cheque. Rawdon Crawley is a thick-headed ruffian who sees nothing wrong in living for years by swindling tradesmen and who also will sign a dud cheque. But Rawdon would not desert a friend in a tight corner. Both of them will behave well on the battle-field. Orwell observes that at the end Major Pendennis is regarded with a kind of amused tolerance and Rawdon with something approaching respect. One very striking thing Orwell mentions about Dickens is the latter’s lack of vulgar nationalism with special reference to the time he lived in. He justifies his allegation by citing how all the English children were brought up to despise southern European races, and history as taught in schools was mainly a list of battles won by England. Orwell charges Thackeray as entertaining this outlook very strongly though there are moments when he sees through it and laughs at it. The famous victory at Waterloo by the English is said to have been firmly fixed in his mind. In his books, George Orwell says, one occasionally comes in with some references to it. Thackeray sees the English as invincible because of their tremendous physical strength mainly because of eating beef. Besides, Thackeray has an illusion that the English are larger than other people as he was larger than most people and hence his capability to write as follows:
"I say to you that you are better than a Frenchman. I would lay even money that you who are reading this are more than five feet seven in height, and weight eleven stone, while a Frenchman is five feet 4 in height and does not weigh nine. The Frenchman after his meal has his soup a dish of vegetables, where you have one of meat. You are a different animal and a superior animal - a French beating animal (the history of hundreds of years has shown you to be) etc., etc." 7

Orwell claims that similar passages are scattered all through Thackeray's works. Dickens would never be guilty of anything of this kind of vulgar nationalism. And Orwell hails it as the mark of a real largeness of mind which from his negative, rather unhelpful political attitude. No doubt, he is very much an Englishman, but is hardlyware of it. Unlike Thackeray, the thought of being an Englishman does not thrill him. Imperialist feeling and discernable views on foreign politics are absent from him and he is untouched by the military tradition. He is much nearer to the Nonconformist tradesman temperamentally who despises the 'red-coats,' and thinks that war is wicked. Orwell thinks Dickens's view is a one-eyed view, but agrees with him that war is indeed wicked. Dickens hardly writes about wars, the reason. Orwell presumes is that the subject would not strike him as interesting and he would not regard a battlefields a place where anything worth settling could be settled. Orwell accounts this view as one up to the lower-middle-class, puritan mentality.

7. Orwell George, 'Charles Dickens, Collected Essays, p. 92
In the third part of *Charles Dickens*, Orwell maintains that though Dickens admired the working classes, he does not wish to resemble them. He is quite genuinely on the side of the poor against the rich, but it would be next door impossible for him not to think of the working-class exterior as a stigma. Orwell quotes one of Tolstoy's fables in which the peasants of a certain village judge every stranger who arrives from the state of his own hands. If his palms are hard from work, they let him in; if his palms are soft, out he goes. This would be hardly intelligible to Dickens as all his heroes have soft hands.

In the fourth part of *Charles Dickens*, Orwell states that though Dickens never writes about agriculture, he writes endlessly about food. He terms Dickens a cockney and as London is the centre of the earth so is the belly the centre of the body. Orwell maintains that London is a city of consumers who are deeply civilized but not primarily useful and argues that a thing that strikes one who looks below the surface or Dickens's book is that, as 19th century novelists go, he is rather ignorant. He knows very little about the way things really happen Orwell says that this statement might seem rather untrue at first sight and needs some qualification.

According to Orwell, Dickens's view of life was 'low life' - life in a debtor's prison and he was a popular novelist who was able to write about ordinary people. This was a characteristic of all the English novelists of the nineteenth-century. They felt at home in the world they lived in, which, incidentally provides a contrast with modern writers who are hopelessly
isolated and that the typical modern novel is a novel about a novelist. Orwell cites Joyce as an example who spends a decade or so patiently to make contact with the common man and finally his common man turns out to be a Jew, and a bit of highbrow at that. But Dickens is at least successful in introducing the common motives, love, ambition, avarice, vengeance and so forth. However, he does not noticeably write about 'work.' In his novels, anything in the nature of work happens off stage. Orwell stresses that the only one of Dickens's heroes who has a plausible profession is David Copperfield who is first a shorthand writer and then a novelist like Dickens himself. With most of the others, the way they earn their living is vague and much is left in the background. The reason for this is that Dickens knows very little about the profession his characters are supposed to follow. Dickens could never follow up the details of parliamentary elections and Stock Exchange rackets as Trollope could. He takes refuge in vagueness, or in satire as soon as he has to deal with trade, finance, industry, politics or even with legal processes, about which actually he must have known a good deal.

The limitations of Dickens mentioned above partly should explain the needless ramifications of his novels, the awful Victorian plot.' Of course not all his novels are alike in this. Orwell analyses his novels and finds A Tale of Two Cities and Hard Times as very good and simple stories though both of them are always rejected as 'not like Dickens,' and Orwell insists that Nicholas Nickleby, Oliver Twist, Martin Chuzzlewit and Our Mutual Friend are always existing round a framework of melodrama. And the last thing
anyone remembers about these books is their central story. On the other hand
Orwell supposes that no one has ever read these novels without carrying the
memory of individual pages to the day of his death. Dickens sees human
beings with the most intensive vividness, but he sees them always in private
life, as Characters, not as functional members of a society; that is to say he
sees them statically. Orwell opines that Pickwick Papers is the greatest
success of Dickens, which is not a story at all, but merely a series of sketches;
there is little attempt at development - the characters simply go on and on,
behaving like idiots, in a kind of eternity. As soon as he tries to bring his
characters into action, the melodrama begins. He cannot make the action
revolve around their ordinary occupations; hence the crossword puzzle of
coincidence, intrigues, murders, disguises, buried wills, long-lost brothers,
etc. etc.

Again, Orwell emphasizes that it would be quite absurd to call Dickens
a vague or merely melodramatic writer. Because much that he wrote is
extremely factual and he has probably never been equalled in the power of
evoking visual images. When he has once described something you see it for
the rest of your life. But in a way the concreteness of his vision is a sign of
what he is missing. Orwell says that the merely casual onlooker always sees
the outward appearance, the non-functional, the surface of things and no one
who is really involved in the landscape ever sees the landscape. Dickens can
wonderfully describe an 'appearance' but does not often describe a 'process.'
The vivid pictures that he succeeds in leaving in one's memory are nearly
always the pictures of things seen in leisure moments and everything is seen
from the consumer-angle, such as in the coffee rooms of Country inns or through the windows of a stage coach, the kinds of things he notices are insigns, brass-door-knockers, painted jugs, the interior of shops and jugs, the interior of shops and private houses, clothes, faces and, above all food.

Orwell has passed a very harsh judgement on Dickens's work and calls it purposeless. With the doubtful exception of David Copperfield (who is a reflection of merely Dickens himself) one cannot point to a single one of his central characters who is primarily interested in his job. "Orwell contends that most of Dickens's heroes work in order to make a living and then marry the heroine. They do not feel at all a passionate interest in one particular subject. In any case, in the typical Dickens' novel; the deus ex machina enters with a bag of gold in the last chapter and the hero is absolved from further struggle. Orwell continues to argue against Dickens's novel that 'The feeling, this is what I came into the world to do. Everything is uninteresting I will do this even if it means starvation,' which turns men of differing temperaments into scientists, inventors, artists, priests, explorers and revolutionaries the motif is almost entirely absent from Dickens's books." 8 He himself worked like a slave and believed in his work as few novelists have ever done. But Orwell presumes that there seems to be no calling except novel-writing towards which he can imagine this kind of devotion. And, after all, it is natural enough, considering his rather negative attitude towards society. In the last resort there is nothing he admires except common decency. Science

is dull and machinery is cruel and ugly. Business is for ruffians like Bounderby and as for politics, leave it to the Tite Barnacles. In Orwell’s view, really there is no objective in Dickens’s novels except to marry the heroine, settle down, live slovenly and be kind.

In the fifth part of Charles Dickens from his Collected Essays, Orwell is somewhat apprehensive that any one who is a lover of Dickens may be probably angry by this time with his treatment and judgement of Dickens. He confesses that all along he has been discussing Dickens simply in terms of his ‘message,’ while ignoring his literary qualities. Orwell is convinced that every writer, especially every novelist has a ‘message’ whether he admits it or not, and the minutest details of his work are influenced by it. He maintains that all art is propaganda and neither Dickens nor the majority of Victorian novelists would have thought of denying this. But on the other hand, Orwell argues again that not all propaganda is art. He reiterates that Dickens is one of those writers who are felt to be worth stealing and Orwell claims that he has been stolen by Marxists, by Catholics and, above all, by Conservatives. The question Orwell poses before all is - What is there to be stolen and why anyone should care about Dickens and why he himself cares about Dickens.

Orwell himself does not find it easy to answer the above questions. He says that as a rule, an aesthetic preference is either something inexplicable or it is so corrupted by non-aesthetic motives as to make one wonder whether the whole of literary criticism is not a huge network of humbug. The complicating factor he mentions in Dickens’s case happens to be one of those
great authors’ who are ladled down everyone’s throat in childhood. Orwell says that at the time of ladling it causes rebellion and vomiting, but it may have different after-effects in later life. He quotes for example that nearly everyone feels a sneaking affection for the patriotic poems that he learned by heart as a child and what he enjoys is not much the poems themselves as the memories they call up. And with Dickens the same forces of association are at work and Orwell presumes that there are copies of one or two of Dickens’s books lying about in an actual majority of English homes. Many children are familiar with his characters even before they can even read and thus Orwell finds on the whole Dickens as quite fortunate in his illustrations. Orwell states that a thing that is absorbed as early as that does not come up against critical judgement. And when one thinks of this, one thinks of all that is bad and silly in Dickens—the set-iron ‘plots,’ the characters who don’t come off, the ‘longuers,’ the paragraphs in blank verse, the awful pages of ‘pathos.’ And a thought arises in Orwell’s mind when he says he likes Dickens; does he simply mean that he likes thinking about his childhood? Is Dickens merely an institution then? If he is an institution at all, there is no getting away from. For how often does one really think about any writer. Even a writer one cares for, is a difficult thing to decide on but Orwell feels that he should doubt whether any one who has actually read Dickens can go a week without remembering him in one context or another. He acclaims that whether one approves of him or not he is there like the Nelson Column and at any moment some scene or character, which may come from some book one cannot even remember the name of, is liable to drop into one’s mind. To
a surprising extent all his characters have entered even into the minds of people who do not care about it, such names and terms like Micawber's letters! Winkle in the witness box! Mrs Gamp! Mrs Wititerly and Sir Tumley Snuffim! Mantalini! Jerry Cruncher! Pecksniff! etc. It amazes Orwell that even people who affect to despise him quote him unconsciously.

Again Orwell hails Dickens as a writer who can be imitated up to a certain point and has been plagiarised quite shamelessly for instance, in the Elephant and Castle version of Sweeney Todd. Yet Orwell claims that what has been imitated is simply a tradition that Dickens himself took from earlier novelists and developed the cult of the character i.e., eccentricity. The thing that cannot be imitated is his fertility of invention, which is invention not so much of characters, still less of 'situations,' as of turns of phrase and concrete details. The outstanding mark of Dickens's writing is the 'unnecessary detail.' Orwell quotes 'the bared shoulder of mutton and potatoes under it' for the example and argues that the 'potatoes under' does not advance the story. And this kind, Orwell thinks takes Dickens's story telling a long time. Orwell also quotes Sam Weller's story of the obstinate patient in chapter XLIV of 'The Pickwick Papers.' Dickens here is said to have plagiarised consciously or unconsciously some ancient Greek writer. Orwell says that what the Greeks takes to tell the story in only about six lines Dickens's Sam Weller takes round about a thousand words!
Orwell names *The Pickwick Papers*, *Hard Times*, and *A Tale of Two Cities* as Dickens's most successful books and not necessarily his best books. In Orwell's opinion, as a novelist, Dickens's natural fertility greatly hampers him, because the burlesque which he is never able to resist is constantly breaking into what ought to be serious situations. He gives the opening chapter of 'Great Expectations' where, the escaped convict Magwitch captured the six-year old Pip in the churchyard as a good example of burlesque incident. Orwell feels that in this particular incident Dickens has simply yielded to temptations as no starving and hunted man would speak in the least as Magwitch did. Moreover Orwell argues that the speech shows a remarkable knowledge of the way in which a child's mind works, its actual words are quite out of tune with what is to follow, it turns Magwitch into a sort of pantomime wicked uncle, or, if one sees him through the child's eye, into an appalling monster. Later in the book he is to be represented as neither, and his exaggerated gratitude, on which the plot turns, is to be incredible because of his speech at the churchyard. Orwell states that as is usual, Dickens's imagination has overwhelmed him. The picturesque details were too good to be left out. Even with characters who are more of a piece than Magwitch, he is liable to be tripped up by some seductive phrase. For instance, Mr. Murdstone is in the habit of ending David Copperfield's lesson every morning with a dreadful sum in arithmetic. 'If I go into a cheesemonger's shop, and buy five thousand double-Gloucester cheeses at four pence half penny each, present payment, it always begins. Here once again, Orwell finds the typical Dickens detail, the double-Gloucester cheeses. But he contends that it is far too human a touch for Murdstone; he would
have made five thousand cash boxes. Every time this note is struck, Orwell says that the unity of the novel suffers. Not that it matters very much, because Dickens is obviously a writer whose parts are greater than his wholes. Orwell does not spare him and continues to rant that Dickens is all fragments, all details-rotten architecture, but wonderful gargoyles—and never better than when he is building up some character who will later on will be forced to act inconsistently.

Again Orwell states that as a matter of fact it is not usual to urge against Dickens that he makes his characters behave inconsistently. Generally on the contrary he is accused of doing just the opposite. His characters are supposed to be mere ‘types,’ each crudely representing some single trait and fitted with a kind of label by which one recognises him. The usual accusation that Dickens is ‘only a caricaturist’ does him more and less than justice. Orwell maintains that Dickens did not think of himself as a caricaturist and he was constantly setting into action characters who ought to have been purely static. Rowel selects Squares, Macabre, Miss Moocher, Egg, Skimpily, Pecksniff and many others who are finally involved in Plots where they are out of place and where they behave incredibly. In Orwell’s view, the characters start off magic-lantern slides and they end by getting mixed up in a third rate movie. Sometimes one can put one’s finger on a single sentence in which the original illusion is destroyed. Orwell contends that as a rule, the plot in which Dickens’s characters get entangled is not particularly credible, but at least it makes some pretence at reality, whereas the world to which they belong is a never-never land, a kind of eternity. But just here one sees
that 'only caricaturist' is not really a condemnation. The fact that Dickens is always thought of as a caricaturist, although he was constantly trying to be something else, is in Orwell's opinion, the surest mark of his genius. The monstrosities that he has created are still remembered as monstrosities, in spite of getting mixed up in would-be probable melodrama. Their first impact is so vivid that nothing that comes afterwards effaces it. As with the people one knew in childhood, one seems always to remember them in one particular attitude, doing one particular thing. Mrs. Squeers is always ladling out brimstone and treacle. Mrs. Gummidge is always weeping, Mrs. Gargr is always banging her husband's head against the wall, Mrs. Jellyby is always scribbling tracts while her children fall into the area-and there they all are, fixed forever like little twinkling miniatures printed on snuff-box lids, completely fantastic and incredible, and yet somehow more solid and infinitely more memorable than the efforts of serious novelists. Orwell opines that even by the standards of his time, Dickens was an exceptionally artificial writer and quotes Ruskin's remark of Dickens that the latter 'chose to work in a circle of fire.' Orwell further states that Dickens's characters are even more distorted and simplified than Smollet's. Yet Orwell feels that there are no rules in novel writing, and 'for any work of art there is only one test worth bothering about and that is survival.' By this test Dickens's characters have succeeded, and even people who remember them hardly think of them as human beings. They are nothing but monsters but at any rate they exist. But there is all the same the disadvantage in writing about a monster. It amounts to this that it is not only certain moods that Dickens can speak to. There are large areas of the human mind that he never touches. There is no poetic feeling anywhere in his books, and no genuine tragedy; and even
sexual love is almost outside his scope. Still Orwell argues that Dickens's books are not so sexless as they are sometimes declared to be, and considering the time in which he was writing, he is reasonably frank. But again Orwell refutes that there is not a trace in Dickens of the feeling that one finds in *Manon Lescaut, Salambo, Carmen, Wuthering Heights*. According to Aldous Huxley, D.H. Lawrence once remarked that Balzac was 'a gigantic dwarf', and Orwell wants to say the same thing of Dickens. He claims that there are whole worlds which Dickens either knows nothing about or does not wish to mention and except in a rather round about way, one cannot learn very much from Dickens. And to say this is, in Orwell's opinion, to think almost immediately of the great Russian writer Tolstoy. The question here one is posed with is this; why is it that Tolstoy's grasp seems to be so much larger than Dickens's—why is it that he seems able to tell you so much more about yourself? Orwell's contention is that it is not that Tolstoy is more gifted, or even, in the last analysis, more intelligent. It is all because he is writing about people who are growing. His characters are struggling to make their souls, whereas Dickens's characters are already finished and perfect. Orwell opines that Dickens's people are present far more often and far more vividly than Tolstoys', but always in a single unchangeable attitude, like pictures or pieces of furniture. Orwell further argues that one cannot hold an imaginary conversation with a Dickens character or as can one with Pierre Bezukhov. And this is not merely because of Tolstoys' greater seriousness, for there are also comic characters that one can imagine oneself talking to Bloom, for instance. It is because Dickens's characters have no mental life. They say perfectly the thing that they have to say, but they cannot be conceived as talking about something else. They never learn, never
speculate. Orwell presumes that the most meditative of Dickens's character is Paul Dombey, and his thoughts are mush. Here is a question whether it means that Tolstoy's novels are better than Dickens's or not. As a matter of fact Orwell finds it absurd to make such comparisons in terms of 'better' and 'worse.' If he were forced to compare Tolstoy with Dickens, he admitted that he would say Tolstoy's appeal will probably be wider in the long run. The reason he states is that Dickens is scarcely intelligible outside the English-speaking culture. On the other hand, Orwell again expresses that Dickens is able to reach simple people, while Tolstoy is not. Tolstoys' characters can cross a frontier whereas Dickens's can be portrayed on a cigarette card.

In the last part of Charles Dickens, Orwell states that Dickens is not merely a comic writer and adds had he been merely a comic writer, the chances are that no one would remember his name. According to Orwell, the thing that drove Dickens forward into a form of art for which he was really not suited, and at the same time caused us to remember him, was simply the fact that he was a moralist with the consciousness of 'having something to say.' He is always preaching a sermon, and that is the final secret of his inventiveness. Orwell maintains that one can only create if one can care. Types like Squeers and Micawber could not have been produced by a hack writer looking for something to be funny about. A joke worth laughing at always has an idea behind it, and usually a subversive idea. Dickens is able to go on being funny because he is in revolt against authority, and authority is always there to be laughed at.
Orwell terms the radicalism of Dickens as of the vaguest kind, and yet says that one always knows that it is there. This Orwell calls as the difference between being a moralist and a politician. Dickens has no constructive suggestions, not even a clear grasp of the nature of the society he is attacking, only an emotional perception that something is wrong. All he can finally say, according to Orwell is, 'Behave decently,' which is not necessarily so shallow as it sounds. Orwell says that most revolutionaries are potential Tories, because they imagine that everything can be put right by altering the shape of society, and once that change is affected, as it sometimes is, they see no need for any other. Dickens has not this kind of mental coarseness. The vagueness of his discontent is the mark of its permanence. What he is talking about is not this or that institution, but, as Chesterton puts it, 'an expression on the human face.' Roughly speaking, his morality is the Christian morality, but in spite of his Anglican upbringing he was essentially a Bible-Christian, as he took care to make plain when writing his will. Orwell feels that he cannot be properly described as a religious man. He 'believed' undoubtedly, but religion in the devotional sense does not have entered much into his thoughts. Where he is Christian is in his quasi-instinctive siding with the oppressed against the oppressors. As a matter of course he is on the side of the underdog, always and everywhere. To carry this to its logical conclusion one has got to change sides when the underdog becomes the upper dog. In fact Dickens tends to do this also. He is said to loathe the Catholic church, but as soon as the Catholics are persecuted he is on their side. He also loathes the aristocratic class even more, but as soon as they are overthrown his sympathies swing around. Orwell stresses that whenever Dickens departs from this emotional attitude, he goes astray.
Orwell maintains that no grown-up persons can read Dickens without his limitations, and yet there does remain his native generosity of mind, which acts as a kind of anchor and nearly always keeps him where he belongs. It is probably the central secret of his popularity and also of his greatness. A good-tempered antinomianism rather of Dickens’s type is one of the marks of western popular culture. Orwell feels that Dickens is popular chiefly because he was able to express in a comic, simplified and therefore memorable form the native decency of the common man. Orwell opines that Dickens voiced a code which was and on the whole still is believed in, even by people who violate it. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why he could be both read by working people (a thing that has happened to no other novelist of his stature) and was buried in Westminster Abbey. It is Orwell’s opinion that when one reads any strongly individual piece of writing, one has the impression of seeing a face somewhere behind the page. It is not necessarily the actual face of the writer and Orwell feels that very strongly with Swift, with Defoe, with Fielding, Stendhal, Thackeray, Flaubert and though in several cases he does not know how those people looked like and does not want to know. He feels that what one sees is the face that the writer ought to have. In the case of Dickens Orwell sees a face that is not quite the face of Dickens’s photographs, though it resembles it. He sees the face of a man of about forty, with a small beard and a high colour. He is laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity, Orwell could see the face of a man who is continuously and relentlessly fighting against something. And the face is of a man who is generously angry.
The third critical essay of George Orwell that we have selected for textual scrutiny is *Inside the Whale*.

Orwell relates *Tropic of Cancer* (1935) by Henry Miller more to the mental atmosphere of the twenties than to the thirties. He said the novel was greeted with a cautious praise obviously contained in some cases by fear of seeming to enjoy pornography. Those who praised the novel included T.S. Eliot, Herbert Read, Aldous Huxley, John dos Passos and Ezra Pound. *Tropic of Cancer* is autobiographical in the form of a novel as Miller himself would appear to insist on. It is a story of the American Paris with the unusual lines without money. During the boom years, when dollars were plentiful and the exchange value of the franc was very low, Orwell puts the figure of impostor painters at as many as 3000 plus writers, students, dilettante, sight-seers, debauches, and plain idlers who invaded Paris. Then as fast as they appeared, they vanished again and the slump descended like another Ice Age and the huge cafes which were filled ten years ago till the small hours by hordes of shrieking poseurs have turned into darkened tombs in which there are not even any ghosts.

When *Tropic of Cancer* was published, Orwell said that the Italians were marching into Abyssinia and Hitler’s concentration camps were packed to capacity. Then the intellectual foci of the world were Rome, Moscow and Berlin. Orwell doubted whether at that moment a novel of outstanding value was likely to be written about American dead-beats cadging drinks in the Latin Quarter. He asserts that a novelist who simply disregards the major
public events of the moment is either a footler or a plain idiot. At face value, from a mere account of *The Tropic of Cancer*, from a mere account of the subject matter, it may appear like a naughty-naughty left over from the twenties, Orwell denies this presumption by most people by stating nearly everyone who read it saw at once that it was nothing of that kind but rather a very small book. To what extent it is remarkable is difficult to answer but Orwell attempts to describe the impression ‘Tropic of Cancer’ has left on his mind in the following way.

When he first opened it he was not impressed as it was full of unprintable words. He believes that most people would feel the same as he feels about it. Nevertheless after a lapse of sometime the atmosphere of the book and its innumerable details seemed to linger in his mind and memory in a very peculiar way. As time passed, *Tropic of Cancer* tended to be much more vividly present in his mind than it had been when he first read it. Yet Orwell maintains that after another year as he read again another book of Miller *Black Spring* many passages from *Tropic of Cancer* had also rooted themselves in his memory. Without any doubt he feels that these books leave a sort of flavour behind them and ‘create a world of their own.’ Orwell terms this kind of books as ‘good bad books’ and grouped together *Raffles* and *Sherlock Holmes* with them. He also calls *Wuthering Heights* and *The house with the Green Shutters* as perverse and morbid books. There is, in Orwell’s opinion, time and again a certain novel which opens up a new world not by revealing what is strange, but by revealing what is familiar. For example, of Ulysses, he says:
“One thing truly remarkable about *Ulysses* is the commonplaceness of its material.”

As far as Joyce is concerned, Orwell states that he is a kind of poet and also an elephantine pedant, but his real achievement has been to get the familiar on to paper. He views that it is a matter of ‘daring’ just as much of technique and Joyce dared to expose the imbecilities of the inner mind, and in doing so, he discovered America which was under everybody’s nose. He also states that there is a whole world of stuff which one has lived with since childhood, stuff which one is supposed to have lived since childhood, stuff which one is supposed to be of its nature incommunicable and somebody has to manage to communicate it. The effect is to break down, at any rate momentarily the solitude in which the human being lives and this Joyce has managed to do in *Ulysses*. Orwell continues his deliberation by saying that when one reads certain passages in *Ulysses* one feels that Joyce’s mind and one’s mind are at one, and that one knows all about one though one has never heard one’s name, and that there exists some world outside time and space in which one and Joyce are together. Orwell thus maintains that though in other ways Miller does not resemble Joyce, still there is a touch of this quality in him.

But, says Orwell,

“This touch is not everywhere and especially ‘Black Spring’ tends to slide away into the squishy universe of the Surrealist or into mere verbage.”

2. Ibid. p. 109
Yet Orwell maintains that if one reads Miller for five pages to ten pages, one feels a peculiar relief that comes not as much from understanding as from ‘being understood.’ One feels that Miller knows all about him and had written that especially for him. It is like a friendly American voice without humbug and moral purposes, merely an assumption that we all are alike. It appears that one has got away from the lies and simplifications, the stylized, marionette-like quality of ordinary fiction, even quite good fiction, and is dealing with recognisable experiences of human beings.

Notably, Orwell states that Miller is writing about the man in the street and he thinks it as a pity that the street should be full of brothels. This, Orwell accounts for as the penalty of leaving one’s land that means transferring one’s roots into a shallower soil and exile and he also presumes that exile is more damaging to a novelist than to a painter or even a poet because its effect is to take him out of contact with working life and narrow down his range to the street, the cafe, the church, the brothel and the studio. On the whole, Orwell judges that in Miller’s books, one reads about the people drinking, talking, meditating and fornicating and he feels sorry that Miller has failed to describe the other set of people working, marrying and bringing up children. There is the swarming Irish-infested New York of O. Henry period in ‘Black Spring’ but Orwell gives the Paris scene as the best with the utterly worthless social type, the drunks and dead-beats of the cafes that are handled with a feeling for character and a mastery of technique that are unapproachable in any other novel of that period. Orwell says,
“All of them are not credible but completely familiar; you have the feeling that all their adventures have happened to yourself. Not that there are anything very startling in the way of adventure.”

To justify and qualify the above statement, Orwell quotes from the following extract:

“Henry gets a job with a melancholy Indian student, gets another job at a dreadful French school during a cold snap when the lavatories are frozen solid, goes on drinking bouts in La Havre with his friend Collins, the sea captain, goes to brothels where there are wonderful Negresses, talks with his friend Van Norden, the novelist, who has got the great novel of the world in his head but can never bring himself to writing about it. His friend Karl, on the verge of starvation, is picked up by a wealthy widow who wishes to marry him. There is an interminable, Hamlet like conversation in which Karl tries to decide which is worse, being hungry or sleeping with an old woman. In great detail he describes his visits to the widow, how he went to the hotel dressed in his best, how before going in he neglected to urinate, so that the whole evening was one long crescendo of torment, etc., etc.

And after all none of it is true, and the widow doesn’t even exist-Karl has simply invented her in order to make himself seem important. Orwell says that more or less the whole book is in this vein and he really wonders why the monstrous trivialities are so engrossing and he stresses that it is because of the deep familiarity and the feeling that these things are happening to one that makes the monstrous trivialities so engrossing. Besides, Orwell opines that one has this feeling because someone has chosen to drop the
Geneva language of the ordinary novel and drag the *real-politik* (sic) of the inner mind into the open. And in Miller’s case it is not so much a question of exploring the mechanisms of the mind as of owning up to everyday facts and everyday emotions. Orwell presumes that an actual majority of the ordinary people do really speak and behave in just the way that is recorded in *Black Spring*. One thing very rare, in Orwell’s view is the callous coarseness with which the characters in *Tropic of Cancer* talk but the way they talk is extremely common in real life and he has claimed it to have heard it often from people who were not even aware they were talking coarsely. He states that *Tropic of Cancer* is an old man’s book as Miller was already in his forties when it was published and also rates that it is one of those books that are slowly matured in poverty and obscurity, by people who know what they have got to do and therefore are able to wait. He also rates the prose style as astonishing and in parts even much better than the style one encounters in *Black Spring*.

Orwell feels quite unfortunate for his limitations to quote unprintable words that occur almost everywhere but he feels that if one gets hold of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Black Spring* and especially reads the first hundred pages it gives one an idea that something can still be done with English, with English prose even at this last date. In the above two mentioned novels, Orwell sees that English is treated as a spoken language, but spoken without fear of rhetoric or of the unusual or poetical words. He sees the return of the adjective in the novels - flowing, swelling prose with rhythms in it, something quite different from the flat, cautious statements and snack-bar dialects that are in fashion even then after a gap of ten years.
Again Orwell states that it is quite natural for people to notice the obscenity when a book like *Tropic of Cancer* appears and given their current notions of literary decency, he finds that it is not at all easy to approach an unprintable book with detachment. He strongly feels that either one is shocked and disgusted, or one is morbidly thrilled, or one is determined above all else not to be impressed. Orwell also supposes that *determining not to be impressed* would be the commonest reaction that results in the decrease of attention to the undeserving unprintable books. In his view, it is quite fashionable to say that it is the easiest to write an obscene book and people only do it so as to get themselves talked about and make money and what not; and, what makes it obvious that this is not the case. It is that books which are obscene in the police-court sense are distinctly uncommon and also if there were easy money to be made out of dirty words a lot more people would be making it. But still Orwell opines that obscene books do not appear very frequently as a rule quite unjustifiably, and there is a tendency to lump them together.

There are two other books which have been vaguely associated with *Tropic of Cancer* though there is no much resemblance, viz., *Ulysses* and *Voyage de la Nuit*. Both Miller and Joyce have something in common, that is, the willingness to mention the inane squalid facts of everyday life. In Orwell’s opinion, putting aside differences of technique, the funeral scene in *Ulysses* would fit into *Tropic of Cancer* but the resemblance ends there. As far as a novel is concerned *Tropic of Cancer* is far, far inferior to *Ulysses*. And Orwell recognises that Joyce is an artist in a sense in which Miller is not.
He presumes that Joyce in any way would like and wish to be like Miller and in any case Orwell sees Joyce as attempting more, exploring different states of consciousness, dream, reverie, drunkenness, etc., and dovetailing them all into a huge complex pattern, almost like a 'Victorian plot.' But Miller simply passes as a hard-boiled person talking about life, an ordinary American businessman with intellectual courage and a gift for words. Yet again Orwell also feels that it is perhaps significant that he looks like everyone's idea of an American businessman.

As for the comparison with the *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* with *Tropic of Cancer*: Orwell finds it even further from the point and the only resemblance is that both books use unprintable words and both are in a sense autobiographical. Still Orwell contends that *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* is a book - with-a-purpose, and its purpose is to protest against a horror and meaninglessness of life and it is a cry of unbearable disgust, a voice from the cesspool. Orwell feels that both *Tropic of Cancer* and *Black Spring* are almost exactly the opposites, the former being the book of a happy man and the latter, a slightly less happy man because it is tinged in places with nostalgia. Orwell states that with years of lumpenproletarian life behind him, hunger, vagabondage, dirt, failure, nights in the open, battles with immigration officers, endless struggle for a bit of cash, Miller finds himself enjoying. Orwell discovers in Miller that exactly the same aspects of life that fills Celine with horror appeal to him and as a result, far from protesting, he is 'accepting' it. The very word 'acceptance' has led Orwell to club the real affinity of Miller with Walt Whitman, another American.
Orwell says that there is something rather curious in being Whitman in the nineteen-thirties. For what Whitman is saying after all is I accept, and there is a radical difference between acceptance now and acceptance then.

Orwell gives the time of Whitman’s writing as a time of unexampled prosperity and total freedom. Life at that time has a buoyant, carefree quality that one can fill like a physical sensation in one’s bellow and it is for this that Orwell says that Whitman is celebrating though actually he does it very badly. In Orwell’s opinion the reason for his doing badly is that Whitman is one of those writers who tell one what one ought to feel instead of making one feel it. Luckily for Whitman, he did not live to see the deterioration in American life that came with the rise of large-scale industry and the exploitation of cheap immigrant labour.

Orwell remarks that Miller’s outlook is deeply akin to that of Whitman’s and adds that nearly everyone who has read him has remarked the same on this akinness. He also claims that Tropic of Cancer ends with something especially Whitmanesque in which after the lecheries, the swindles, the fights, the drinking bouts and the imbecilities, he simply sits down and watches the Sein flowing past, in a sort of mystical acceptance of the thing-as-it-is. And in the first place Orwell states that he is accepting the ancient bone-heap of Europe, where every grain of soil has passed through innumerable human bodies. In the second place what Miller is accepting is an epoch of fear, tyranny and regimentation and not an epoch of expansion and liberty. Orwell states that to say ‘I accept’ in an age like this is to say that one accepts concentration camps, rubber truncheons, Hitler, Stalin, bombs,
aeroplanes, tinned foods, machine-guns, putsches, purges, slogans, Bedaux belts, gas-masks, submarines, spies, 'provocateurs,' press censorship, secret prison, aspirins, Holywood films and political murders. On the whole in Orwell's view this is Miller's attitude though he shows a sign of fairly ordinary kind of literary nostalgia. In Black Spring, there is a long passage in the earlier part in praise of Middle Ages that Orwell credits as one of the most remarkable pieces of prose writing in recent years.

Orwell opines that an ordinary everyday consists largely of horrors than writers care to admit. But Whitman himself 'accepted' a great deal that his contemporaries found unmentionable. Orwell states that Whitman is not only writing of the prairie, he also wonders through the city and notes the shattered skull of the suicide, the grey sick faces of onanists, etc., etc. Orwell feels that their own age at any rate in Western Europe, is less healthy and less hopeful than the age in which Whitman was writing and unlike Whitman's world he feels that they live in a shrinking world with the 'democratic vista' ending in barbed wire. Orwell is disappointed as there is less feeling of creation, of growth, less and less emphasis on the cradle, endless rocking, more and more emphasis on the teapot, endless stewing. Orwell believes that to accept civilization as it is practically means accepting decay and it has ceased to be a strenuous attitude and has become a passive attitude - even decadent, if that word means anything.
Orwell calls Miller in one sense passive to experience and therefore Miller is able to get nearer to the ordinary man than is possible to more purposive writers as the ordinary man is also passive. He sees the ordinary man only as a master of his own fate within a narrow circle, say home life, trade union, or local politics but against major events he is as helpless as against the elements. The ordinary man, so far from endeavouring to influence the future, simply lies down and let things happen to him. But there is a change in literature involving itself more deeply in politics and as a result there is less room in it for the ordinary man than at any time during the past two centuries. One can see the change in the prevailing literary attitude by comparing the books written about the Spanish Civil War with those written about the Great War of 1914-18. Orwell perceives the immediate striking about Spanish War especially written in English as shockingly very dull and bad. What is more significant is that almost all the right-wing or left-wing writers have written from a political angle by telling what to think, whereas the books about the Great War were by Common soldiers of junior officers who clearly understood what the whole thing was about. Orwell has listed some books written by victims, they are All Quiet of the Western Front, Le Feu, A Farewell to Arms, Death of a Hero, Good-Bye to All That, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, and A Subaltern on the Somme, and Orwell stresses that these writers were not propagandists but real victims. All that has been written in the above books is what the hell is all about war and the resignation that God knows about, it all and all they can do is just to endure. Orwell terms Miller a passive writer at that and not a victim of that sort. He quotes the contents of periodical called the Booster whose part-editor was
Miller himself in which it used to describe itself in its advertisement as 'non-political, non-educational, non-progressive, non-co-operative, non-ethical, non-literary, non-consistent, non-contemporary and Miller's own works possesses nearly the same qualities it is voice from the passive man.

All along Orwell believes that he has taken the liberty to use the phrase 'ordinary man' rather loosely and he has taken it for granted that though some people denied then, the ordinary man does really exist. He says that Miller's 'ordinary man' is neither the manual worker nor the suburban householder, but the derelict, the 'declassed,' the adventurer, the American intellectual without roots and without money. Orwell feels that still, the experiences even of this type overlap fairly widely with those of normal people but says that the courage to identify with it has led Miller to get the most out of a rather limited material. Like Balam's ass in Numbers from the Bible, the ordinary man, the average sensual man, has been given the power of speech by Miller. Again Orwell states that the average sensual man is out of fashion along with the passive, non-political attitude and is also the preoccupation with sex and truthfulness about the inner life, of course along with the American Paris too, that is out of fashion. Orwell thinks that to publish Tropic of Cancer at such a time, must be either a tedious precocity or something unusual and he feels that a majority of the people who have read it would agree that it is not the first of that kind. Orwell also finds it worthy trying to discover just what this escape from the current literary fashion means. In order to do this he is convinced that one has got to see it against its background—that is, against the general development of English literature in the twenty years since the Great War.
In the beginning of Part II of *Inside the Whale* Orwell attempts to define a fashionable writer. He defines that if a writer is admired by people under thirty, he is a fashionable writer. At the beginning of the period he is speaking, the most fashionable, Orwell has selected, was almost certainly Housman. Housman had an enormous influence in the years 1910-25 and Orwell then did not all find it easy to understand him. Yet as a mere seventeen year old in 1920, Orwell claims to have known the whole of one Housman's works. *A Shropshire Lad* by heart. He wonders how much impression the book would make on a boy the same age and more or less the same cast of mind. He is quite convinced that other boys too must have heard of it and even glanced into it and it must have struck them as rather cheaply clever. But it impressed Orwell and his contemporaries deeply and they used to recite to themselves over and over in ecstasy. An extract from the poem goes as follows:

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With rue my heart is laden
   For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
   And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
   The light foot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
   In field where roses fade.
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Orwell holds this opinion that Housman would not have appealed so deeply to the people who were young in 1920 if it had not been for his blasphemous, antimonian, ‘cynical’ strain. At the end of the Great War, the fight that always occurs between the generations was exceptionally bitter and Orwell partly blames the war itself and partly the Russian Revolution for their fight. In any case an intellectual struggle was due about that date and owing to the ease and security of life in England, which even the war hardly disturbed, many people whose ideas were formed in the eighties or earlier had carried them quite unmodified into the nineteen-twenties. Meanwhile, so far as the younger generation was concerned, Orwell says that the official beliefs were dissolving like sand-castles and the slump in religion was quite spectacular. Orwell maintains that for several years the old-young antagonism took on a quality of real hatred and what was left of the war generation had crept out of the massacre to find their elders still bellowing the slogans of 1914, a slightly younger generation boys writhing under dirty-minded celibate schoolmasters. Again in Orwell’s opinion it was to these that Housman appealed, with his implied sexual revolt and his personal grievance against God. He finds Housman’s patriotism as in a harmless old-fashioned way, to the tune of red coats and ‘God save the Queen’ rather than steel helmets and *Hang the Kaiser*. Orwell charges Housman as satisfying the anti-Christians and having stood for a kind of bitter, defiant paganism, a conviction that life is short and that the gods are against you, which exactly, in Orwell’s opinion fitted the prevailing mood of the young.
Orwell feels that one may take Housman as merely a propagandist, an utterer of maxims and quotable 'bits' and he contends that Housman was much more than that and so, there is no need to under-rate him then as he was over-rated a few years ago. Again Orwell mentions that there are a number of Housman poems that are not likely to remain long out of favour but in his view, at the bottom it is always a writer's tendency, his 'purpose,' his 'message' that makes him liked or disliked and the proof of this is the extreme difficulty of seeing any literary merit in a book that seriously damages one's deepest beliefs. Orwell is convinced that no book is neutral as some tendency or other is always discernible, in verse as much as in prose and even if it does no more than determine the form and the choice of imagery. Orwell ascribes Housman as definitely a gnomic writer as he has attained wide popularity.

After Housman and the nature poets, after the war, a group of writers of completely different tendency appeared on the scene like Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Lawrence, Wyndham, Lewis, Aldous Huxley and Lytton Strachey. These poets, so far as the middle and late twenties go, are of 'the movement' as surely as the Auden-Spender have been of 'the movement' during those past few years. However Orwell is sure that though gifted, for example E.M. Forster, in spite of having written his best book in 1923 or thereabouts, could not fit into this 'the movement' group as his work was essentially pre-war. Nor does Yeats belong to this group, in Orwell's judgement. There were some others who were still living at that time and had shot their bolts before the war happened. Such people were Moore, Conrad, Bennet, Wells, Norman
Douglas and Orwell thinks that Somerset Maugham, perhaps may be added to this group, though in the narrow literary sense he hardly 'belongs.' Besides, Orwell opines that although the dates do not fit exactly; most of the writers had already published books before the war, but they could be classified as post-war in the same sense that the younger men then were writing the post-slump. Of course, equally, Orwell perceives that one could read through most of the literary papers of the time without grasping that those people were in 'the movement.' Orwell contends that even more than then at most times the big shots of literary journalism were busy pretending that the age-before-last had not come to an end. Squire ruled the London Mercury. Gibbs and Walpole were the gods of the leading libraries. briar pipes and monogamy, it was at all times possible to earn a few guineas by writing an article denouncing 'highbrows.' But it amazes Orwell that all the same it was the despised highbrows who had captured the young and as the wind was blowing Europe, and long before 1930 it had blown the beer-and-cricket school naked except for their knighthoods.

Still, Orwell feels that the first and foremost thing one would notice about the group of writers he has mentioned above is that they did not look like a group, and moreover several of them he doubts, would strongly object to being coupled with several of the others. In Orwell's judgement Lawrence and Eliot were in reality antipathetic, Huxley adored Lawrence but was at the same time repelled by Joyce, and most of the others, he fears would have looked down on Huxley, Strachey and Maugham. Orwell states that Lewis attacked every one in turn and his reputation as a writer rests largely on these attacks. And in his attack there is a temperamental similarity, evident enough then, though it would not have been so a dozen years ago.
In Orwell's perception the keynote of the Georgian poets was 'beauty of Nature' and that of the post-war-writers a *tragic sense of life*. Orwell analyses that the spirit behind Housman's poems is not tragic, but merely querulous and it is hedonism disappointed. With the exception of 'The Dynast' the same is true of Hardy. But Joyce-Eliot group, says Orwell, came later in time. Puritanism is not their main adversary as they are able from the start to 'see through' most of the things that their predecessors had fought for. Orwell sees all of them as temperamentally hostile to the notion of 'progress'; it is felt that progress not only doesn't happen, but 'ought not' to happen. Given this similarity, there are differences of approach between the writers Orwell has named as well as very different degrees of talent. Eliot's pessimism is partly called Christian pessimism by Orwell - the pessimism, which implies a certain indifference to human misery; and also partly laments over the decadence of western civilization. The example of expression quoted by Orwell is as follows:

'We are the hollow men, we are the stuffed men' etc., etc.

Again Orwell categorises Strachey's pessimism as merely a polite eighteenth-century scepticism mixed up with a taste for debunking.

Of Maugham, Orwell states that it is a kind of stoical resignation, the stiff upper lip of the pukka sahib somewhere east of Suez, carrying on with his job without believing in it, like an Antonine Emperor.
At first sight, Lawrence does not appear to Orwell to be a pessimistic writer because like Dickens, he is a 'change-of-heart' man who is constantly insisting that life here and now would be all right if only you looked at it a little differently. But Orwell contends that Lawrence is demanding a movement away from our mechanized civilization, which is not going to happen, and which he knows is not going to happen. Hence, his exasperation with the present turns once more into an idealization of the past, this time a safely mythical past, the Bronze Age. Therefore, pessimistically, all that Lawrence has been able to produce is a mere wish that things would happen in a way in which they are manifestly not going to happen. Orwell continues his rant and rage that for Lawrence it is 'A wave of generosity or a wave of death' though it is obvious that there are no waves of generosity this side of the horizon.

Once again, Orwell believes that one will be able to conceive by this time that he is speaking of the above people as though they were not artists but writers who were putting propagandists 'message' across. He is sure that all of them are much more than that. For instance, in Orwell's opinion, it is quite absurd to look on *Ulysses* as merely a show-up of the horror of modern life, the dirty *Daily Mail* era, as Pound put it. Orwell places Joyce as an actual, more of a 'pure artist' than most writers. Orwell does not believe that *Ulysses* could have been written by someone who was merely dabbling with word-patterns, it is rather the product of a special vision of life., the vision of a Catholic who has lost his faith! Orwell states that what Joyce is saying is that 'Here is life without God. Just look at it!' and his technical innovations, important though they are, in Orwell's view, are there primarily to serve this pessimistic purpose.
Here, an important question arises. What does Orwell find noticeable about all these writers like Joyce, Eliot, Lawrence and Dickens? When he looks back at the twenties, Orwell finds nothing queerer than the way in which every important event in Europe escaped the notice of the English intelligentsia. He quotes the vanishing of the Russian Revolution from the English consciousness for about ten years—between the death of Lenin and the Ukraine famine. Those ten years in Russia mean Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and exiled counts driving taxi-cabs. Meanwhile Italy means picture-galleries, ruins, churches and museums except Blackshirts. At the same time Germany means films, nudism and psychoanalysis but Hitler was hardly by anyone till 1931. In cultured circles, Orwell contends that art-for-art's sake extended practically to a worship of the meaningless and literature was supposed to consist solely in the manipulation of words. Besides, to judge a book by its subject-matter was the unforgivable sin, and even to be aware of its subject-matter was looked on as a lapse of taste. Orwell selects the following joke that he thinks it genuinely funny that has been produced by 'Punch' since the Great War, say about 1928: an intolerable youth is pictured informing his aunt that he intends to 'write'.

'And what are you going to write about, dear?' ask the aunt.
'My dear aunt,' says the youth crushingly, 'one doesn't write about anything, one just writes.'
In Orwell's view, the best writers of the twenties did not subscribe to this doctrine. They have a 'purpose' which is in most cases fairly overt but it is usually a 'purpose' along moral-religious-cultural lines and also when translatable into political terms, it is usually 'right' and in no case 'left.' In one way or another the tendency of all the writers in this group is conservative. Orwell singles out Lewis who spent years in frenzied witch-smelling after Bolshevism, which he was able to detect in very unlikely places. Orwell presumes that Hitler's treatment of artists has changed some of his views recently. Orwell also presumes that Pound has plumped definitely for Fascism, at any rate the Italian variety. He sees Eliot as remaining aloof but again presumes that if forced at the pistol's point to choose between Fascism and Socialism, would probably choose the former. Again Orwell maintains that Huxly starts off with the usual despair-of-life, then under the influence of Lawrence's 'dark abdomen,' tries something called Life-Worship, and finally arrives at pacifism that Orwell thinks as a tenable position and at that moment an honourable one at that but probably in the long run involving rejection of Socialism. Orwell also notices that most of the writers in this group have a certain tenderness for the Catholic church though not usually of a kind that an orthodox Catholic, in Orwell's opinion, could accept.

Without any doubt, Orwell sees the mental connection between pessimism and a reactionary outlook as obvious enough. What he thinks less obvious is just why the leading writers of the twenties were predominantly pessimistic. He wonders at the sense of decadence, the skulls and cactuses,
the yearning after lost faith and impossible civilizations. He asks that after all, these people were writing in an exceptionally comfortable epoch and it is just in such times that ‘cosmic despair’ can flourish. Orwell claims that people with empty belief never despair of the universe, nor even think about the universe, for that matter. And the whole period between 1910 and 1930 was a prosperous one, and even the war years were physically tolerable if one happened to be a non-combatant in one of the allied countries. Again, Orwell describes the twenties as the golden age of the rentier-intellectual, a period of irresponsibility such as the world had never seen before. After the war, the new totalitarian states had not arisen, moral and religious taboos of all descriptions had vanished, and the cash was rolling on.

In Orwell’s opinion, the best writers see life very comprehensively, much more so than those who come immediately before or after them, but they see it through the wrong end of the telescope. Even then it does not invalidate their books as books. And in his view regarding the first test of any work of art is -survival and he matter of factly states that a great deal that was written in the period between 1910-30 has survived and he also believes that it looks like continuing to survive.

However, Orwell contends that a new group of writers like Auden and Spender made their appearance in the years 1930-35 when the literary climate seems to have changed. And although technically these writers owe something to their predecessors, their ‘tendency’ is entirely different. Orwell is to claim that quite suddenly we have got out of the twilight of the gods into
a sort of Boy Scout atmosphere of bare knees and community singing. The typical literary man ceases to be a cultured expatriate with a leaning towards the church, and becomes an eager-mined school boy with a leaning towards communism. Orwell puts that if the keynote of the writers of the twenties is 'tragic sense of life,' the keynote of the new writers is 'serious purpose.'

Again, Orwell continues that the differences between the two schools are at some length discussed in Mr. Louis Mac Neice's book Modern Poetry. He judges that this book is written entirely from the angle of the younger group and takes the superiority of their standard for granted. Orwell quotes from Mac Neice:

"The poets of 'New Signatures,' unlike Yeats and Eliot, are emotionally partisan. Yeats proposed to turn his book on desire and hatred; Eliot sat back and watched other people's emotions with ennui and an ironical self-pity .... The whole poetry, on the other hand, of Auden, Spender and Day Lewis implies that they have desires and hatreds of their own and, further, that they think somethings ought to be desired and others hated." 1

And again,

"The poets of 'New Signatures' have swing back ... to the Greek preference for information or statement. The first requirement is to have something to say, and after that you must say it as well as you can."

1. Quoted by Orwell from Mr. Louis Mac Neice's book Modern Poetry.
Orwell states that in other words 'purpose' has come back and the younger writers have 'gone into politics.' As he has pointed out already, he stresses that Eliot & Co. are not really so non-partisan as Mr. Mac Neice seems to suggest. Still he claims (and this is very important and typically Orwellian) that it is broadly true that in the twenties the literary emphasis was more on techniques and less on subject-matter than it is then. And the leading figures in this group are Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, Mac Neice and Orwell identifies a long string of writers of more or less the same tendency. They are Isher Wood, John Lahmann, Arthur Calder Marshal, Edward Upwards, Alex Brown, Philip Henderson, and many others. As he has previously done before, he is lumping them together simply according to tendency and it is very obvious that there are very great variations in talent. But when Orwell compares these writers with the Joyce-Eliot generations, the immediately striking thing he sees is how much easier it is to form them into a group. He sees their technique as closer together, they are almost indistinguishable politically and to put it mildly, their criticisms of one another's work have always been found good-natured. Orwell states that the outstanding writers of the twenties were of very varied origins, a few of them had passed through the ordinary English educational mill. Except for Lawrence, incidentally, the best of them were not Englishmen and Orwell is to say that most of them had at some time to struggle against poverty, neglect, and even downright persecution. On the other hand Orwell recognizes all the younger writers from the background of the public-school-university-Bloomsbury pattern. He finds it quite significant that several of the writers in this group have been not only boys but, subsequently, masters at public schools. He also states that he had described Auden some years ago as 'a sort of gutless
Kipling.' He feels this as quite an unworthy criticism and confesses that it was merely a spiteful remark but again argues that without any doubt, in Auden's work, especially in his earlier work, an atmosphere of uplift—something rather like Kipling's 'If' or Nebolt's 'Play Up, Play Up, and Play the Game!'- never seems to be very far away. He cites the following poem for instance:

"You're leaving now and it's up to you boys."  

Orwell is convinced that there is an element of parody that he intends. And besides the rather priggish note that is common to most of these writers is a symptom of release. Orwell expresses that by throwing 'pure art' overboard they have freed themselves from the fear of being laughed at and vastly enlarged their scope. He thinks that the prophetic side of Marxism, for example, is new material for poetry and has great possibilities. To quote the poem selected:

We are nothing.  
We have fallen  
Into the dark and shall be destroyed.  
Think though, that in this darkness  
We hold the secret hub of an idea  
Whose living sunlit wheel revolves in future years outside.  

(Cherub, Trial of Judge)

But at the same time, Orwell contends that by being Marxized literature has moved no nearer to the masses and even allowing for the time-lag, Auden and Spender are somewhat, in Orwell's judgement, further from

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2. Quoted by Orwell from Poem No. 10. in Cecil Day. Lewis early volume of poetry, The Magnetic Mountain.
being popular writers than Joyce and Eliot, let alone Lawrence. And as before, Orwell sees that there are many contemporary writers who are outside the current, but there is not much doubt about what is the current. Just as Joyce, Eliot & Co. were 'the movement' for the middle and late thirties. And Orwell feels that the movement is in the direction of some rather ill-defined thing called Communism. He considers that as early as in 1934 or 1935, Communism was quite popular and it was considered even eccentric in literary circles not to be more or less 'left,' and in another year or a couple there had grown a left-wing orthodoxy that made a certain set of opinions absolutely 'de rigeur' on certain subjects. The communist party had an almost irresistible fascination for any writer under forty in the periods between 1935 and 1939. Orwell says that it became as normal to hear that so-and-so had 'joined' as it had been a few years earlier, when Roman Catholicism was fashionable, to hear that so-and-so had 'been received.' In fact, for about three years the central stream of English literature was more or less directly under communist control. Orwell poses two questions here as to how it was possible for such a thing to happen and at the same time what communism actually meant. He proposes to answer the second question first.

As Orwell sees, the Communist movement in Western Europe began as a movement for the violent overthrow of capitalism, and degenerated within a few years into an instrument of Russian foreign policy. This, Orwell presumes, was inevitable when the revolutionary ferment that followed the Great War had died down and so far as he knows, the only comprehensive history of this subject in English is Franz Borkenau's book, *The Communist*
*International.* What Borkenau's book made clear is that Communism could never have developed along its present lines if any real revolutionary feeling had existed in the industrialized countries. And for instance, in England, he understands that no such feeling had ever existed for many years in the past. The pathetic membership figures of all extremist parties show this clearly. Therefore, Orwell discovers and asserts that it is only natural that the English Communist movement is controlled by only people who are mentally subservient to Russia who have no real aim except to manipulate British foreign policy in the Russian interest. Such an aim cannot be openly admitted that gives the Communist Party its very peculiar character. In Orwell's view, the more vocal kind of communist party is in effect a Russian publicity agent posing as international Socialist. It is a pose that is easily kept up at normal times, but becomes difficult in moments of crisis because of the fact that the USSR is no more scrupulous in its foreign policy than the Great Powers. Alliances, changes of front, etc. which only makes sense as part of the game of power politics have to be explained and justified in terms of international Socialism. As soon as Stalin swaps partners, 'Marxism' has to be hammered into a new shape and this entails sudden and violent changes of 'line' purges, denunciations, systematic destruction of party literature etc., etc. In fact every Communist is liable at any moment to have to alter his most fundamental convictions, or leave the party. Within a span of ten years, Orwell says that the unquestionable dogma of Monday became the damnable heresy of Tuesday for at least as many as three times. In any western country Orwell finds that a Communist Party is always unstable and usually very negligible. Its long term membership really consists of an inner ring of intellectuals who
have identified with the Russian bureaucracy and as a slightly larger body of
working-class people who feel a loyalty towards Soviet Russia though quite
ignorant of its policies. Otherwise, Orwell says that there is only a shifting
membership, one lot coming and another going with each change of 'line.'
The English Communist Party was a tiny, barely legal organization in 1930
and its main activity was libelling the Labour Party. But it so happens that
after only five years i.e., 1935, the face of Europe had changed along with
left-wing politics. Hitler had risen to power and began to re-arm. The Russian
five-year Plan had succeeded and as a result the country had reappeared as a
great military power. Orwell gives Hitler's three targets of attack, to all
appearances, Great Britain, France and the USSR as a result, the three
countries were forced into a sort of uneasy rapprochement. This, in Orwell's
opinion, meant that the English or French Communist was obliged to become
a good patriot and imperialist that is to defend the very things he had been
attacking for the past fifteen years. The Comintern slogans suddenly faded
from red to pink and World Revolution and Social Fascism gave way to
Defence of democracy and Stop Hitler. At the same time Orwell puts the year
1935-39 as the period of anti-Fascism and the Popular Front, the heyday of
the Left Book Club, when red duchesses and 'broadminded' deans toured the
battlefields of the Spanish War and Winston Churchill was the blue-eyed
boy of the Daily Worker. Since then, of course there has been yet another
change of 'line' but what Orwell feels important for his purpose is that it was
during the 'anti-Fascist' phase that the younger writers of English gravitated
towards Communism.
To Orwell, the Fascism-democracy dogfight was no doubt an attraction in itself, but in any case their conversion was due at about that date. He sees evidently that ‘lassie-faire’ capitalism was finished and that there had got to be some kind of reconstruction and he feels that it was hardly possible to remain politically indifferent in the world of 1935. Again Orwell poses the question why those young men turn towards anything so alien as Russian Communism.

Talking of the upcoming writers, Orwell is of the view that they can just swallow totalitarianism because they have no experience of anything except liberalism. An extract from Mr. Auden’s poem is thought by Orwell as the only few decent things that have been written about the Spanish War:

Tomorrow for the Young, the poets exploding like bombs,
The walks by the lake, the Weeks of perfect Communism;
   Tomorrow the bicycle races
   Through the suburbs on summer evenings.
   But today the struggle
Today the deliberate increase in the chances of death
The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder;
   Today the expanding of powers
   On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting.

Orwell says that the second stanza is intended as a sort of thumbnail sketch of a day in the life of a ‘good party man,’ and a couple of political murders in the morning serves only as a ten minute’s interlude to stifle ‘bourgeois’ remorse, and then a hurried luncheon and a busy afternoon and evening chalking walls and distributing leaflets which are all very edifying. But he wants special notice of the phrase ‘necessary murder’ as it could be written by a person to whom murder is at most a mere word.
Orwell again refers to some portions towards the end of Mr. Cyril Connolly’s book *Enemies of Promise* where an interesting and revealing passage occurs. More or less in Orwell’s evaluation, the first part of the book is an evaluation of present-day literature. Orwell places Connolly among the generation of the writers of ‘the movement’ as their values are his values with not many reservations. Orwell finds it quite interesting to notice that among prose writers, Connolly admires chiefly those specializing in violence, say for instance, Hemmingway. However, the latter part of the book is autobiographical and consists of accounts fascinating accurate life at a preparatory school and Eton in the years 1910-1920. Orwell quotes how Mr. Connolly ends by remarking:

"Were I to deduce anything from my feeling on leaving Eton, it might be called ‘The Theory of Permanent Adolescence.’ It is the theory that the experience undergone by boys at the great public schools are so intense as to dominate their lives and to arrest their development."  

Finally, by way of summing up his views on Miller, Orwell says that as a rule, novels are spoken of as important when they are either a terrible indictment of something or other or when they introduce some technical innovation. Neither of these applies to Millers’s *Tropic of Cancer* as its importance is merely symptomatic. Here, in Orwell’s opinion is the only imaginative prose writer of the slightest value who has appeared among the English-speaking races for some years past. And even that is objected as an

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3. Quoted by Orwell from Mr. Cyril Connolly’s *Enemies of Promise*. 
overstatement, in Orwell’s opinion, it will be probably admitted that Miller is a writer out of the ordinary, worth more than a single glance, a completely negative, unconstructive, a moral writer, a mere Jonah, and a passive acceptor of evil.

The fourth critical essay that we have selected for textual scrutiny is Politics Vs Literature; (An examination of Gulliver’s Travels).

Orwells says that in ‘Gulliver’s Travels’, humanity in attacked at least from three angles and the implied character of Gulliver himself necessarily changes somewhat in the process. In Part I, he is the typical eighteenth-century voyager, a man of forty with two children who is bold, practical, and unromantic. His homely outlook skilfully impresses readers by biographical details at the beginning when his adventures start. In Part II he retains in general the same character, but at moments, when the story so demands he has the tendency to develop into an imbecile who is capable of boasting of your noble country, the Mistress of Arts and Arms, the scourge of Frame’ etc. etc. and at the same time of betraying every available scandalous fact about the country he professes to love. In Part III he, in Orwell’s judgement, is much as he was in Part I, as he is consorting chiefly with the courtiers and men of learning that impresses Orwell that he has risen in the social scale. In Part IV, he conceives a horror of the human race which is not apparent in the earlier books and changes into a sort of irreligious anchorite whose one desire is to live in some desolate spot where he can devote himself to meditating on the goodness of the Houyhnhnms. Orwell remarks that these inconsistencies are forced upon Swift by the fact that Gulliver is there chiefly
to provide a contrast. Orwell justifies that Gulliver should appear sensible in Part I and at least intermittently silly in Part II because in both books the entire manoeuvre is to make the human being look ridiculous by imagining him as a creature six inches high. Orwell opines that whenever Gulliver is not acting as a stooge there is a sort of continuity in his character, which comes out especially in his resourcefulness and his observation of physical detail. He says that Gulliver is much the same kind of person, with the same prose style, when he bears off the warships of Blefuscu and when he rips open the belly of the monstrous rat, and when he sails away upon the ocean in his frail coracle made from the skin of the Yahoos.

Besides, Orwell does not think it difficult not to feel that Gulliver is simply Swift himself in his shrewder moments. He observes that there is at least one incident in which Swift seems to be inventing his private grievances against contemporary society. It will be well to remember that when the Lilliputian Emperor's palace catches fire, Gulliver puts it out by urinating on it. He looks forward to be applauded for his presence of mind but he finds out in horror that he has committed a capital offence by making water in the precincts of the palace. Orwell says that according to Professor G.M. Trevelyan, part of the reason for swifts failure to get preferment was that the Queen was scandalized by *A Tale of a Tub* a pamphlet in which Swift probably felt he had done a great service to the English Crown, since in scarifies the Dissenters and still more the Catholics while leaving the established church alone. In any case, Orwell calls *Gulliver's Travels* rancorous and rather pessimistic. Especially Part I and II often descend into a
political partisanship of a narrow kind. Orwell opines that in these two parts, i.e., Parts I & III, pettiness and magnanimity, republicanism and authoritarianism, love of reason and lack of curiosity, all get mixed up. In Part IV Orwell sees the hatred of the human body with which Swift is especially associated as dominant but this new preoccupation does not surprise him. He also feels that all these adventures and changes of mood could have happened to the same person. And one of the most, interesting features of *Gullivers Travels*, in Orwells' opinion is the inter-connection between Swift's political loyalties and his ultimate despair.

Orwell places Swift politically as one of those people who are driven into a sort of perverse Toryism by the follies of the progressive party of the moment. In his judgement, part I of *Gullivers Travels* is ostensibly a satire on England, an attack, in fact on the dominant Whig Party and on the war with France. However bad the motives of the Allies may have been, Orwell sees the salvation of Europe from being tyrannized over by a single reactionary power. Orwell calls Swift neither a Jacobite nor a Tory and asserts that his declared aim in war was merely a moderate peace treaty and not the outright defeat of England. Still Orwell traces a tinge of quislingism in Swift's attitude in the ending portion of Part I. When Gulliver flees from Lilliput i.e., England to Blefuscu, France, the assumption that a human being six inches high is inherently contemptible seems to be dropped. Whereas the people of Lilliput had behaved towards Gulliver with utmost treachery and meanness, those of Blefuscu behave generously and straightforwardly. And Orwell affirms that this section of the book ends here on a different note.
from the all-round disillusionment of the earliest chapter. To, Orwell, it is, quite obvious that Swift's animus is against England in the first place. Orwell observes that it was the Dutch too and England's' other allies, the target of one of Swift's most famous pamphlets where the former, i.e., the Dutch are more or less attacked in Part III. In the following passage quoted by Orwell, Gulliver records his satisfaction that the various countries he has discovered cannot be made colonies of the British Crown.

"The 'Houyhnhnms,' indeed, appear not to be so well prepared for war, a science to which they are perfect strangers and especially against massive weapons. However, supposing myself to be a Minister of State, I could never give my advice for invading them. Imagine twenty thousand of them breaking into the midst of an European Army, confounding the Ranks, Over turning the Carriages, battering the Warriors Faces into Mummy, by terrible Yerks from their hinder Hoofs."

Orwell considers that as a man of few words, Swift's phrase battering warriors faces into mummy is not an exaggeration of the secret wish of Swift to see the invincible armies of the Duke of Malborough to the treated in the same manner. Orwell traces similar touches elsewhere especially in Langdon, which is within one letter of being an anagram of England. Orwell maintains that Swift's physical repulsion from humanity is certainty real enough but Orwell feels that Swift's debunking of human grandeur, his diatribes against lords, politicians, court favourites have mainly a local application and spring from his frustration that he belonged to the unsuccessful party. In Orwells'

Swift denounces injustice and oppression but gives no evidence of liking democracy. In spite of his enormous greater powers, Orwell states that his implied position is very similar to that of the innumerable silly-clever conservatives of their own day like Sir Alan Herbert, Prof. G.M. Young etc. And in Orwell’s opinion, the case with which Swift has been forgiven even by devout believers for the blasphemies of A Tale of a Tub clearly demonstrates the strength of political sentiments as compared with religious ones.

In Part III of Gulliver’s Travels, the famous Academy of Lagado is described and Orwell says that it is evidently a justified satire on most of the so-called scientists of Swift’s own day. Significantly enough, the people at work in it, are described as Projectors, that is, people not engaged in disinterested research but merely on the look-out for gadgets which will save labour and bring in money. But Orwell refutes that there is indeed no sign all through the book of the fact that pure science world have struck Swift as a worthwhile activity.

The Houyhnhnms whom Orwell calls Swift’s ideal beings are said to be backward in a mechanical sense. They are neither acquainted with metals nor with boats. Again they do not speak properly nor do they practise agriculture. They use sledges for transport and they have not much curiosity about the physical world. They do not believe in the existence of another world except their own but they understand the motions of the sun and the moon and the nature of eclipse, which illustrated the utmost progress of their knowledge of Astronomy. By great contrast the philosophers of the flying
view, Swift denounces injustice and oppression but gives no evidence of liking democracy. In spite of his enormous greater powers, Orwell states that his implied position is very similar to that of the innumerable silly-clever conservatives of their own day like Sir Alan Herbert, Prof. G.M. Young etc. And in Orwell’s opinion, the case with which Swift has been forgiven even by devout believers for the blasphemies of A Tale of a Tub clearly demonstrates the strength of political sentiments as compared with religious ones.

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islands of Laputa are so continuously absorbed in mathematical speculations that before speaking to them one has to draw their attention by flapping them on the ear with a bladder. They are said to have catalogued ten thousand fixed stars, have settled the period of ninety three comets, and in advance of the astronomers of Europe, have discovered that Mars has two moons all of which information Swift evidently regards as ridiculous, useless and uninteresting. Orwell expects that Swift believes that the scientists place is in the laboratory and that scientific knowledge has no bearing on political matters:

"What I .... thought altogether unaccountable, was the strong Disposition I observed in them towards News and Politics, perpetually enquiring into Public Affairs, giving their judgement in Matters of State, and passionately disputing every Inch of a Party Opinion. I have, indeed, observed the same Dispositions among most of the mathematicians I have known in Europe though I could never discover the least Analogy between the two sciences; unless those people suppose, that, because the smallest circle hath as many Degrees as the largest, therefore the Regulation and the Management of the World require no more Abilities, than the Handling and turning of a Globe." ²

Here, Orwell poses a question whether there is not something familiar in that phrase 'I could never discover the least analogy between the two sciences. He thinks that it has precisely the note of the popular Catholic apologists who profess to be astonished when a scientist utters an opinion on such questions as the existence of God or the immortality of the soul. Orwell

² Ibid. p. 160
argues that as the scientist is an expert only in one restricted field, his opinion, even though of value may be questioned. His argument is that theology is applied to be much an exact science like Chemistry, and the priest is also an expert whose conclusions on certain subjects must be accepted. Swift, in Orwell's opinion, makes the same claim for the politician, but he goes one step further in that he will not allow the scientist to be a useful person in his own line. Orwell maintains that even if Swift had not written Part III of Gulliver's Travels, one could infer from the rest of the book that, like Tolstoy and like Blake, he hates the very idea of studying the process of Nature. The Reason which he so admires in the Houyhnhnms, in Orwell's view does not primarily mean the power of drawing logical inference from observed facts. In general Swift assumes that we know all that we need to know already, and merely use our knowledge incorrectly. He takes medicine as a useless science because if we live in a more natural way, there would be no disease. This means to go back to nature and apply nature cures. However, Swift is not a simple-lifer or an admirer of the Noble Savage and he is very much in favour of civilization and the arts of civilization. He does not only see the value of good manners, good conversation, and even learning of a literary and historical kind but he also sees that agriculture, navigation and architecture need to be studied and could with advantage be improved. But in Orwell's analysis, his implied aim is a static, incurious civilization-the world of his own day a little decent with no radical change and no poking into the unknowable. He reveres classical antiquity and believes that the modern man has degenerated sharply during the past hundred years. In the island of sorceress, where the spirits of the dead can be
called up at will, Orwell mentions the wish of Swift that the Senate of Rome might appear before him in one large chamber, and a modern representative in Counterview in another. Swift presumes the first group to be an Assembly of Heroes and Demy-Gods, the other a Knot of Pedlars, Pickpockets, Highwaymen, and Bullies. Orwell maintains that Swift uses this section of Part III to attack the truthfulness of recorded history, yet his critical spirit deserts him as soon as he is dealing with Greeks and Romans. Orwell sees him remarking upon the corruption of imperial Rome but at the same time mentions that Swift has unreasonable admiration for some of the leading figures of the ancient world like Brutus, Junius, Socrates, Epaminondas, Cato the younger, Sir Thomas More.

However, Orwell observes that Swift shows no sign of having any religious beliefs, at least in the ordinary sense of the words. It appears to Orwell that Swift does not believe seriously in life after death and his idea of goodness is bound up with republicanism, love of liberty, courage, benevolence, reason and other pagan qualities. This reminds Orwell of a strain in Swift that is not quite congruous with his disbelief in progress and his general hatred of humanity.

Orwell feels that Swift has moments when he is ‘Constructive’ and even ‘advanced.’ And to be occasionally inconsistent, in Orwell’s opinion is almost a mark of vitality in Utopia books and Swift is said to insert sometimes a word of praise into a passage that ought to be purely satirical. Thus, Swift’s ideas about the education of the young are set on the Lilliputians, who have much the same views on this subject on the
Houyhnhnms. The Lilliputians also have various social and legal institutions which Swift would have liked to see prevailing in his own country. In the middle of this passage, Orwell says that Swift remembers his satirical intention and adds, ‘In relating these and the following Laws, I would only be understood to mean the original Institutions, and not the most scandalous corruption into which these people are fallen by the degenerate Nature of Man’: but as Lilliput is supposed to represent England, Orwell states that the laws Swift is speaking of never had their parallel in England. He finds it quite clear that the impulse to make constructive suggestions has been too much for him. Orwell credits Swift with an extra ordinarily clear provision of the spy-haunted ‘police-state’ and Orwell wishes one to remember that Swift is here inferring the whole from a quite small part, for the feeble governments of his own day did not give him illustration ready-made. Orwell, in this connection quotes the professor at the school of Political Projectors who showed Swift a large paper of instructions for discovering plots and conspiracies who claimed that one can find peoples secret thoughts by examining their excrement that when men consider what was the best way of murdering the king, his Ordures would have a Tincture of Green, but quite different when he thought only of raising an insurrection, or burning the Metropolis. This professor and his theory, in Orwell’s point of view, are said to have been suggested to Swift from the fact in a recent State Trial when some letters found in somebody's privy had been put in evidence.

Later in chapter VI Orwell feels that we seem to be positively in the middle of the Russian purges as -
“In the Kingdom of Tribnia, by the Natives called Langden ..... the Bulk of the People consist, in a Manner, wholly of Discoverers, Witnesses, Informers, Accusers, Prosecutors, Evidences, Swearers.... It is first agreed and settled among them, what suspected persons shall be accused of a plot : Then, 'effectual Care is taken to secure all their Letters and other Papers, and put the Owners in Chains. These Papers are delivered to a Set of Artists, very dexterious in finding out the mysterious Meanings of Words, Syllables, and Letter ...... When the method fails, they have two others more effectual, which the learned among them called 'Acrostiks' and 'Anagrams.' First they can decypher all initial Letters into political Meanings. Thus N shall signify a plot, B a Regiment of Horse, L a Fleet at Sea : Or, secondly, by transposing the Letters of the Alphabet in any suspected Paper, they can lay open the deepest Designs of a discontented Party. So, for example, if I should say in a Letter to a Friend, 'Our Brother Tom has just got the Piles' a skilful Decypher would discover that the same Letters, which compose the Sentence, may be analysed in the following words : 'Resist - a plot is brought Home - The Tour.' And this is the anagramatic Method.”

Orwell finds something queerly familiar in the atmosphere of these chapters as other professors at the same school invent simplified languages, write books by machinery, educate their pupils by inscribing the lessons on a wafer and causing them to swallow it, or propose to abolish individuality altogether by cutting a part of the brain of one man and grafting it to the head of another. In these chapters, as they are mixed up with much fooling, Orwell feels that there is a perception that one of the aims of totalitarianism is not merely to make sure that people will think the right thoughts, but actually to make them less conscious.
Then, again, Orwell observes that Swift's account of the Leader who is usually to be found ruling over a tribe of Yahoos, and the 'favourite' who acts first as a dirty-worker and later as a scapegoat, fits remarkably well into the pattern of our own times. Here, Orwell poses a question whether we are to infer from all this that Swift was first and foremost an enemy of tyranny and a champion of the free intelligence. As Orwell discerns them, Swift's views are not marked liberal. It is evident that he hates lords, kings, bishops, generals, ladies of fashion, orders, titles and flummery generally, but Orwell feels that Swift does not seem to think better of the common people than of their rulers, or to be in favour of increased social equality, or to be enthusiastic about representative institutions.

Orwell sees the Houyhnhnms as organised upon a sort of caste system which is racial in character and he also identifies the horses which do the menial work being of different colours from their masters and not interbreeding with them. Orwell also is aware that the educational system of the Lilliputians which Swift admires takes hereditary clans distinctions for granted and the children of the poorest class do not go to school as their business in being only to till and cultivate the Earth. Though his own writings enjoy toleration, Orwell indicts Swift as not so strongly in favour of the freedom of speech and the press.

As regards religious and political sects, the king of Brobdingnag is astonished at the multiplicity in England and considers that those who hold 'opinions prejudicial to public' though they need not be obliged to change
them, ought to be obliged to conceal them: for 'as it was Tyranny in any government to require the first, so it was weakness not to enforce the second. Orwell feels that there is a subtler indication of Swift's own attitude in the manner in which Gulliver leaves the land of the Houyhnhnms. And intermittently, he says that Swift was a kind of anarchist and Part IV of *Gulliver's Travels* is a picture of an anarchist society not governed by law in the ordinary sense, but by the dictates of *Reason*, which are voluntarily accepted by everyone.

The exhortation or advice by the General Assembly of the Houyhnhnms to get rid of Gulliver, the unusual Yahoo, in Orwell's opinion illustrates quite well the totalitarian tendency which he thinks is implicit in the anarchist or pacifist vision of society. Orwell also views that the only arbiter of behaviour in a society in which there is no law is public opinion. Orwell continues to deliberate that government by love or reason is better than governing by commandment or *dos* and *dons*'. In governing by love or reason, Orwell observes that one is under continuous pressure to make him behave and think in exactly the same way as everyone else. Orwell states that the Houyhnhnms had reached the highest stage of totalitarian organization, the stage when conformity has become so general that there is no need for a police force. They are said to be unanimous on almost all subjects. Orwell singles out the only question they ever discussed was how to deal with the Yahoos. Orwell believes that Swift approves this kind of thing because among his many gifts, neither curiosity nor good nature was included and disagreement would always seem to him sheer perversity.
Orwell maintains that it is quite right to think of Swift as a rebel and iconoclast, but except in certain secondary matters such as his insistence that women should receive the same education as man, he cannot be labelled left. Orwell terms him as a Tory anarchist, despising authority while disbelieving in liberty, and preserving the aristocratic outlook while seeing clearly that the existing aristocracy is degenerate and contemptible. As he has said earlier, Orwell reiterates that when Swift utters one of his characteristic diatribes against the rich and powerful one must probably write off something for the fact that he himself belonged to the less successful party, and was personally disappointed. For obvious reasons, Orwell argues that the ‘outs’ are always more radical than the ‘ins.’ In his opinion, the most essential thing in Swift is his inability to believe that ordinary life on the solid earth, and not some nationalized, deodorized version of it—could be made worth living. Orwell does not doubt that no honest person claims that happiness is now a normal condition among adult human beings’ but perhaps it could be made normal, and it is upon this question that all serious political controversy really turns. He compares Swift and Tolstoy and it is his belief that both men have the same anarchistic outlook covering an authoritarian cast of mind; One comes across in both a similar hostility to science, the same impatience with opponents, the same inability to see the importance of any question not interesting to themselves; and in both cases a sort of horror of the actual process of life, though in Tolstoy’s case it was arrived at later in a different way. Orwell differentiates the sexual unhappiness of the two men but states that there was this in common, that in both of them a sincere loathing was mixed up with a morbid fascination. Orwell also charges Tolstoy seriously as a reformed rake who ended by preaching complete celibacy while continuing
to practise the opposite into extreme old age. Again Orwell presumes that Swift was impotent and funnily believes that the latter had an exaggerated horror of human being and he also thought about it incessantly as is evident throughout his works. Orwell opines that such people are not likely to enjoy even the small amount of happiness that falls in the share of most human beings, and from obvious motives, are not likely to admit that earthly life is capable of much improvement. In his view in both Swift and Tolstoy incuriosity and intolerance spring from the same root and nature.

Orwell says that Swift’s disgust, rancour and pessimism would make sense against the background of a next world to which this one is the prelude. To Orwell, it appears that swift does not believe seriously in a ‘next world,’ so that it becomes necessary to construct a paradise existing supposedly on the surface of the earth, but something quite different from anything we know, with all that he disapproves of - lies, folly, change, enthusiasm, pleasure, love and dirt-eliminated from it. His ideal being is the horse whose excrement is not offensive.

The Houyhnhnms are dreary beasts and unattractive because the Reason by which they are governed is really a desire for death. Orwell compares them to the Nazis in Germany as they are exempt from love, friendship, curiosity, fear, sorrow and they have anger and hatred towards the Yahoos as the Jews in Nazi Germany. He says that the Houyhnhnms take care of their young over by dictates of Reason, value conversation, practice birth control and arranged marriages. They are indifferent to the dead, value
athleticism, are devoted to poetry and have enormous physical strength. Orwell maintains that poetry appeared to Swift as the antithesis of science and the kind of poetry he thought valuable would be probably didactic poetry and terms him as an admirable writer of comic verse. The genius of Swift is not still able to produce a specimen by which one could judge the poetry of the Houyhnhnms and this surprises Orwell a great deal. Swift merely says that the poetry of the Houyhnhnms—

"must be allowed to excel (that of) all other Mortals; where in the Justness of their Similes, and the Minuteness, as well as Exactness, or their Descriptions, are indeed imitable. Their Verses abound very much in both of these; and usually contain either some exalted Notions of Friendship and Benevolence, or the Praises of those who were Victors in Races, and other bodily Exercises."

Though we do not get a specimen of the poetry of the Houyhnhnms, Orwell thinks and feels that the above nature of poetry referred to by Swift sounds as though it were chilly stuff (in heroic couplets, presumably), and not seriously in conflict with the principles of Reason.

Orwell finds it notoriously difficult to describe happiness and so the pictures of a just and well-ordered society are seldom either attractive or convincing. But he feels that most creators of 'favourable' Utopia are concerned with showing what life could be like if it were lived more fully. He says that Swift advocates a simple refusal of life, justifying this by the claim that Reason consists in the wasting of your instincts. In the life of the

4. Ibid. p. 280
Houyhnhnms, the notions that life here and now is worth living, or that it could be made worth living, or that it must be sacrificed for some future good, are absent. Orwell maintains that the dreary world of the Houyhnhnms was about as good a Utopia as Swift could construct, granting that he neither believed in a ‘next world’ nor could get any pleasure out of certain normal activities. But Orwell says again that it is not really set up as something desirable in itself, but as the justification for another attack on humanity. The aim, he contends, as usual, is to humiliate Man by reminding him that he is weak and ridiculous, and above all that he stinks; and the ultimate motive, probably, is a kind of envy, the envy of the ghost for the living, of the man who knows he cannot be happy for the others who - so he fears-may be a little happier than himself. In Orwell’s opinion, the political expression of such an outlook must be either reactionary or nihilistic, because the person who holds it will want to prevent society from developing in some direction in which his pessimism may be cheated. Orwell thinks that one can do this either by blowing everything to pieces, or by averting any social change. He asserts that Swift ultimately blew everything to pieces in the only way that was feasible before the atomic bomb, that is, he went mad—but as he had tried to show, his political aims were on the whole reactionary.

From what he has written Orwell presumes that he may have seemed against Swift and that his object is to refute him and even to belittle him. He admits that in a political and moral sense, he is against him so far as he understands him. Yet he confesses that curiously enough Swift is one of the writers that he admires with least reserve, and Gulliver’s Travels, in
particular is a book which seems impossible for him to grow tired of. He says that he read it first when he was exactly one day short of eight. He stole it furtively and read the copy which was to be given to him next day on his eighth birthday and he remembers that he had certainly read it more than half a dozen times at least. Its fascination seems inexhaustible to him and if he had to make a list of six books which were to be preserved when all others were destroyed he is sure that he would preserve *Gulliver's Travels* as one among them. This he thinks raises the question of what precisely the relationship between an agreement with a writer's opinions, and enjoyment of his work, is.

Orwell opines that if one is capable of intellectual detachment, one can 'perceive' merit in a writer whom one deeply disagrees with, but enjoyment is a different matter. He believes that the goodness or badness of art must reside in the work of art itself, not independently of the observing indeed, but independently of the mood of the observer. Therefore, in one sense, he feels that a poem is good on Monday and bad on Tuesday. But if one judges the poem by the appreciation it arouses, then it can certainly be true, because appreciation, or enjoyment, is a subjective condition which cannot be commanded. Orwell maintains that for a great deal of his waking life, even the most cultivated person has no aesthetic feelings whatsoever, and the power to have aesthetic feelings is very easily destroyed. Orwell views that when one is frightened, or hungry, or is suffering from toothache or seasickness, *King Lear* is no better from one's point of views than *Peter Pan*. He feels that one may know in an intellectual sense that it is better, but
that is simply a fact which one remembers; one will not feel the merit of *King Lear* until one is normal again. Orwell also thinks that an aesthetic judgement can be upset just as disastrously because the cause is less readily recognized - by political or moral disagreement. He opines that a book that angers or alarms cannot be enjoyed by anyone whatever its merits may be. If it seems to one a really pernicious book, likely to influence other people in some undesirable way, then one probably constructs an aesthetic theory to show that it has no merits. In Orwell's view, current literary criticism consists quite largely of this kind of dodging to and fro between two sets of standards. And yet the opposite process can also happen: enjoyment can overwhelm disapproval, even though one clearly recognizes that one is enjoying something inimical. Swift, whose world view is thought so peculiarly unacceptable to Orwell, but who is nevertheless an extremely popular writer, is a good instance of this. Orwell wonders why we don't mind being called Yahoos although firmly convinced that we are not Yahoos.

Orwell thinks that it is not enough to make the usual answer that of course Swift was wrong; in fact he was insane, but was 'a good writer.' He also thinks it true that the literary quality of a book is to some small extent separable from its subject-matter. And as some people have a naturally 'good eye' at games, Orwell feels that some people have a native gift for using words and it is largely a question of timing and of instinctively knowing how much emphasis to give on one thing or another. As for instance he quotes the following:

“In the kingdom of Tribnia, by the Natives called Langden.” 5

In the above two sentences, Orwell mentions that much of its force derives from the final sentence and calls this the anagrammatic method. Strictly speaking, Orwell finds this sentence unnecessary as we have already seen the anagram deciphered, but the mock-solemn repetition, in which one seems to hear Swift's own voice uttering the words, drives home the idiocy of the activities described, like the final tap to a nail. But Orwell again feels that not all the power and simplicity of Swift's prose, nor the imaginative effort - none of this would enable us to enjoy Swift if his world-view were truly wounding or shocking. Orwell also believes that millions of people in many countries must have enjoyed Gulliver's Travels while more or less seeing its anti-human implications: and even the child who accepts Parts I and II as a simple story gets a sense of absurdity from thinking of human beings six inches high. Hence Orwell calls Swift as a man having a diseased mind. His explanation is that Swift's world-view is felt to be not altogether false—or it would be more accurate to say, not false all the time. In most people, the mood of depression is only intermittent but Orwell says that Swift remains permanently in a depressed mood.

Orwell accuses Swift of falsifying his picture of the whole world by refusing to see anything in human life except dirt, folly and wickedness, but the part which he abstracts from the whole does exist, and it is something which we all know about while shrinking from mentioning it. In Orwell's opinion, part of our minds—in any normal person it is the dominant part that believes that man is a noble animal and life is worth living: but there is also a sort of inner self which at least intermittently stands aghast at the horror of
existence. He also thinks that pleasure and disgust are linked together in the queerest way. He finds the human body beautiful, as well as repulsive and ridiculous. The sexual organs he views as objects of desire and also of loathing so much so that in many language their names are used as words of abuse. Again, meat is delicious but a butcher’ shop, in Orwell’s opinion, makes one feel sick and he asserts that all our food ultimately comes from dung and dead bodies. Orwell maintains that in his endless harping on disease, dirt and deformity, Swift is not actually inventing anything but he is merely leaving something out. He says that human behaviour, too, especially in politics, is as he describes it, although it contains other more important factors which he refuses to admit. Orwell believes that so far as we can see, both horror and pain are necessary to the continuance of life on this planet, and it is therefore open to pessimists like Swift to say: ‘If horror and pain must always be with us, how can life be significantly improved?’ Swift’s attitude, according to Orwell, is in effect the Christian attitude, minus the bribe of a ‘next world’ - which, however, probably has less hold upon the minds of believers than the conviction that this world is a vale of tears and the grave is a place of rest. Orwell feels certain that it is a wrong attitude, and one which could have harmful effects upon behaviour, but he still feels that something in us responds to it, as it responds to the gloomy words of the burial service and the sweetish smell of corpses in a country church.

Orwell says that it is often argued, at least by people who admit the importance of subject-matter, that a book cannot be, good if it expresses a palpably false view of life. He also mentions that in their own age, any book
that has genuine literary merit will also be more or less 'progressive' in
tendency. He feels that this ignores the fact that throughout history a similar
struggle between progress and reaction has been raging, and that the best
books of any one age have always been written from several different
viewpoints, some of them palpably more false than others. He opines that in
so far as the writer is a propagandist, the most one can ask of him is that he
shall genuinely believe in what he is saying, and that it shall not be something
blazingly silly. He quotes an example that one can imagine a good book being
written by a Catholic, a Communist, a Fascist, a Pacifist, an Anarchist,
perhaps by an old-style Liberal or an ordinary Conservative; and one cannot
imagine a good book being written by a spiritualist, a Buchmeianite or a
member of the Ku Klux Klan. And the views that a writer holds must be
compatible with sanity, in the medical sense, and with the power of
continuous thought: beyond that what we ask of him is talent, which Orwell
presumes as another name for conviction. Orwell contends that Swift did not
possess ordinary wisdom, but credits him with possessing a terrible intensity
of vision, capable of picking out a single hidden truth and then magnifying it
and distorting it. He says that the durability of Gulliver's Travels goes to show
that if the force of belief is behind it, a world-view which only just passes the
test of sanity is sufficient to produce a great work of art.