Taine's idea of the organic relationship of the moment, the man and the milieu, seems to be quite pertinent for the evaluation of Orwell's works, since these are largely the outcome of the experiences which he underwent during the course of his life. Orwell envisaged that no writer worth his salt could possibly distance himself from the events taking place around him. As he maintains in one of his essays,

... I do not think one can assess a writer's motives without knowing something of his early development. His subject matter will be determined by the age he lives in - at least this is true in tumultuous, revolutionary ages like our own ... It is his job, no doubt, to discipline his temperament and avoid getting stuck at some immature stage, or in some perverse mood: but if he escapes from his early influences altogether, he will have killed his impulse to write.¹

In relating, therefore, some of the known but symbolic facts of Orwell's life to his works we can locate some clues to the creative source of his thoughts and ethics. Even in as conscious and committed a writer as Orwell, unconscious urges, repression and fantasies finally impinge upon the creative imagination. And since
that imagination is basically ethical, it is imperative that we seek the grounds of his thoughts in his saintly and quixotic life-grounds, which led to his transformation from Eric Blair to George Orwell. Stansky and William Abraham in their book, *The Unknown Orwell* (1972) make this significant statement: “Blair was the man to whom things happened; Orwell the man who wrote about them”.

The things that happened in his life therefore, form the background to his works. It is, however, quite a problem for us to trace the link between Orwell’s background and his works because he desires no biography of him be written. He was, perhaps, uncomfortable with the idea of submitting his private life to the security of academic research and to enter into a biographical dissertation is to enter into the most private chamber of the artist or the dark room of a chemist. Neither the artist nor the chemist can willingly allow such prying.

Christopher Hollis also resents the very idea of someone attempting his biography. In his words,

George Orwell expressed a wish that no biography of him should be written and it is proper that such a wish be respected.... there is no greater vulgarian than the gossip writer who thinks of every private secret as a marketable article. The burden of justification rests upon any
one who discovers and reveals secrets contrary to an expressed wish.\textsuperscript{4}

What Christopher Hollis desires is that the wish or will of the late Orwell must be respected because the life of the novelist was full of pain and a series of defeats. This sense of defeatism finds expression in the following words of Orwell himself:

The conviction that it was not possible for me to be a success went deep enough to influence my actions till far into adult life. Until I was about thirty I always planned my life on the assumption not only that any major undertaking was bound to fail, but that I could only expect to live a few years longer.\textsuperscript{5}

Writers on Orwell, however, honoured his request till his death. But after his death researchers could not help exploring the background which shaped his creative imagination. If adhered to Christopher Hollis's contention that the tracing out of the background would be an act of sacrilege against the will of the dead novelist then this would make it impossible to understand the workings of the mind of a writer. The purpose here is not to prepare a list of his failures, but to see how, inspite of a series of defeats and failures, he could create works of art. The more failures and defeats threatened him, the more valiant he grew. Unlike Forster, defeats and failures spurred him on to write even more
prolifically and honestly. E. M. Forster wrote no novel after 1924.

In a television interview he said,

> I think one of the reasons why I stopped writing novels is that the social aspect of the world changed so much. I had been accustomed to write about the old fashioned world with its homes and its family life and its comparative peace. All that went, and though I can think about the new world, I cannot put it into fiction. ⁶

Forster abandoned novel writing with a note of warning. Orwell on the other hand continued to tell those unpleasant truths which had embittered his life and made him a disillusioned artist. If his background is not traced out, it would be difficult to know about the courage with which he fought against circumstances.

> “We must put up some sort of fight”. ⁷

Eric Blair was the second son of the three children of Richard Walmesley Blair. His pen name, George Orwell, combines a traditional English Christian name with the name of a river in Suffolk, a country where his parents lived for some time. He was born on 25th June, 1903 at Motihari in Bihar (then in Bengal). When Eric Blair was born, his father was a Sub Deputy Agent of opium department in Indian Civil Service which supervised the opium trade with China. His paternal grandfather had served in the
Indian Army and later became an Anglican clergyman. His maternal grandfather had been a teak merchant in Burma and later, a rice grower. His mother Ida Mabel Limousin also served under British Empire. Orwell’s family was part of that “upper middle class which had its heyday in the eighties nineties with Kipling as its poet laureate and was a sort of mound of wreckage left behind when the tide of Victorian prosperity receded”. When Blair was four the family returned to England and settled at Henley, though the father worked in India until his retirement in 1912. Like Thackeray, Kipling and Durrell, he spent his first few years in India before he was sent to England at the age of four for his schooling. The sudden parting of the tender child from the servants or ayahs who held him to their breasts, might have left an emotional scar. So this parting may be one of the reasons of the subsequent disillusionment. Kipling’s Something of Myself (1921) gives a lyrical description of a secure Indian childhood protected by the gentleness and affection of bearers and ayahs. And Frazer writes of Durrell that “the Indian childhood, the heat, the colour, the Kiplingesque atmosphere deeply affected the childish imagination”.

Both Thackeray and Kipling stress the wrenching trauma of leaving India at the age of five. In The Newcomes (1853)
Thackeray writes, “what a strange pathos seems to me to accompany all our Indian story: the family must be broken up ... In America it is from the breast of poor slave that a child is taken; in India it is from the wife”. Eric Blair, like Thackeray and Kipling had to leave his birth place in early childhood. With Orwell the tragedy of parting is a bit grimmer. Thackeray and Kipling had to leave India at the age of five whereas Orwell was four at the time. This reminds us of Phatik Chakraverty, the protagonist of Tagore’s Home Coming. He is taken to Kolkata off the breast of his mother and the charmed circle of his rustic friends. Orwell too might have undergone the same experience while being shifted from Motihari to England and from his house in England to preparatory school just at the age of eight. The child Blair, like Tagore’s Phatik Chakraverty, might have felt wrenched in heart. Orwell justifies his experience of bed wetting: “It is a normal reaction in children who have been removed from their home to strange place”.

Snatching Orwell from the ayah’s breast at the age of four and once again from mother’s lap to a strange place, told upon his nervous system. Hence bed wetting and his sense of loneliness; “soon after I arrived at St. Cyprain’s ... I began wetting my bed”.

At the age of eight Eric Blair was sent to a private preparatory
school in Sussex in 1911 and lived there except on school holidays. He studied there until he was 13. Though his parents were not wealthy, yet they sent Eric to a school like St. Cyprian’s where sons of only wealthy fathers could receive their education. Sir Richard Rees has made a very cogent remark- “Orwell’s family was not wealthy. His father was an official in the Bengal Civil Service. But the family’s way of life was more upper class than middle class.”

It was no doubt a matter of credit on the part of Eric’s parents to send him to a very expensive preparatory school at a great reduced terms. Orwell was from the very beginning conscious of “money stink”. Tom Hopkinson who appears to be interested in discussing in what way Orwell felt isolated from all social classes, clears his position:

Around Orwell’s cradle ... it was the bad fairies, bestowers of handicaps, who get the say first ... His family belonged to what he described as the lower-upper-middle class, worse off, in consequence, than many working class. Orwell was never able to identify himself successfully with any group or class ... Acutely aware of social divisions he felt himself to be outside them all... and it stemmed in part from the contrast between his own family background and that of the much wealthier boy with whom he
Again in a booklet on Orwell, Tom Hopkinson makes the point still more clear—“he from childhood . . . from infancy indeed — hampered by lack of money and he sees the world as a succession of money rackets”.

Thus his early years bred nothing but pain and inferiority complex which left a deep scar on the mind of the young Eric. Those early years were merely a prelude to the period of deprivation and bitterness that awaited him in the years to come. What contributed most apart from his unsound economy, to the young Eric’s consciousness was the gnawing feeling of class distinction:

I was very young, not more than six, when I first became aware of class distinction. Before that age my chief heroes had generally been working-class people because they always seemed to do such interesting things such as being fisher-men and blacksmiths and brick layers ... To me in my early boyhood, to nearly all children of families like mine ‘Common’ people seemed almost sub-human.

Orwell’s parents kept him at a safe distance from what the writer terms “common people”. Being intellectually honest, Orwell felt it very seriously in his later years. His being kept away from the common people might have unsettled the sensitive boy. This state
of Orwell’s mind reminds us of Katherine Mansfield’s story *The Doll’s House* in which the children of economically unsound families are strictly forbidden to talk to the children of economically sound ones. This social ostracism finds a fitting expressions in the instruction given to Burnel children by their parents- "‘You know as well as I do you are not allowed to talk to them. Run away children, run away at once and don't come back again’, said aunt Beryl. And she stepped into the yard and shooed them out as if they were chicken.”¹⁷

Orwell too, perhaps had such experiences of being forbidden by his parents to talk with what he terms “sub-human” or what Katherine Mansfield calls “chicken”. His hatred against his father and lack of emotional warmth for his mother is possibly because of their snobbery; “one ought to love one’s father but I know very well that I merely disliked my father who had barely seen me before when I was eight and who appeared to me simply as a gruffed-voiced elderly gentleman for ever saying ‘do not’.”¹⁸

Hence it is clear that Orwell was an unhappy person from the very beginning and certain incidents left their scar in his sensitive mind. There is nothing new about Orwell’s dislike for his father. This sort of archetypal father-son clash is to be seen even in Kafka and
Dostoevsky. In Freudian terms, for instance, a good deal of Kafka’s metaphysical dread could be related to his tortured and warped relations with his father whom he regarded with great awe and unconscious loathing. Dostoevsky’s agony may also be partly explained thus. To young Eric his father was undoubtedly a symbol of authoritarianism which was by birth like a cruel ghost to him. Big Brother complex in *Nineteen Eighty Four* is perhaps the outcome of his inner revolt against authoritarianism. Though he felt love for his mother, he did not allow even her to have a full view of his inner spiritual landscape. He felt somewhat cut off from elderly people “by a veil of fear and shyness mixed up with physical distance.”

This sense of loneliness and alienation is the hallmark of the major protagonists in Orwell’s fiction too. Orwell, a member of a society which is quite uncongenial to him, watches it from a distance, utterly powerless to do anything as in “Shooting An Elephant”.

In Orwell the loneliness can be traced back to his early life. From the very beginning maintaining human relationships was difficult for him. He had no liking for his father, nor much of love for his mother or his siblings either. He married very late and begot no child. He was a childless father—he adopted a son, Richard Horatio
Blair, in the year 1944. No novel of Orwell except *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* represents any good human relationship. This leads us to think that because of strained relationship with the world, he didn’t let any character of his novel lead a happy life. His life at St. Cyprian’s was even more bitter and he was even more disillusioned there. It can perhaps be said that the seed of disillusionment was sown in his mind at St. Cyprian’s.

The patent themes of his novels are authority, guilt, cruelty, helplessness, isolation and misery, which he himself experienced in his life at St. Cyprian’s. It is here that he was transformed into a neurotic – having this “profound conviction that I was no good, that I was wasting my time, wrecking my talents, behaving with monstrous folly and wickedness and ingratitude – and all this, it seemed, was inescapable.”

It is in his autobiographical sketch “Such Such were the Joys” that Orwell has given fairly adequate account of this remarkable phase of his life. So the title of this essay appears to have been ironically framed. Orwell, basically an intellectually honest man, when admitted in the school, was the most disillusioned man. His ideas and high values of life were smashed to pieces. He could not bear the pain of snobbery, cruelty, authoritarianism of the head-master
and his wife and of money worship, of hatred of the rich class against the economically weaker sections of society. His own account of this snobbishness in school is worth noting:

Cross-gates was an expensive and snobbish school which was in the process of becoming more snobbish, and I imagine more expensive. The public school with which it had special connections was Harrow, but during my time an increasing proportion of the boys went on to Eton. Most of them were the children of rich parents; but on the whole they were the unaristocratic rich, the sort of people who live in huge shrubberried houses in Bourne-mouth or Richmond, and who have cars and butlers but not country estates. There were a few exotics among them... some such American boys, sons of Argentine beef barons, one of two Russians and even a Siamese prince or someone who was described as a prince.\(^{21}\)

The snobbery and superiority complex of the boys born of rich parents told on the nerves of the boys economically inferior to them. Orwell illustrates it with an anecdote. A Russian boy once asked Orwell how much money his father had a year? Orwell thought to defend himself by adding a few hundred to this estimate of his family income. But the Russian was not to leave him so easily. He hastily did some calculation and declared "my father has over two hundred times as much as yours."\(^{22}\) Orwell therefore
developed a sense of inferiority complex which was planted in his mind in the school and remained there throughout his life. He confesses, "In a world where the prime necessities were money, titled relatives, athleticism, tailor-made clothes, neatly brushed hair, a charming smile, I was no good."²³

Thus every breath of him was an agonised sigh in the preparatory school because it was quite a problem to get along with other boys. He always felt that he could by no means put himself at par with them for the sole reason that his parents were not rich. Not only that, this distinction was not restricted to the boys only, but even the headmaster and his wife looked down upon the boys coming from economically unsound background:

The boys of the scholarship class were not all treated alike. If a boy were the son of rich parents to whom the saving of fees was not all important, Sambo would goad him along in a comparatively fatherly way, with jokes and digs in the ribs and perhaps an occasional tap with the pencil, but no hair-pulling and no caning. It was the poor but clever boys who suffered. Our brains were a gold-mine in which he had sunk money, and the dividends must be squeezed out of us. Long before I had grasped the nature of my financial relationship with Sambo, I had been made to understand that I was not on the same footing as most of the other boys."²⁴
The treatment meted out to Eric by Sambo and Flip – they called him “a little office boy at 40 pounds a year”25 - was very painful for the young boy. Flip used to tell him, “you know you are not going to grow up with money, don’t you? You people are not rich. You must learn to be sensible. Don’t get above yourself”.26

Thus the young boy kept on watching the injustice, the inhumanity and discrimination with anguish and kept nurturing revulsion against authorities. The following lines smack of his ingrained hatred for Flip and Sambo:

What should I think of Sambo and Flip, those terrible, all-powerful monsters? I should see them as a couple of silly, shallow, ineffectual people, eagerly clambering up a social ladder which any thinking person could see to be on the point of collapse. I would no more be frightened of them than I would be frightened of a doormouse.27

Symbolically Orwell’s hatred is not against Sambo and Flip but against authoritarianism at large. Orwell’s works- be they novels, journalism, essay, letters, or articles- are an organized call against cruelty, suppression, tyranny and exploitation wherever and in whatever shape he sees them. This was the young Orwell moulded by St. Cyprian’s.
Let us now switch over to Eton and see how far it influenced Orwell. Although Orwell himself later on comments that he did no work there and learned very little and he felt that Eton had not been much of a formative influence on his life, but some influence must have been left on his mind since he lived there from 1917 to 1921.

He seemed to be comparatively happy there. His quietude of mind at Eton—which stands in bold contrast to his mental torment at St. Cyprian’s—can be traced in his essay, “My Country, Right or Left”. Referring to the death of John Cornford in Spain, he observes, “The young Communist who died heroically in the International Brigade was public school to the core”.^28

At Eton there was a sudden change in his personality and mentality. Here he was no longer a stage rebel, a mute spectator of the evils from a distance. He turned into an iconoclast, threatening a revolt against authority. There grew in him seriousness of puritanic sincerity. For example, once John Grace, the master in College who had felt offended over a reference he believed Blair had made to him in a burlesque in College Days, announced that “‘Blair, either you or I must go’. Pat came the reply, ‘I am afraid it will have to be you, sir’.”^29 The second thing Eton gave to Orwell was the friendship with Conolly, Anthony Powell, Cecil Beatan and Sir
Steven Runisiman. Aldous Huxley who taught him English and French from 1917 to 1919 was one of Orwell’s teachers who influenced him a great deal. But to say that Orwell enjoyed Eton very much and in Eton he was a satisfied man would be to misrepresent things. Firstly, the seed of failure and disappointment had already been sown in his mind at St. Cyprian’s. The sense of being no good remained with him throughout his life. He always struggled under the premonition of a dark future, and this premonition which he was seized with in early years was carried over to Eton. Even at Eton, Orwell’s basic problems remained unsolved. The basic problem was money crisis which is testified to by George Bott’s remarks with reference to the years Orwell spent at Eton, “The demon of the empty purse was gnawing at him”. It is true that Eton did not add much to his outlook, yet it paved the way for him to be revolutionary by temperament:

Orwell was so wholly unique a character that if knowing nothing of him, I had been shown his work and asked to guess whence he had sprung, I should not perhaps have known how to answer but if I had been told—which would not have seemed to me an improbability - that he was a public school boy, I should certainly have guessed that he was an Eton Colleger, for I think that at Eton that peculiar excess of individualism is more kindly treated than elsewhere. And old Etonian is far more likely to dare to be a Danial.”
And Orwell himself remarks:

At that time we all thought of ourselves as enlightened creatures of a new age, casting off the orthodoxy that have been forced upon us. And again, I was against all authority. I had read and re-read the entire published works of Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy.  

Hence, it is here that we find Orwell mature enough to understand the world and to cast off orthodoxies and to ascend to the first rung of revolutionary ladder. Hollis holds the same view; “Orwell was a rebel among the rebellious generation of school days”. Thus Eton also had its influence on the shaping of his mind, and if we neglect Eton we would miss the clue to his revolutionary temperament. The seed of his revolutionary temperament which is reflected in his writing was sown at Eton.

Whatever Orwell has written, like Shaw’s works, savours of bitter truth. The five years in Burma embittered Orwell’s mind against the authorities. He found, to his utter dismay, a credibility gap caused by differences between what he knew about British humanitarianism and what he saw of it in practice in Burma. Burma was larger, bigger and more powerful than St. Cyprian’s. Here cruelty, snobbery and authoritarianism were unlimited. At the preparatory school, those in authority appeared to the sensitive boy
a little short of being an army of bullies. Similarly in Burma his freedom was ruthlessly stifled by his cold-blooded superiors. In a way the situation in Burma was even worse. Here he was not only the oppressed but also the oppressor. He had to exercise that abominably evil thing – authority. Christopher Hollis, who had the opportunity to meet Orwell in Burma in the summer of 1925, has written about his mental state in the following words:

In the side of him which he revealed to me at that time there was no trace of liberal opinions. He was at pains to be the imperial police man explaining that these theories of no punishment and no beating were all very well at public schools but that they did not work with the Burmese.  

While in Burma, the inner conflict between his conscience and action kept troubling him throughout his stay there. The conflict is reflected in his essays, “Shooting An Elephant”, “Hanging”, some of the passages of Burmese days and The Road to Wigan Pier. The first phase of “Shooting an Elephant” betrays Orwell’s dilemma whether to support the unruly mob of the Burmese or to exercise his policemanship. He began to consider imperialism as something evil and he prophesied its instant collapse:

I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole
body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him, he seemed to tower upwards like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.  

The falling of the elephant symbolizes the disintegration of the British Empire. And hence “Shooting an Elephant” is, in a sense prophetic, inasmuch as it foretells the break-up of the British Empire. The white man’s burden, and his hatred against the natives of Burma can be seen in “A Hanging” where a Hindu prisoner is mercilessly hanged.

*Burmesse Days* is a novel written in the late autumn of 1931. Here Orwell has in greater detail exposed the bane of imperialism and his mental agony consequent upon his growing awareness of the role he was called upon to play:

The landscapes of Burma, which when I was among them, so appalled me as to assume the qualities of a nightmare afterwards and it stayed so hauntingly in my mind that I was obliged to write a novel about them to get rid of them.  

The hatred of the English for the native finds a fitting expression in
the following lines of Ellis:

Here we are, supposed to be governing a set of damn black swines who have been slaves since the beginning of history, and instead of ruling them in the only way they understand, we go and treat them as equals.\textsuperscript{37}

Burmese women were shabbily treated. They were no better than prostitutes. Flory's sexual enjoyment with Ma Hela May and his words to her "'Go away, go away', he said angrily. 'Look in the pocket of my shorts. There is money there. Take five rupees and go'"\textsuperscript{38} are tell-tale pictures.

The injustice, cruelty and tyranny of the English to which Orwell was a witness began to disillusion him. He began to creak under the ever-growing weight of guilt. The following lines reiterate the position of Orwell much more clearly:

I was in the Indian Police for five years, and by the end of that time I hated the imperialism I was serving with a bitterness which I probably cannot make clear. In the free air of England that kind of thing is not fully intelligible. In order to hate imperialism you have got to be part of it. Seen from the outside the British rule in India appears... indeed it is... benevolent and even necessary: and so no doubt are the French rule in Morocco and the Dutch rule in Borneo, for people usually govern foreigners better than they govern themselves.\textsuperscript{39}
In August 1927 Orwell went home on leave as a rather “frayed Saheb”\textsuperscript{40} From August 1927 to June 1936, his marriage with Eileen O’Shanghnesy Orwell added some new experiences to his artistic sensibility. The first important event was his resignation from Burmese Police Service and the other, his journey to Paris in the spring of 1928. Leaving Burmese Service in those days when there was a job crisis and job outside England was a matter of comfort, money and power, was really a risky step. As Fyvel observes, “...in actual fact he had found it difficult to find work on returning from Burma. He had little money, few social connections and no special trade; and it was a time of unemployment; a respectable job would have been difficult enough.”\textsuperscript{41}

His sole motive behind leaving Burmese Service and plunging into the gutters of Paris and London instead seemed to be to experience failure in its most painful form.

When we ponder on Orwell's bold steps in leaving Burmese Service and going into the world of gutter people of Paris and London, we feel that they had something to do with his guilty conscience. His conscience was perhaps pricked because of the role he had to play in Burma as a tool of despotism.
prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my fist in moments of rage..... haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate.42

Orwell wanted to expiate and atone for the cruelty he had perpetuated on the peasants, the coolies, the prisoners of Burma by subjecting himself to the life of gutters in Paris and London. This was why he wanted to feel the pangs of the gutter’s life with his own pulse. So his flight to France was not an escape from the respectable world, but it was, as Atkins maintains, “something much more passionate, resembling a love affair with the rejected of this world”.43 As a matter of fact, Orwell desired to submit himself to some kind of what can be termed as ‘endurance-test’.

The other major event which left an everlasting impact on Orwell’s mind was the Spanish Civil War which broke out in July 1936. Orwell went to Spain in December. One notable thing is that he did not attend the Literary Congress, did not meet other writers like Hemingway and Dos Passos, Pablo Neruda and Rafeel Alberti, who often gathered at Hotel Florids on the Granwia in Madrid, and didn’t join the more famous organizations like Nalraux Escadre Espans and International Brigade which attracted most foreigners.
Instead, Orwell got enlisted in the rather obscure and ill-equipped Anarchist POUM militia at the Lenin Barracks in Barcelona where the shabby clothes and gay coloured revolutionary posters, the universal use of the word “Comrade” and the anti-fascist ballads printed on flimsy papers and sold for a penny created an atmosphere of international solidarity. For the first time in his life socialism to Orwell seemed a reality—something worth fighting for. Class distinction seemed to have evaporated. There was a shortage of everything, but there was equality. By January 1937, he was in action on the Aragon Front. He was wounded in the throat. Three and a half months later when he returned to Barcelona, he found it a changed city. No longer a place where the word ‘comrade’ was really felt to mean something. It was a city limping back to normalcy with the workers no longer in the saddle. Worse, he was to find that the group he was with, the POUM, was now accused of being a fascist militia secretly helping France. Orwell had to sleep in the open for fear of showing his papers and eventually managed to escape into France with his wife. His account of his days in Spain was published in “Homage to Catalonia” in 1938.

Orwell’s experiences in Spain left two impressions on his mind: firstly, they showed him that socialism in action was a human possibility, if only a temporary one. He never forgot the
exhilaration of those first few days in Barcelona, where a new society seemed possible, where the word "comradeship", instead of being a political term, became a reality for him. On the other hand, the experience of the city returning to normalcy was a gloomy confirmation of the idea we have seen before, that there is something in human nature that seeks violence and conflict, and power over others. Clearly these two impressions, of hope on one hand, and of despair on the other were entirely contradictory. Nevertheless, despite despair, the overall impression was an optimistic one. In the end, while preparing to leave Spain, he came to the conclusion that he had seen wonderful things, and at last really believed in socialism. The ordinary decent people of Spain were capable of uniting to oppose the power that would try to oppress them. But as time went by, Orwell’s view of things was to darken, and he developed an overwhelming sense of the futility of man’s efforts to improve his lot. Evidence of this can be seen in increasing despair in Animal Farm. The whole book seems just one long groan of hopelessness.

While looking at the puzzling question of Orwell’s differing attitudes to socialism, it would be well to remember that the period in which he was learning his craft as a writer—the 1930’s—was the decade when Hitler and Mussolini came to power—the decade of
fascism. Hitler called the Nazi party a Nationalist Socialist Party, an example of the abuse and distortion of language for political ends that greatly disgusted Orwell. And yet it seemed to Orwell and to many writers of the time, among them W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis Mac Neice and Christopher Isherwood, that some form of socialism, which would protect the individual, and his freedom to see things for himself, was the only defence against the advancing fascist armies. The only trouble was, as Orwell pointed out in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, that socialism itself was inclined to insist that the writer should suppress his own view of things when they were in conflict with what the party thought. This for Orwell was the end of a writer as a creative artist, because creativity was, first and foremost for Orwell, a matter of being able to see things for oneself. To Orwell, the freedom to be different within one’s society was all important. This feature of socialism, of having an inbuilt streak of fascism can be seen in *Animal Farm* in the way the socialist revolution against the humans gives way to a fascist dictatorship under the pigs.

In 1938 Orwell became ill with tuberculosis, a recurrence of his childhood disease. Later in the month of March 1938, he went into a sanatorium at Preston Hall, Aylies Fort, Kent. On 25th April "Homage to Catalonia" was published. The doctors had advised
him to spend the winter in a warm climate, and on 2\textsuperscript{nd} September he and his wife set sail for Morocco. They arrived at Moraquash on 12\textsuperscript{th} September and later in the month Orwell started writing \textit{Coming up for Air}. It was published in 1939, the year of long threatened war between England and Germany. Here the enemy was very clearly a fascist and Orwell wanted to fight as he had fought in Spain, but was declared unfit by the doctors. Anthony Powell writes:

The bad health that prevented him from taking an active part in the war was a terrible blow to Orwell. He saw himself as a man of action and felt passionately about the things for which the country was fighting. When he heard Evelyn Waugh was serving with a commando unit, he said, ‘why cannot someone on the Left ever do something like that’.

The year 1943 was in several ways a turning point. In March Orwell’s mother died. He had to leave the Home Guard because he was ill and he left the B.B.C to become the Literary Editor of the “Tribune” whose Director was Auncurian Bevan. In that newspaper Orwell began his amusing and idiosyncratic “As I Please” column which he continued for the next four years, his subjects ranging from the New Year Honours List to the ugliest building in the world. In the fag end of the year he began writing \textit{Animal Farm}
which was completed in February 1944 and he was shocked when it was rejected for political reasons by Golanoz, Cape & Faber. T. S. Eliot, a director of Faber, softened the blow by praising the literary merits of the satire against the ‘Russian Ally’:

We agree that it is a distinguished piece of writing, that the fable is very skilfully handled, and that the narrative keeps one’s interest on its own plane and that is something very few authors have achieved since Gulliver... But we have no conviction that this is the right point of view from which to criticise the political situation at the present time.45

Orwell was quite naturally frustrated. *Animal Farm* was, in fact, published by Warburg in August 1945, at a crucial moment in world history. In the previous four months Roosevelt, Mussolini and Hitler had died. Churchill had been voted out of office, Germany had surrendered and on 6th August 1945, the atom bomb had exploded over Hiroshima. Of the Big Three only Stalin survived. That month was also a turning point in Orwell’s life; for half a million copies of *Animal Farm* were sold through the American Book of the Month Club and he became financially successful for the first time in his life. Towards the end of the war in Europe Orwell travelled to France and later to Germany and Austria as a reporter. He and his wife had adopted a son in 1944
but in March 1945, his wife died during an operation. The adoption of the child (Richard Horatio Blair), the unexpected death of Eileen, tremendous success of the *Animal Farm* and a serious deterioration in his own health completely transformed Orwell’s life within a few months. Despite, or perhaps because of the death of his wife, Orwell refused to give up his adopted son. He kept a goat in his backyard to provide milk for Richard, who was cared for by several housekeepers until Orwell’s younger sister, Avrill came to live with him in 1946.

Orwell had first visited the island of Jura in the Hebrides in September 1945 and returned to live there in the winter of 1946. His wife’s death and his own stern asceticism and distaste for social life created in him a perverse compulsion to lead the arduous and exhausting existence on the rainy island, far from medical assistance in a country that he, like Samuel Johnson, professed to dislike. The suicidal decision to live on Jura where he wrote *Nineteen Eighty Four*, hastened the terminal phase of his grave illness. Like Lawrence, Orwell seems to have had defective lungs since boyhood, for in “Such Such were the Joys” he writes ‘after the age of 10, I was seldom in good health... I had defective bronchial tube and a lesion in one lung which was not discovered till many years later’. Orwell perhaps believed, like Keats, that
‘until we are sick, we understand not’. The relation between Orwell’s disease and his heart was very close, and he states that writing a book was a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. *Nineteen Eighty Four* is a novel whose central metaphor is disease.

Since the closing years of nineteenth century certain marked changes in the economic and social field were perceptible. The economic and social forces which were found actively operating in these decades appear to have a rich potential for drastic consequences. Before the Industrial Revolution, agriculture was the stable source of income of the general mass in England. But the new economic and social forces which came as a widespread phenomenon shocked the conservatives. In short, agrarian life in pre-revolution days had an organization of its own. But since the beginning of the twentieth century the slump in agriculture continued, though indeed it was in the period between the two world wars that the worst came. S. R. Clough and C.W. Cole give an authentic account of this phase in the following words:

Agriculture, which provided direct employment for more persons than all other branches of European Employment together was in an almost continuous slump from 1920-1940. By the end of the First World War however adjustment to this
situation had been in a large part made but the war itself once more upset the applecart.\textsuperscript{46}

From a close survey of the available records and data it would appear that in the cut-throat competition between agriculture and industry, the former was doomed to suffer and it must be pointed out here that at this moment of transition, the highly sensitive consciences apprehended that the impending agricultural tragedy might result in an incalculable loss to human values. Perhaps the first novelist and poet to take note of these serious questions was Thomas Hardy. To him the growing menace of urbanisation appeared singularly appalling. So he strived to convey his deep sense "of the antiquity of man and still the greater antiquity of the earth."\textsuperscript{47} The other novelists like D. H. Lawrence and George Orwell found that the decline of the rural way of life still had a shadier side to it. Their agonizing sense of disillusionment is marked thus-

"The utter negation of the gladness of life... the stacks of soap in the grocer's shops, the rhubarb and lemons In the green grocers; all went by, ugly, ugly, ugly... the great lorries full of steel-workers from Sheffield. Ah, what has man done to man?... They have reduced them to less than humans and now there can be no fellowship any more; it is just a nightmare."\textsuperscript{48}
And Orwell’s disillusionment was no less pinching. He observes:

I’d come to Lower Binfield with a question in my mind. What’s need of us? Is the game really up? Can we get back to the life we used to live, or is it gone forever? Well, I’d had my answer. The old life’s finished, and to go about looking for it is just a waste of time. There’s way back to Lower Binfield. You can’t put Jonah back into the whale. I knew, though I don’t expect you to follow my train of thought. And it was a queer thing I’d done by coming here. All those years at Lower Binfield had been tucked away somewhere or other in my mind, a sort of quiet corner that I could step back into when I felt like it, and finally I’d stepped back into it and found that it didn’t exist. I’d chucked a pine-apple into my dreams, and lest there should be any mistake the Royal-Air Force had followed up with five hundred of T.N.T.⁴⁹

Thus a sense of dissatisfaction with the present world and a disillusionment with it developed in almost every novelist of the 1920’s. The general belief of every novelist was that the past was golden and the best period of life. Orwell was no exception to it. In the following passage in Keep the Aspidistra Flying he is shown as one faced with the agonizing realization that- “It was the lack of money, simply the lack of money that robbed him of the power to write. He clung to that as to an article of faith. Money, money all is money.”⁵⁰
He was a poet and his sad experiences of poverty ate into his very vitals. In one of his poems, “St. Andrew’s Day” (later incorporated into the novel *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*), Orwell describes the dismal poverty of the clerks and seeks to explain how and why they abuse themselves to the money-god—“They think of rent rates, season tickets, insurance, coal, the skivy's wages, boots, school-bills, and the next instalment upon the two twin beds from Drage’s”.

In fact the “economic man” destined to a life of misery and humiliation is doomed to fight the money-god forever. Even his love fails, for he cannot afford it. “Money, money, always money; even in the bridal bed, the figure of the money-god intruding; in the heights or in the depths, he is there”.

In the twentieth century Victorian ethos noted for a moral earnestness suffered a serious setback. Society was divided into several classes. The upper and middle classes were impelled by a strong desire to adopt a kind of fascist attitude towards the rest of society. There was, apart from other classes, a shabby gentle family. It was what Orwell says “the lower-upper-middle class”. According to Orwell, this class was raised on the spoils of the upper middle class. Before the war, the upper middle class was a fairly strong force, though none too prosperous:
April 6, 2005

The Assistant Controller
Office of the Controller of Examinations
And Admissions
(Research Unit)
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh-202002

Dear Sir,


The report is being sent separately.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

(KAPIL KAPOOR)
... Before the war, you were either a gentleman or not a gentleman, and if you were a gentleman you struggled to behave as such, whatever your income might be ... probably the distinguishing mark of the upper-middle class was that its traditions were not to any extent commercial, but mainly military, official, and professional. People in this class owned no land, but they felt that they were land owners in the sight of God and kept up a semi-aristocratic outlook by going into the professions and the fighting services rather than into trade.\(^5\)

Orwell himself belonged to this class which is described thus:

Rent and clothes and school-bills are an unending nightmare, and every luxury, even a glass of beer, is an unwarrantable extravagance. Practically the whole family income goes in keeping up appearances. It is obvious that people of this kind are in an anomalous position ... the real importance of this class is that they are the shock-absorbers or the bourgeoisie.\(^4\)

It is therefore very easy to conclude that in this “anachronistic” class system which had emerged in the 30’s, the people developed a tendency to a growing distrust of personal relationships, where annihilation of traditional values and shattering of faith were marked. And when the war ended it left only heaps of ashes—ashes of people’s hopes and dreams. *The Brave New World* never came. The disillusioned people saw that it was an appalling wasteland.
Orwell was eleven years old when the First World War began. Naturally he might have seen with his eyes naked and mind mature the total crises of the time. And David Daiches beautifully and vividly pictures the society in the following words:

In the Restoration period the seduction of a girl by a young man was a comedy; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was a tragedy; but in all cases it was something significant, one way or the other. To a twentieth-century mind it might well be neither comedy nor tragedy—simply a wholly unimportant details.55

In the 1920's, unemployment soared and social and welfare services remained woefully inadequate and the people were subjected to degrading conditions of eligibility such as the infamous “means test” and the rigorous application of the “genuinely seeking work” clause; and the gap between rich and poor remained as wide and as visible as it has been in the nineteenth century when Benjamin Disraeli had spoken of “two nations” in Britain. In the war of 1914-18 British losses in both men and materials were very heavy. Nearly a million men from the United Kingdom and the Empire were killed. 40% of her shippings had been sunk. The national debt had increased enormously. Her exports which had declined even before the war were now reduced to half. There were many reasons for this. Britain had lost many of
her powerful world markets. Germany was now supplying coal and iron to France and Italy. Europe had been impoverished and had little purchasing power. The spread of the Industrial Revolution had brought in new competitions. China, Japan, and India were now producing cotton which was formerly supplied by Lancashire. The coal mining industry of Britain was the hardest hit, for petrol and electricity had replaced steam power in other countries. Besides, Britain had fallen behind other countries in the applications of newer and improved methods of industrial production.

Decline in exports compelled British industries to reduce production, and this in turn resulted in unemployment. Unemployment, of course, existed in Britain even before the war, but in the post-war years it assumed alarming proportions. By the end of 1931, the number of the unemployed had reached three million. In 1933 George Orwell in his letter to Brenda Salkeld painfully admitted:

A few years ago I thought it rather fun to reflect that our civilization is doomed, but now it fills me above all else with boredom to think of the horrors that will be happening within 10 years—either some appalling calamity, with revolution and famine—or else all round trustification and fordification, with the entire population reduced
to docile wage-slaves, our lives utterly in the hands of the bankers, and a fearful tribe of Lady Astors and Lady Rhonddas let hoc genus riding us like succubi in the name of progress.56

The problem of unemployment was so grim by that time that the young men started a movement called NUWM (National Unemployed Workers' Movement). The condition of the working class was grim. The sad and tragic lot of the workers in mines has been depicted in Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

In literary history, the period of the 1930s is termed as the "political decade". It was the period of totalitarianism in Russia, Germany and Italy, an era of concentration camps, secret police and "framed" political trials and complete mobilization of whole societies for war.

With the rise Communism,Nazism and Fascism, Individualism began to be important. The rule of law was replaced by that of the leader and his "torture chambers". It was almost impossible to ignore these public, political realities, and to live a wholly private life, or to play the role of an indifferent artist. Moral anarchy threatened to destroy civilization. So writers were morally obliged to face the world, to commit themselves to turning art into action. But the response of writers to this inner and external pressure was
not uniform. Some of them resisted it entirely, or by-passed the question of ethics. They took shelter in a sort of protective aestheticism, as for instance, Proust who developed a highly personal type of quietism, and Henry James who could not go beyond the ethics of personal relationships. As for W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot, they sought salvation in art, mysticism and orthodox Christianity. In their devotion to art, some at least sought support from the doctrine of impersonality, and did not confront the problem of the relationship of art and life.

In view of such a critical situation of a world embittered by the two major events of the defeat of the Spanish Government in the Spanish war and Hitler-Soviet Pact, it was odd to write novels of merely slovenly and haphazard conglomeration of description. Hence the novelists of the 30’s discussed the political problems in their novels.

1934 onwards was the crucial age. For the middle and late thirties Auden, etc. were the leaders of a movement. And the movement was in the direction of some rather “ill-defined” thing called communism. As early as 1934 or 1935 it was considered eccentric in literary circles not to be more or less Left and in the following year there had grown up a Left wing orthodoxy. The idea that a
writer must either be actively Left or Right had begun to gain ground. Between 1935 and 1939 the communist party had an almost irresistible fascination for any writer under forty. For about three years in fact, the central stream of English Literature was more or less under communist control. 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. Franz Brokenan in his book *The Communist International* says that communism would have never developed along its present lines if any real revolutionary feeling had existed in the industrialized countries. In England for instance, it is obvious that no such feeling had existed. It was only natural therefore, that the English communist movement should be controlled by people who were mentally subservient to Russia and had no real aim except to manipulate British policy in the Russian interest.

In 1935 the face of Europe changed and left wing politics changed with it. Hitler rose to power and began to rearm Germany. As Hitler’s three targets of attacks were Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R., the three countries were forced into a sort of uneasy “rapprochement”. This meant that the English or the French communist was obliged to become a good patriot and imperialist.
There were slogans like “World Revolution” and “Stop Hitler”. The years 1935 to 1939 were the period of anti-fascism. It was this reason that during the anti-fascist phase all the younger English writers gravitated towards communism. In 1935 it was hardly possible, therefore, to remain politically indifferent:


By 1937 the whole of the intelligentsia was mentally at war. Left wing thought had narrowed down to anti-fascism i.e. a negative literature directed against Germany. In 1938 Orwell declared that if fascism triumphed he was finished as a writer and “one has to be actively a socialist, not merely sympathetic to socialism”.

Orwell’s disillusionment with Communist Party had started from Spain where he saw the real picture of the Soviet Russia:

The real struggle is between revolution and counter-revolution; between the workers who are vainly trying to hold on to a little of what they won in 1936, and the liberal-communist bloc who are so successfully taking it away from them. It is unfortunate that so few people in England have yet caught up with the fact that communism is now a counter-revolutionary force; that communist everywhere are in alliance.
with bourgeois reformism and using the whole of their powerful machinery to crush or discredit any party that shows signs of revolutionary tendencies.\textsuperscript{59}

And his disillusionment was not simple disillusionment merely but it extended to his hatred against the communist U.S.S.R.:

Indeed, in my opinion, nothing has contributed so much to the corruption of the original idea of Socialism as the belief that Russia is a Socialist country and that every act of its rulers must be excused, if not imitated.\textsuperscript{60}

The politics of 1946-50 can be traced to the idealism and the radicalization of the war years, spilled over, with declining forces, into the post-war period. Labour's peace-time policies owe much to "progressive" propaganda and activity launched by the outbreak of the war in 1939. These policies gathered momentum in the wake of Dunkirk debacle of June 1940. Men who had vacillated over extension of state control over the economy and full-blooded policies of nationalization were quickly converted by their wartime experiences. One was Wallism Beveridge, who can fairly be regarded as one of the two patron saints of post-war reconstruction and the other was Keynes, who had during the 1930's, expressed serious doubts about his youthful enthusiasm for centralized social policy. Beveridge had rejected the radical interventionist ideas of
Keynes' *General Theory of Employments* and *Interest and Money*, and when they appeared in 1936 in the year of Dunkirk he abruptly came out with a comprehensive scheme of collectivist and egalitarian social reform.

But the Second World War was to be the necessary and decisive catalyst. It was not simply that as with the First World War, the state was once more forced to mobilize the economy and society in an even more comprehensive case of "total war". The context of that intervention had now changed making it impossible to conceive of a return to pre-war practices once the war was over. The scale and complexity of the operation meant that the trade union had to be brought directly into the Government. It was also true of businessmen and scientists and economists like Keynes. Kingsley Wood's budget of 1941 was the first truly Keynesian budget even making possible "macro-economic" regulation of the economy. Like the incorporation of important "functional" groups - trade unions, businessmen, doctors, farmers - it was to be a permanent feature of the British Government.

At the same time, the Second World War demanded a mobilization of physical resources. This called for a major and unprecedented effort of education for citizenship - an effort applying as much to
the largely conscript army as to the civilians of the home front. The Coalition Government, despite the fears of some of its members at the radicalizing potential of the venture, put its weight behind a programme of cultural mobilization the like of which had never before been seen in England.

The arts were encouraged on a wide scale through ENSA (the Entertainments National Service Association) and CEMA (the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts). Wide ranging political and social discussions took place among the troops through the activities of the Army Education Corps and the Army Bureau of Current Affairs. The BBC consolidated its position in the war years as the cultural spokesman of the nation. Priestly, George Orwell, William Empson, Louis Mac Neice, and Herbert Read—all found a reception here. The most celebrated members of the Brain Trust—Julian Huxley, C.E.M. Joad and Barbara Ward—were left-wing luminaries. Orwell wrote in 1943 that

the British Government started the present war with the more or less openly declared intention of keeping the literary intelligentsia out of it; yet after three years of war almost every writer, however undesirable his political history or opinions, has been sucked into the various Ministries or the BBC and even those who enter the armed forces tend to find themselves after a
while in Public Relations or some other essentially literary job. The Government has absorbed these people, unwillingly enough, because it found itself unable to get on without them.\footnote{61}

But Orwell knew that this was only one side of the story. The government was not engaged in cultural activities purely for Machiavellian reasons of state but out of its own need for propaganda. It is just as true to say that it was pushed into action by the popular feeling unleashed by the war, to which it was compelled to respond and to harness as best as it could. Orwell himself has put it so well:

The English revolution started several years ago, and it began to gather momentum when the troops came back from Dunkirk... If one wishes to name a particular moment, one can say that the old distinction between Right and Left broke down when Picture Post was first published. What are the politics of Picture Post? Or of Cavalcade, or Priestley's broadcasts, or the leading articles in the Evening Standard? None of the old classifications will fit. They merely point to the existence of multitudes of unlabelled people who have grasped within the last year or two that something is wrong. But since a classless, ownerless society is generally spoken of as 'Socialism', we can give that name to society towards which we are now moving. The war and the revolution are inseparable.\footnote{62}
Soon the English revolution and the prospects for socialism appeared bleak to Orwell. But he had pointed to the essential phenomenon, the rise of a radical egalitarian spirit across party lines and for a while even across the lines of class and culture.

Thus Orwell, being disillusioned on all fronts; St. Cyprian’s, at Burma, in Paris and London, in Spain, by communism in Soviet Russia and by socialism in England, turned into a “radical pessimist”. He saw the hollowness of idealism woven around political institutions before and after the world wars. He was against everything which stank, everything that was tripe and cabbage, every decay and putrefaction in himself and in society. And there was no compromise. Orwell, therefore, is exactly what he is in his writings. Truly “Blair was the man to whom things happened; Orwell, the man who wrote about them”.

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