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Introduction

George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair on 25 June 1903, in Motihari, a small town in Bengal near the Nepalese border, and in the middle of a highly productive opium district. His father was there working as an agent for the British Opium Department, not arresting growers but supervising quality control of the product, in which Britain had long enjoyed a monopoly. A year later, young Eric was back in England with his mother and sister, and did not return to the region until 1922, as a junior officer of the Indian Imperial Police, in Burma. That job paid well, but when he came home on leave in 1927, much to the distress of his father, he decided to chuck it, because what he really wanted to do with his life was be a writer, and that is what he became. In 1933, with the publication of his first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, he adopted the pseudonym of George Orwell, which was the name he was known by from then on. Orwell was one of the names he had used while tramping round England, and may have been suggested by a river of the same name in Suffolk.

Nineteen Eighty-Four was Orwell's last book – by the time it came out, in 1949, he had published twelve others, including the highly acclaimed and popular *Animal Farm*. In an essay from the summer of 1946, 'Why I Write', he recalled, '*Animal Farm*

was the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole. I have not written a novel for seven years, but I hope to write another fairly soon. It is bound to be a failure, every book is a failure, but I know with some clarity what kind of book I want to write.' Shortly after this, he was at work on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In a way, this novel has been a victim of the success of *Animal Farm*, which most people were content to read as a straightforward allegory about the melancholy fate of the Russian revolution. From the minute Big Brother's moustache makes its appearance in the second paragraph of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* many readers, thinking right away of Stalin, have tended to carry over the habit of point-for-point analogy from the earlier work. Although Big Brother's face certainly is Stalin's, just as the despised Party heretic Emmanuel Goldstein's face is Trotsky's, the two do not quite line up with their models as neatly as Napoleon and Snowball did in *Animal Farm*. This did not keep the book from being marketed in the United States as a sort of anti-communist tract. It arrived in the thick of the McCarthy era, when 'Communism' was damned officially as a monolithic, worldwide menace, and there was no point in even distinguishing between Stalin and Trotsky, any more than for shepherds to be instructing sheep in the nuances of wolf recognition.

The Korean conflict (1950-53) would also soon highlight the alleged Communist practice of ideological enforcement through 'brainwashing', a set of techniques said to be based on the work of I. P. Pavlov, who had once trained dogs to salivate on cue, as the Soviet technocrats after him were conditioning their human subjects into political reflexes that

would be useful to the State. The Russians were supposed to be sharing these methods with their puppets, the Chinese and North Korean Communists. That something very much like brainwashing happens in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in lengthy and terrifying detail, to its hero, Winston Smith, did not surprise those readers determined to take the novel as a simple condemnation of Stalinist atrocity.

This was not exactly Orwell's intention. Though *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has brought aid and comfort to generations of anti-communist ideologues with Pavlovian-response issues of their own, Orwell's politics were not only of the Left, but to the left of Left. He had gone to Spain in 1937 to fight against Franco and his Nazi-supported fascists, and there had quickly learned the difference between real and phony anti-fascism. 'The Spanish war and other events in 1936-7,' he wrote ten years later, 'turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I know it.'

Orwell thought of himself as a member of the 'dissident Left', as distinguished from the 'official Left', meaning basically the British Labour Party, most of which he had come, well before the Second World War, to regard as potentially, if not already, fascist. More or less consciously, he found an analogy between British Labour and the Communist Party under Stalin — both, he felt, were movements professing to fight for the working classes against capitalism but in reality concerned only with establishing and perpetuating their own power. The masses were only there to be used — for their idealism, their class resentments, their willingness to work cheap — and to be sold out, again and again.

Now, those of fascistic disposition – or merely those among us who remain all too ready to justify any government action, whether right or wrong – will immediately point out that this is pre-war thinking, and that the moment enemy bombs begin to fall on one's homeland, altering the landscape and producing casualties among friends and neighbours, all this sort of thing, really, becomes irrelevant, if not indeed subversive. With the homeland in danger, strong leadership and effective measures become of the essence, and if you want to call that fascism, very well, call it whatever you please, no one is likely to be listening, unless it's for the air raids to be over and the all clear to sound. But the unseemliness of an argument – let alone a prophecy – in the heat of some later emergency, does not necessarily make it wrong. One could certainly argue that Churchill's war cabinet had behaved no differently than a fascist regime, censoring news, controlling wages and prices, restricting travel, subordinating civil liberties to self-defined wartime necessity.

Orwell's critique of England's official Left was to undergo some modification in July 1945, when, at the first opportunity they got, the British electorate, by a landslide, threw out their wartime rulers and put in a Labour government, which would remain in power till 1951 – beyond what would be left of Orwell's lifetime – during which period Labour finally got its chance to reshape British society along 'socialist' lines. Orwell, being a perpetual dissident, must have been delighted to help the party confront its contradictions, notably those arising from its wartime acquiescence to, and participation in, a repressive, Tory-led government. Once having enjoyed and exerted that sort of power, how likely would Labour be to choose not to extend its scope, rather than stick to the ideals of its founders,

and go back to fighting on the side of the oppressed? Project this will to power four decades into the future, and you could easily end up with Ingsoc, Oceania and Big Brother.

What is clear from his letters and articles at the time he was working on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is Orwell's despair over the post-war state of 'socialism'. What in Keir Hardie's time had been an honourable struggle against the incontrovertibly criminal behaviour of capitalism towards those whom it used for profit had become, by Orwell's time, shamefully institutional, bought and sold, in too many instances concerned only with maintaining itself in power. And that was just in England – abroad, the impulse had been further corrupted, in immeasurably more sinister ways, leading at length to the Stalinist gulags and the Nazi death camps.

Orwell seems to have been particularly annoyed with the widespread allegiance to Stalinism to be observed among the Left, in the face of overwhelming evidence of the evil nature of the regime. 'For somewhat complex reasons,' he wrote in March of 1948, early in the revision of the first draft of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 'nearly the whole of the English Left has been driven to accept the Russian regime as "Socialist", while silently recognizing that its spirit and practice are quite alien to anything that is meant by "Socialism" in this country. Hence there has arisen a sort of schizophrenic manner of thinking, in which words like "democracy" can bear two irreconcilable meanings, and such things as concentration camps and mass deportations can be right and wrong simultaneously.'

We recognize this 'sort of schizophrenic manner of thinking' as a source for one of the great achievements of this novel, one which has entered the everyday language of political discourse – the identification and analysis of doublethink. As described

present division of spoils among the former Allies carried the potential for fatal mischief. Orwell's uneasiness over the 'peace' in fact is one major subtext of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

'What it is really meant to do,' Orwell wrote to his publisher at the end of 1948 – as nearly as we can tell early in the revision phase of the novel – 'is to discuss the implications of dividing the world up into "Zones of Influence" (I thought of it in 1944 as a result of the Teheran Conference) . . .

Well, of course novelists should not be altogether trusted as to the sources of their inspiration. But the imaginative procedure bears looking at. The Teheran Conference was the first Allied summit meeting of the Second World War, taking place late in 1943, with Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin in attendance. Among the topics they discussed was how, once Nazi Germany was defeated, the Allies would divide it up into zones of occupation. Who would get how much of Poland was another issue. In imagining Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia, Orwell seems to have made a leap in scale from the Teheran talks, projecting the occupation of a defeated country into that of a defeated world. Though China had not been included, and the Chinese revolution in 1948 was still in progress, Orwell had been in the Far East and knew better than to ignore the weight of Eastasia when arranging his own Zones-of-Influence scheme. Geopolitical thinking in those days was enchanted with the 'World-Island' idea of British geographer Halford Mackinder – meaning Europe, Asia and Africa considered as a single landmass surrounded by water, 'the pivot of history', whose heartland was *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* 'Eurasia'. 'Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island,' as Mackinder had put it, and 'Who rules the World-Island commands the world,' a pronouncement not lost on Hitler and other theoreticians of realpolitik.

One of these Mackinderites with connections in intelligence circles was James Burnham, an American ex-Trotskyist who around 1942 had published a provocative analysis of the world crisis then current called *The Managerial Revolution*, which Orwell discussed later in a lengthy article in 1946. Burnham, at the time, with England still reeling under Nazi assault and German troops at the outskirts of Moscow, argued that with the conquest of Russia and the global heartland imminent, the future would belong to Hitler. Later in the war, while serving with the OSS, with the Nazis headed for defeat, Burnham changed his mind in a lengthy afterthought, 'Lenin's Heir', in which he now argued that unless the United States did something about it, the future, actually, would belong to Stalin and the Soviet system, and not Hitler after all. By this point Orwell, who took Burnham seriously but not uncritically, may have sensed that the man's thinking was sort of on the flighty side – nevertheless traces of Burnham's geopolitics can be found in the tripartite world balance of power of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with Burnham's victorious Japan becoming Eastasia, Russia, the pivotal heartland, controlling the Eurasian landmass, and the Anglo-American Alliance transmogrifying to Oceania, which is the setting for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

This grouping of Britain and the United States into a single bloc, as prophecy, has turned out to be dead-on, foreseeing Britain's resistance to integration with the Eurasian landmass as well as her continuing subservience to Yank interests – dollars, for instance, being the monetary unit of Oceania. London is still recognizably the London of the post-war austerity period. From the opening, with its cold plunge directly into the grim April day of Winston Smith's decisive, act of disobedience, the textures of dystopian life are unremitting –

the uncooperative plumbing, the cigarettes that keep losing their tobacco, the horrible food – though perhaps this was not such an imaginative stretch for anyone who'd had to undergo wartime shortages.

Prophecy and prediction are not quite the same, and it would ill serve writer and reader alike to confuse them in Orwell's case. There is a game some critics like to play, worth maybe a minute and a half of diversion, in which one makes lists of what Orwell did and didn't 'get right'. Looking around us at the present moment, for example, we note the popularity of helicopters as a resource of 'law enforcement', familiar to us from countless televised 'crime dramas', themselves forms of social control – and for that matter at the ubiquity of television itself. The two-way telescreen bears a close enough resemblance to flat plasma screens linked to 'interactive' cable systems, circa 2003. News is whatever the government says it is, surveillance of ordinary citizens has entered the mainstream of police activity, reasonable search and seizure is a joke. And so forth. 'Wow, the Government has turned into Big Brother, just like Orwell predicted! Something, huh?' 'Orwellian, dude!'

Well, yes and no. Specific predictions are only details, after all. What is perhaps more important, indeed necessary, to a working prophet, is to be able to see deeper than most of us into the human soul. Orwell in 1948 understood that despite the Axis defeat, the will to fascism had not gone away, that far from having seen its day it had perhaps not yet even come into its own – the corruption of spirit, the irresistible human addiction to power, were already long in place, all well-known aspects of the Third Reich and Stalin's USSR, even the British Labour Party, like first drafts of a terrible future. What could prevent the same thing from happening to Britain and the

United States? Moral superiority? Good intentions? Clean living?

What has steadily, insidiously, improved since then, of course, making humanist arguments almost irrelevant, is the technology. We must not be too distracted by the clunkiness of the means of surveillance current in Winston Smith's era. In 'our' 1984, after all, the integrated circuit chip was less than a decade old, and almost embarrassingly primitive next to the wonders of computer technology circa 2003, most notably the Internet, a development that promises social control on a scale those quaint old twentieth-century tyrants with their goofy moustaches could only dream about.

On the other hand, Orwell did not foresee such exotic developments as the religious wars with which we have become all too familiar, involving various sorts of fundamentalism. Religious fanaticism is in fact strangely absent from Oceania, except in the form of devotion to the Party. Big Brother's regime exhibits all the elements of fascism – the single charismatic dictator, the total control of behaviour, the absolute subordination of the individual to the collective – except for racial hostility, in particular anti-Semitism, which was such a prominent feature of fascism as Orwell knew it. This is bound to strike the modern reader as puzzling. The only Jewish character in the novel is Emmanuel Goldstein, and maybe only because his original Leon Trotsky, was Jewish too. And he remains an offstage presence whose real function in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is to provide an expository voice, as the author of *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*.

Much has been made recently of Orwell's own attitude toward Jews, some commentators even going so far as to call it anti-Semitic. If one looks in his writing of the time for overt

references to the topic, one finds relatively little – Jewish matters did not seem to command much of his attention. What published evidence there is indicates either a sort of numbness before the enormity of what had happened in the camps or a failure at some level to appreciate its full significance. There is some felt reticence, as if, with so many other deep issues to worry about, Orwell would have preferred that the world not be presented the added inconvenience of having to think much about the Holocaust. The novel may even have been his way of redefining a world in which the Holocaust did not happen.

As close as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* gets to an anti-Semitic moment is in the ritual practice of Two Minutes Hate, presented quite early, almost as a plot device for introducing Julia and O'Brien, the other two major characters. But the exhibition of anti-Goldsteinism described here with such toxic immediacy is never generalized into anything racial. The strategy of pitting race against race does not seem to be found in the Party's tool kit. 'Nor is there any racial discrimination,' as Emmanuel Goldstein himself confirms, in *the book* – 'Jews, Negroes, South Americans of pure Indian blood are to be found in the highest ranks of the Party . . .' As nearly as one can tell, Orwell considered anti-Semitism 'one variant of the great modern disease of nationalism', and British anti-Semitism in particular as another form of British stupidity. He may have believed that by the time of the tripartite coalescence of the world he imagined for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the European nationalisms he was used to somehow no longer exist, perhaps because nations, and hence nationalities, would have been abolished and absorbed into more collective identities. Amid the novel's general pessimism, this might strike us, knowing what we know today, as an unwarrantedly chirpy analysis. The hatreds

Orwell never found much worse than ridiculous have determined too much history since 1945 to be dismissed quite so easily.

Besides the unexpected presence of racial tolerance in Oceania, the class structure is also a bit odd. It should be a classless society, but it isn't. It is divided into Inner Party, Outer Party and the Proles. But as the story is being told from the point of view of Winston Smith, who belongs to the Outer Party, the Proles are largely ignored, much as they are by the regime itself. Despite his admiration for them as a force for salvation, and his faith in their eventual triumph, Winston Smith doesn't seem to know any proles himself – his only personal contact, and that indirect, is with the lady singing outside the room at the back of the antique shop where he and Julia have found their lovers' refuge. 'The tune had been haunting London for weeks past. It was one of countless similar songs published for the benefit of the proles by a sub-section of the Music Department.' By Winston's Inner Party poetic standards, the tune is 'drivelling', 'dreadful rubbish'. But Orwell quotes it three times, almost word for word. Is something else going on? One cannot be sure – one likes to imagine that Orwell, a songwriter in disguise who loved writing verse that rhymed and had a beat, also came up with an actual melody for this lyric, and that while he was writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* he went around humming or whistling it, perhaps for days on end, driving those in his vicinity crazy. His own artistic judgements were not those of Winston Smith, a bourgeois of the late forties projected into the future. Orwell enjoyed what we now call pop culture – his allegiance, in music as in politics, being to the people.

In a *New Statesman* review from 1938 of a John Galsworthy

novel, Orwell commented, almost in passing, 'Galsworthy was a bad writer, and some inner trouble, sharpening his sensitiveness, nearly made him into a good one; his discontent healed itself, and he reverted to type. It is worth pausing to wonder in just what form the thing is happening to oneself.'

Orwell was amused at those of his colleagues on the Left who lived in terror of being termed bourgeois. But somewhere among his own terrors may have lurked the possibility that like Galsworthy he might one day lose his political anger, and end up as one more apologist for Things As They Are. His anger, let us go so far as to say, was precious to him. He had lived his way into it – in Burma and Paris and London and on the road to Wigan Pier, and in Spain, being shot at, and eventually wounded, by fascists – he had invested blood, pain and hard labour to earn his anger, and was as attached to it as any capitalist to his capital. It may be an affliction peculiar to writers more than others, this fear of getting too comfortable, of being bought off. When one writes for a living, it is certainly one of the risks, though not one every writer objects to. The ability of the ruling element to co-opt dissent was ever present as a danger – actually, not unlike the process by which the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is able perpetually to renew itself from below.

Orwell, having lived among the working and unemployed poor of the 1930s Depression, and having learned in the course of it their true imperishable worth, bestowed on Winston Smith a similar faith in their *Nineteen Eighty-Four* counterparts the proles, as the only hope for deliverance from the dystopian hell of Oceania. In the most beautiful moment of the novel – beauty as Rilke defined it, the onset of terror just able to be borne – Winston and Julia, thinking they are safe, regard from

their window the woman in the courtyard singing, and Winston gazing into the sky experiences an almost mystical vision of the millions living beneath it, 'people who had never learned to think but were storing up in their hearts and bellies and muscles the power that would one day overturn the world. If there was hope, it lay in the proles!' It is the moment just before he and Julia are arrested, and the cold, terrible climax of the book commences.

Before the war, Orwell had his moments of contempt for graphic scenes of violence in fiction, particularly the American hard-boiled crime fiction available in pulp magazines. In 1936, in a review of a detective novel, he quotes a passage describing a brutal and methodical beating, which uncannily foreshadows Winston Smith's experiences inside the Ministry of Love. What has happened? Spain and the Second World War, it would seem. What was 'disgusting rubbish' back in a more insulated time has become, by the post-war era, part of the vernacular of political education, and by 1984 in Oceania it will be institutionalized. Yet Orwell cannot, like the average pulp writer, enjoy the luxury of unreflectively insulating the flesh and spirit of any character. The writing is at places difficult to stay with, as if Orwell himself is feeling every moment of Winston's ordeal.

But in a detective novel, the motives – for writer as well as characters – are usually financial, and often low stakes at that. 'It is not funny that a man should be killed,' Raymond Chandler wrote once, 'but it is sometimes funny that he should be killed for so little, and that his death should be the coin of what we call civilization.' What is not so funny is when this financial motive is altogether missing. You can trust a cop who'll take a bribe, but what happens when you run into a law-and-order

zealot who won't? The regime in Oceania seems immune to the lure of wealth. Its interests lie elsewhere, in the exercise of power for its own sake, in its unrelenting war on memory, desire and language as a vehicle of thought.

Memory is relatively easy to deal with, from the totalitarian point of view. There is always some agency like the Ministry of Truth to deny the memories of others, to rewrite the past. It has become a commonplace circa 2003 for government employees to be paid more than most of the rest of us to debase history, trivialize truth and annihilate the past on a daily basis. Those who don't learn from history *used to* have to relive it, but only until those in power could find a way to convince everybody, including themselves, that history never happened, or happened in a way best serving their own purposes – or best of all that it doesn't matter anyway, except as some dumbed-down TV documentary cobbled together for an hour's entertainment.

Controlling desire, however, is more problematic. Hitler was known for some unconventional sexual tastes. Heaven knows what Stalin was into. Even fascists have needs, which, at least so they dream, the enjoyment of limitless power will allow them to indulge. So although they may be willing to attack the psychosexual profiles of those who threaten them, there may at least be some moment of hesitation before they do. Of course when all the machinery of enforcement is assigned to computers, which do not, at least as presently designed, experience desire in any form that we would find appealing, why then it will be another story. But in 1984 that hasn't happened yet. Because desire in itself cannot always be easily co-opted, the Party has no choice but to adopt, as an ultimate goal, the abolition of the orgasm.

The point that sexual desire, taken on its own terms, is *inherently subversive* is pursued here by way of Julia, with her cheerfully lustful approach to life. If this were really only a political essay disguised as a novel, Julia would most likely have been obliged to symbolize something – the Pleasure Principle or Middle-class Common Sense or something. But because this is a novel first of all, her character is not necessarily under Orwell's firm control. Novelists may wish to indulge the worst kinds of totalitarian whims directed against the freedom of their characters. But often as not, they scheme in vain, for characters always manage to evade one's all-seeing eye long enough to think thoughts and utter dialogue one could never have come up with if plot were all there were. It is one of the many joys of reading this book that we can watch Julia turn from a tough-cookie seductress into a loving young woman, as it is one of the chief sadnesses when her love is dismantled and destroyed.

The Winston–Julia story, in other hands, might have degenerated into the usual love's-young-dream sort of rubbish – just like something a Ministry of Truth novel-writing machine would produce. Julia, who works in the Fiction Department after all, presumably knows the difference between rubbish and reality, and it is through her that the love story in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is able to keep its grown-up real-world edge, though at first glance it seems to be following the familiar formula of boy dislikes girl, boy and girl meet cute, first thing you know boy and girl are in love, then they get separated, finally they get back together. This *is* what transpires . . . sort of. But there's no happy ending. The scene towards the end where Winston and Julia meet again, after the Ministry of Love has forced each to betray the other, is as disheartening as any

in fiction. And the worst of it is, we understand. Beyond pity and terror, we are not really surprised, any more than Winston Smith himself, at how things have turned out. From the moment he opens his illegal blank book and begins to write, he carries his doom with him, consciously guilty of *crimethink* and only waiting for the authorities to catch up. Julia's unexpected arrival in his life will never be quite miraculous enough for him to believe in a different outcome. At the moment of maximum well-being, standing at the courtyard window, gazing into endless expanses of sudden revelation, the most hopeful thing he can think of to say to her is, 'We are the dead', an assessment the Thought Police are only too happy to echo a second later.

Winston's fate is no surprise, but the one we find ourselves worrying about is Julia. She has believed up till the last minute that she can somehow beat the regime, that her good-humoured anarchism will be proof against anything they can throw at her. 'Don't be too downhearted,' she tells Winston, 'I'm rather good at staying alive.' She understands the difference between confession and betrayal. 'They can make you say anything – *anything* – but they can't make you believe it. They can't get inside you.' The poor kid. You want to grab her and shake her. Because that is just what they do – they get inside, they put the whole question of soul, of what we believe to be an inviolable inner core of the self, into harsh and terminal doubt. By the time they have left the Ministry of Love, Winston and Julia have entered permanently the condition of double-think, the anterooms of annihilation, no longer in love but able to hate and love Big Brother at the same time. It is as dark an ending as can be imagined.

But strangely, it is not quite the end. We turn the page to find appended what seems to be some kind of critical essay,

'The Principles of Newspeak'. We remember that back on page 6 we were given the option, by way of a footnote, to turn to the back of the book and read it. Some readers do this, and some don't – we might see it nowadays as an early example of hypertext. Back in 1948, this final section apparently bothered the American Book-of-the-Month Club enough for them to demand that it be cut, along with the chapters quoted from Emmanuel Goldstein's book, as a condition of acceptance by the Club. Though he stood to lose at least £40,000 in American sales, Orwell refused to make the changes, telling his agent, 'A book is built up as a balanced structure and one cannot simply remove large chunks here and there unless one is ready to recast the whole thing . . . I really cannot allow my work to be mucked about beyond a certain point, and I doubt whether it even pays in the long run.' Three weeks later the BOMC relented, but the question remains, Why end a novel as passionate, violent and dark as this one with what appears to be a scholarly appendix?

The answer may lie in simple grammar. From its first sentence, 'The Principles of Newspeak' is written consistently in the past tense, as if to suggest some later piece of history, post-1984, in which Newspeak has become literally a thing of the past – as if in some way the anonymous author of this piece is by now free to discuss, critically and objectively, the political system of which Newspeak was, in its time, the essence. Moreover, it is our own pre-Newspeak English language that is being used to write the essay. Newspeak was supposed to have become general by 2050, and yet it appears that it did not last that long, let alone triumph, that the ancient humanistic ways of thinking inherent in standard English have persisted, survived, and ultimately prevailed, and that perhaps the social and

moral order it speaks for has even, somehow, been restored. In his 1946 article 'James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution', Orwell wrote, 'The huge, invincible, everlasting slave empire of which Burnham appears to dream will not be established, or if established, will not endure, because slavery is no longer a stable basis for human society.' In its hints of restoration and redemption, perhaps 'The Principles of Newspeak' serves as a way to brighten an otherwise bleakly pessimistic ending – sending us back out into the streets of our own dystopia whistling a slightly happier tune than the end of the story by itself would have warranted.

There is a photograph, taken around 1946 in Islington, of Orwell with his adopted son, Richard Horatio Blair. The little boy, who would have been around two at the time, is beaming, with unguarded delight. Orwell is holding him gently with both hands, smiling too, pleased, but not smugly so – it is more complex than that, as if he has discovered something that might be worth even more than anger – his head tilted a bit, his eyes with a careful look that might remind filmgoers of a Robert Duvall character with a backstory in which he has seen more than one perhaps would have preferred to. Winston Smith 'believed that he had been born in 1944 or 1945 . . .'. Richard Blair was born 14 May, 1944. It is not difficult to guess that Orwell, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, was imagining a future for his son's generation, a world he was not so much wishing upon them as warning against. He was impatient with predictions of the inevitable, he remained confident in the ability of ordinary people to change anything, if they would. It is the boy's smile, in any case, that we return to, direct and radiant, proceeding out of an unhesitating faith that the world, at the end of the day, is good, and that human decency, like parental love, can

always be taken for granted – a faith so honourable that we can almost imagine Orwell, and perhaps even ourselves, for a moment anyway, swearing to do whatever must be done to keep it from ever being betrayed.

Thomas Pynchon

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1. Orwell's life experiences & his other work.
 2. The politics of the war, war time and post war, Europe America
 3. The concept of doublethink
 4. Orwell's politics
 5. What is left, right, communist, fascist
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