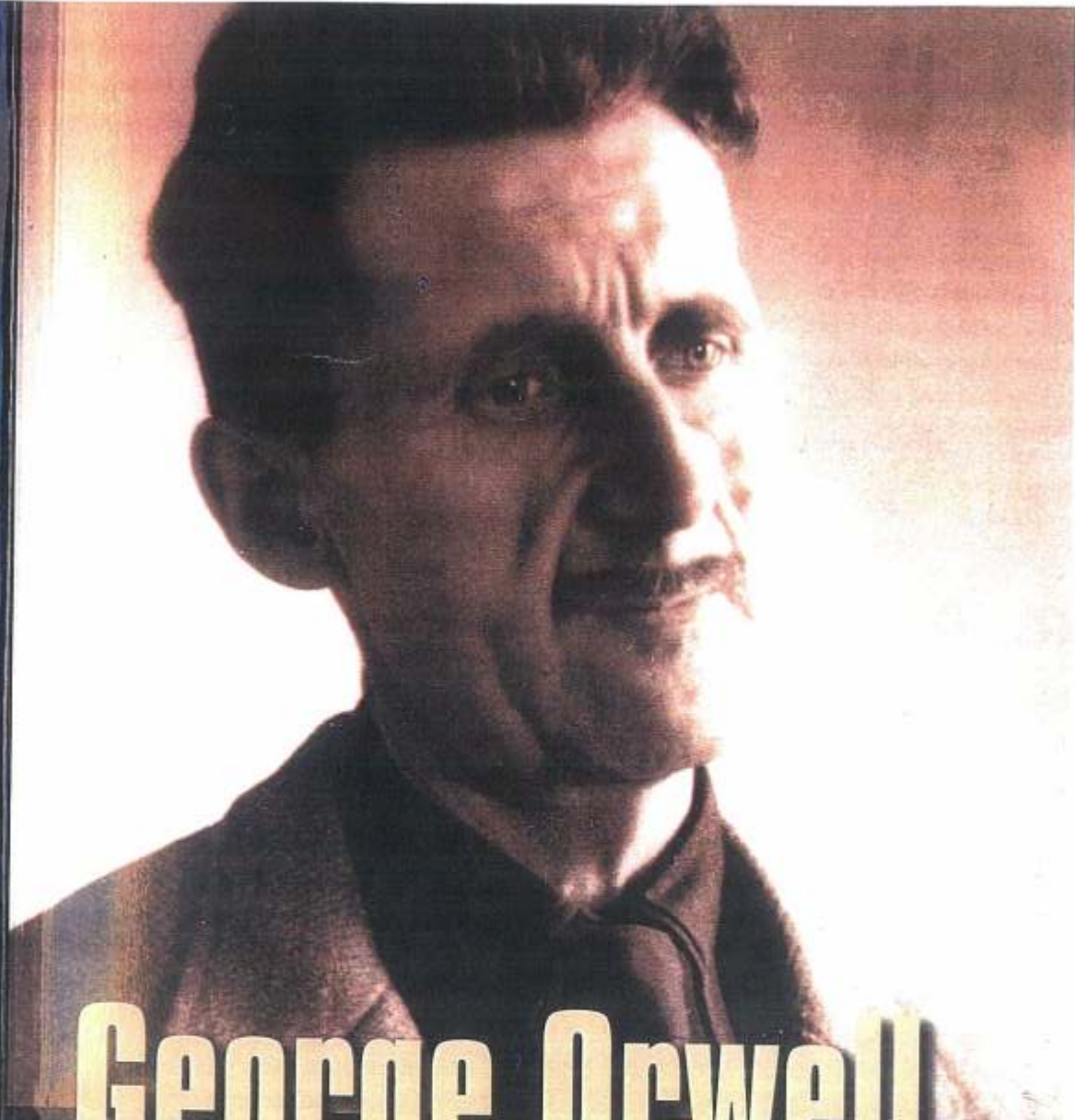


Cushman, Rodden

GEORGE ORWELL Into the Twenty-First Century



# George Orwell

## Into the Twenty-First Century

Edited by Thomas Cushman and John Rodden

Paradigm



**GEORGE ORWELL  
INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

*Edited by Thomas Cushman  
& John Rodden*

The year 2003 was the 100th anniversary of the birth of George Orwell, one of the most influential authors of the twentieth century. Orwell's books are assigned today in over 60,000 classrooms annually. In this book essays by prominent writers and scholars explain why his impact continues in a world much changed from his own. The essays explore new aspects of Orwell's life and work and his continuing relevance for the interpretation of modern social, political, and cultural affairs. Thematic topics include: the use and abuse of *1984*; ideas, ideologues, and intellectuals; biography and autobiography; literary and stylistic analyses; and the reception of Orwell's work abroad. The volume is an ideal resource for those who continue to be influenced by Orwell's insights and for teachers of Orwell's work.

**Contributors:**

Thomas Cushman, Jonathan Rose, Ian Williams, Morris Dickstein, Christopher Hitchens, John Rodden, Ronald F. Thieman, Lawrence Rosenwald, Todd Gitlin, Anthony Stewart, Jim Sleeper, Jonathan B. Imber, Peter Stansky, Dennis Wrong, Daphne Patai, William E. Cain, Lynette Hunter, Margery Sabin, Erika Gottlieb, Vladimir Shlapentokh, Miquel Berga, Gilbert Bonifas.



**Thomas Cushman**, Wellesley College, is the editor of *The Journal of Human Rights* and was the principal organizer of the George Orwell Centenary Conference at Wellesley College.

**John Rodden** is the author of *George Orwell: The Politics of Literary Reputation*, *Scenes from an Afterlife: The Legacy of George Orwell*, and *Understanding Orwell's Animal Farm*.



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# 10

## Orwell's "Smelly Little Orthodoxies"— and Ours

JIM SLEEPER

In the dark London spring of 1944, George Orwell was having an eerily difficult time finding an established publisher for *Animal Farm*. He had expected—and gotten—a rejection from his regular publisher, Victor Gollancz, a parlor leftist who was also enough the public liberal to deny hotly Orwell's suggestion, in a letter to him, that fealty to the Soviet Union had had anything to do with the decision. Biographer Bernard Crick recounts that Orwell and some friends felt sure Gollancz was warning other publishers that the book's Swiftian send-up of Stalinism endangered Britain's vital interests, what with Hitler still just across the channel and the Eastern Front so critical to national survival. Subsequent rejections of *Animal Farm* were by turns mealy-mouthed and candid about its political risks, deepening Orwell's suspicions. The publisher Jonathan Cape had been enthusiastic at first but informed him that on a second reading—undertaken after an unexplained consultation with the Ministry of Information—he realized that the book was a satirical reprise of Soviet history and so was unworkable even as a fable. Especially irksome to the Russian ally, Cape suggested, would be Orwell's representation of the politbureau and commissars as pigs.

It wasn't only book publishers who were letting Orwell down. He suspended his own weekly *Tribune* column because, he told a friend, the newspaper's Labourite editorial codirector Aneurin Bevan "was terrified there might be a row over *Animal Farm* which might have been embarrassing [to the Labour Party]."<sup>1</sup> *The Manchester Evening News* rejected a review of Orwell's that faulted Harold Laski's *Faith, Reason, and Civilization* for its blindness to Stalin's "purges, liquidations, the dictatorship of a minority [and] suppression of criticism."<sup>2</sup> Crick stops just short of saying that Orwell felt himself the victim of some vast, left-wing conspiracy.

If these guardians of highbrow book publishing and popular journalism weren't in thrall to Stalinism, they were at least paralyzed by a cowardice before it that puzzled and exasperated Orwell. He probed it in "The Freedom of the Press," a preface he wrote for *Animal Farm* as he contemplated publishing the book pri-



vately with subventions from friends. In the preface he described the weakness he sensed in editors and public discourse all around him and traced the balance he was trying to maintain. But he withheld "The Freedom of the Press" when *Animal Farm* was accepted by Secker and Warburg, a moderately leftist, anti-Stalinist publisher, well-enough established to allay fears that the book would sink into oblivion. The preface didn't see print until 1972, when Crick resurrected it from the papers of one of the firm's principals and brought it out in *TLS*.

The best-known sentence of "The Freedom of the Press" is a declaration any dissenter might utter: "If liberty means anything at all it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." But what if some of the things people "do not want to hear," such as fascist or Stalinist lies and smears, are destructive of public trust and, with it, of liberty itself? Orwell might have answered that liberty can't be defended by prejudging which utterances will prove out in debate and which will be shown up as serpentine lies. Why, then, do publishers and editors who claim to prize liberty keep denying hearings even to reasonable, well-presented views like Orwell's? He gets this far toward an answer: "If publishers and editors exert themselves to keep certain topics out of print it is not because they are frightened of prosecution but because they are frightened of public opinion. In this country intellectual cowardice is the worst enemy a writer or journalist has to face, and that fact does not seem to me to have had the discussion it deserves."<sup>3</sup>

Orwell is probing for causes of intellectual cowardice that run deeper than Stalinism and for "cowards" besides those in the highbrow intelligentsia who preoccupy him at the moment. He is struggling, as he would in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, against a broader despair of the public and of democracy itself, as if both harbored a malignancy of which editors may be carriers and accelerants but not causes. This long struggle against despair of democracy had absorbed Orwell from his first encounters with British colonialism (and colonials themselves) in Burma, and from his time "down and out" in Paris and London, tramping with Britain's "underclass," sojourning with workers at Wigan, and fighting alongside proletarian and peasant soldiers in Spain. And that preoccupation would consume him in Winston Smith's emblematic rendering of it in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: "[I]f there was hope, it lay in the proles. You had to cling on to that. When you put it in words it sounded reasonable; it was when you looked at the human beings passing you on the pavement that it became an act of faith."<sup>4</sup> Not an illusion, mind you, and not even a revolutionary act of sacrifice, but an almost stoical, tragical, perhaps even faintly Christic act of faith, a burden so heavy and at times frightening that many would do almost anything but bear it—even if they were just publishers turning down manuscripts whose force and integrity made readers face up to the responsibilities and risks of being free.

Reading Orwell this way revivifies three truths that are sometimes finessed by political writers. First, there is something so inherently dangerous to freedom in democracy itself that the two cannot be conflated. Second, what a political writer needs most isn't the courage to stand for equality with the Left against the Right or for freedom with the Right against the Left, but the more elusive courage to illuminate truths about freedom that may anger both sides or, worse, be taken up by both opportunistically. Third, that kind of courage depends in turn on a willingness to strip oneself of protections that come with the insulations of class (or the nursed injuries of class) and with ideological partisanship. Even writers brave



enough to seek out dangerous encounters with "freedom" and "equality" they could well have avoided (and who have bodily scars to show for it) may spoil their efforts by sparring with other writers about whose stigmata are bigger. They may even get into arguments about whether Orwell himself always kept a train ticket home to a comfortable flat. What matters more, I think, is whether a writer exposes oneself somewhat or not at all. One writer's moral imagination may be deeply shaken and instructed by moderate leaps and risks that would seem a Sunday outing to another.

Orwell didn't end up despairing of all public discourse and politics, but he certainly stared into that abyss. I want to suggest here that had he been able to engage Americans' fraught experiences with freedom and equality by sojourning here in person or at least by reading Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, his own chiaroscuro of despair and hope, of dire prediction and mere warning, might have been even richer than it already is for us in liberal capitalist democracies. John Rodden has shown that wherever *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* were circulated, samizdatlike, in the totalitarian countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the books struck readers with the force of dark revelation or epiphany; even now in those countries they remain as ubiquitous as Bibles (or anti-Bibles), evoking and exorcising the nightmares of the recent past. The books swept Western Europe and America, too, of course, especially during the cold war, but we needed then a rendering of Orwell's dystopic vision that would show, as Tocqueville had, that even an apparently benign democracy can curdle or decay not only in party coups or statist terror, as in Eastern Europe, but in something more like what Gibbon saw in ancient Rome: the slow, subtle weakening of the vitals of an apparently triumphal republican felicity. I think that it was Tocqueville, not Gibbon or Orwell, who showed best that a democracy could become so "democratic" it would be almost wholly unfree and that it could become so owing to a division in the human heart that cannot be explained only by analyses of oppression, grinding inequality, and other exogenous constraints. One must be careful in saying this, and Orwell says it unforgettably in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. But I still wish that he had read Tocqueville, who, incidentally, anticipated that American editors would be even less free than the British ones who vexed Orwell.

Orwell reconnoiters the problem in his 1944 preface about the British publishers' mishandling of his manuscript and reviews:

The sinister fact about literary censorship in England is that it is largely voluntarily. Unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any official ban . . . because of a general tacit agreement that "it wouldn't do" to mention that particular fact. . . . It is not exactly forbidden to say this that or the other but it is "not done" to say it. . . . Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness. A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing either in the popular press or in the highbrow periodicals.<sup>5</sup>

At the moment, he notes, the main orthodoxy of Britain's intelligentsia proscribes all criticism of the Soviet Union. As if anticipating Ronald Reagan, he writes, "For quite a decade past, I have believed the existing Russian regime is a mainly evil thing," but he adds, "I claim the right to say so in spite of the fact that we are allies with the USSR in a war which I want to see won."<sup>6</sup> Here is the



ideologically elusive courage I've mentioned: He sounds, by turns, like a conservative moralist ("a mainly evil thing"), a moral liberal ("I claim the right to say so"), a patriot ("a war which I want to see won"), and even, perhaps, a progressive ("we are allies with the USSR"). Such complexity is discomfiting to partisans. Something in the fellow-traveling publishers' discomfort with Orwell suggests a desperation to sustain the conceit that they are independent thinkers, not the foot soldiers he thinks some of them actually are in the wars of more powerful people.

He finds especially galling their indulgence of crude "literary" enforcers like the *Daily Worker's* Harry Pollitt, who, Orwell recalls, had explained his *Homage to Catalonia* by describing Orwell as a "disillusioned little middle class boy."<sup>7</sup> Orwell notes in his preface that apparatchiks more practiced than Pollitt in "the art of denigration will not attack [a book] on political grounds but on literary ones. They will say that it is a dull, silly book and a disgraceful waste of paper. This might well be true" of his own work, he adds with impish modesty, but such reviewers never criticize trash that follows their own political line.<sup>8</sup> Anyone who has sojourned in political journalism knows this is far from the worst of it, as Orwell learned in Spain and made excruciatingly clear in *Homage*.

But that still doesn't explain why anyone enjoying the liberties of Western book publishers and newspaper editors would do what they did to Orwell and do now to challengers of certain orthodoxies here. "It is important to realize that the current Russomania is only a symptom of the general weakening of the western liberal tradition," he writes, but still he doesn't go far beyond noting that editors "are afraid of public opinion."<sup>9</sup> Seven times in this four-thousand-word preface he accuses them of "intellectual cowardice," "sheer cowardice," harboring "a cowardly desire to keep in with the bulk of the intelligentsia," "timidity," "fear," and "servility" to conventional wisdom. He calls them "circus dogs" who jump even when no whip is cracked by government or private interests. And that is restrained compared to his rebuke to Stalin-friendly "English leftwing journalists and intellectuals" in a *Tribune* column at the time: "Do remember that dishonesty and cowardice always have to be paid for. . . . Once a whore, always a whore."<sup>10</sup>

Crick calls the preface itself "intemperate," acknowledging that "it had to be, considering how badly temperate, civilized and responsible [publishers and editors] had behaved." Still, Orwell was "wise to decide against publishing 'The Freedom of the Press' in front of *Animal Farm*, which might have lost its resonance as a fable and appeared to be an attack only on Stalin. The universality of its reflections on power and corruption might have seemed just the projection of a literary quarrel."<sup>11</sup> Yet the preface doesn't seem so "intemperate" when read alone now with an eye to what had provoked it. Orwell sounds exasperated, yes, but even more puzzled, like a diagnostician facing a strange malignancy he can't quite identify or explain.

At one point he alters the diagnosis enough to make one wonder if there is even a disease: "You could, indeed, publish anti-Russian books," he acknowledges, even if "to do so was to make sure of being ignored or misrepresented by nearly the whole of the highbrow press"<sup>12</sup> So his was not quite as totalitarian a suppression as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* readers might think. It is only highbrow gatekeepers who affront and preoccupy Orwell; there *are* other publishers, some successful even if disdained by those among whom he has generally taken his bearings. Orwell shares that disdain: "There was a huge output of anti-Russian literature, but



nearly all of it was from the Conservative angle, and manifestly dishonest, out of date and actuated by sordid motives";<sup>13</sup> even with *Animal Farm* being silenced by a tacit understanding among liberals, he rejected an offer to serialize it in the right-wing journal *Time and Tide*. Still, on the left and in the centrist prestige press, "there was an equally huge and almost equally dishonest stream of pro-Russian propaganda and what amounted to a boycott on anyone who tried to discuss all-important questions in a grown-up manner."<sup>14</sup> He leaves us with little more than that last, prosaic, almost wistful phrase; reading it, I can't help but recall Turgenev's more portentous lament: "The honest man will end by having to live alone."<sup>15</sup>

For Orwell in 1944, politics "in a grown-up manner" could be imagined only somewhere beyond the ideological partisanship of both Left and Right. Certainly he was more bitterly disappointed in leftists' and liberals' betrayals of liberty than in conservatives' throne-and-altar mystifications of oppression: "In our country . . . it is the liberals who fear liberty and the intellectuals who want to do dirt on the intellect."<sup>16</sup> Yet the more we know of Orwell's complex courage to be scathing of both sides, the more we grasp why so many other writers and editors avoid such independence or only feign it. What Orwell saw early was that while both the Left and the Right have credible claims on certain truths, each tends to cling to its own claims so tightly that they become half-truths which soon curdle into lies, leaving each side right only about how the other is wrong. At any historical moment, one side's claims may be the more liberating in struggle against the other's institutionalized carapaces and cant; Orwell sought liberation through democratic socialist movements in the dark, protofascist Europe of the interwar years, and indeed his sympathies abided with workers throughout his life, albeit sometimes against their self-proclaimed leaders as well as against Tories. But he never forgot that both sides tend to get stuck in their imagined upswings and disappoint in the end: The Left's almost willful misreadings of human nature make it founder in swift currents of nationalism and religion, pitching from sweeping denials of their importance to abject and hypocritical surrenders: "Socialism in One Country"; Marxism the secular eschatology. Not for nothing did Orwell, the social democrat, label the progenitor of Big Brother "Ingsoc" (*English Socialism*), not Stalinism. Yet neither did he doubt that the corporate capitalist state and its ministries of information could pose *Nineteen Eighty-Four*-ish dangers. He remained conservative enough to look sympathetically into nationalism, patriotism, and religion and to savor the life in their interstices. He was always on the left enough to seek solidarity in struggles against capitalist overreach, but he also held to an irreducible personal dignity and responsibility that balk at solidarity itself. Another way of characterizing his political balance might be to say that just as a healthy person walks on both a left foot and a right one, a society needs both a left foot of social equality and social provision—without which neither the individuality nor the communal bonds which conservatives honor could exist—and a right foot of personal liberty through responsibility, without which any leftist social reorganization would reduce persons to clients, cogs, or worse.

Why then, after all, were "highbrow" editors and publishers afraid to join Orwell in sustaining this balance? Perhaps, knowing that they were tethered to a capitalism dark and foreboding, they were trying to offset their discomfort through flights of socialist imagination. Because those flights were never as well grounded



as Orwell's, they had to be kept insulated from reports of reality in order to be sustained. Like other links in a long chain of leftist-intellectual exoticisms, including attractions to demagoguery in third world countries from Cuba to Tibet, philo-Stalinism was really a displacement of social hope onto something so distant it could be sustained by a highly moralized ignorance; the more distance, the more certitude.

Surely some editors were merely opportunistic in promoting such flights. Others may have been driven less by opportunism than by upper-class self-loathing. Orwell understood them. He had entered adulthood wearing their clothing and lenses, and his unrelenting search for better drove him to tramps, workers, and Spanish peasant and proletarian freedom fighters. What parlor intellectuals only fantasized he engaged, at greater risk. But what seems to have put off Orwell's editors wasn't just the bothersome truth that he'd made himself more vulnerable and therefore unpredictable than they let themselves be but also a reality that was bothering him, too: uncertainty about "the people" as a beacon of social hope.

Here is where I wish that Orwell had been able to try on the lenses Tocqueville had worn a hundred years earlier while surveying the United States' unprecedented effort to reconcile untrammelled individual liberty with the self-government of a vast demos. It was Tocqueville who most memorably observed and imagined that the more "democratic" a society in the colloquial, "we're all equal" sense, the more susceptible to despotism its members are actually likely to be. It is a dark, and for Americans somewhat counterintuitive, warning, tracing back though it does to Benjamin Franklin's misgivings about the viability of a republic. Had Orwell encountered such American warnings earlier than he did, he might have cautioned even more compellingly about tendencies in the "free world."

Tocqueville observed that freedom and equality aren't as mutually reinforcing as Americans often innocently believe, and he insisted on this even in the America of the 1830s, where a fortuitous alignment of the stars seemed to have unleashed democratic passions for both freedom and equality whose nearness to realization resembled nothing before. The passion for equality was so torrentially strong that it swept aside every care about the costs and prerequisites of freedom. Americans had little to fear from the highly centralized nation-state that had replaced feudalism in much of Europe. Shielded by two oceans from proximate enemies of the kind that shaped nationalism there, Americans were free, as well, of the standing armies that nourish authoritarianism. Americans traded and governed themselves locally, with little intervention from a tiny, distant federal government. They debated one another in local newspapers and forums, enjoying what struck Tocqueville as unprecedented freedom of the press. Religiously, they communed, if at all, not through the sacraments of an established ecclesium but in a dissenting Protestant "priesthood of all believers," in which equality came straight from God. Equality was championed as well in the unprecedented universal white, male citizenship of the liberal, constitutional polity, displacing socialism's allure for a caste-hobbled Europe. And when equality or freedom faltered, there was always the American frontier, with its promise of an earthly yet oddly sacralized deliverance from despotism and the injuries of class.

Or so it seemed, and Tocqueville was too acute an observer to leave the picture that rosy. Yet his evocations of equality's potency and intimacy in the America of 1835 anticipate nothing better than Orwell's own account, a hundred years later, in



*Homage to Catalonia*, of his bracing first encounters with revolutionary equality in Barcelona. There, he was uncharacteristically exultant about equality's first flush among men long constrained by caste but now unafraid to look one another in the eye, if only for a breakthrough moment. Read Tocqueville on young America and, with some stylistic allowances, you can hardly tell which man is talking:

The first and most intense passion which is produced by the equality of condition is, I need hardly say, the love of that equality. . . . This passion for equality is every day gaining ground in the human heart. . . . Equality every day confers a number of small enjoyments on every man. The charms of equality are every instant felt, and are within the reach of all; the noblest hearts are not insensible to them, and the most vulgar souls exult in them. Men cannot enjoy political liberty unpurchased by some sacrifices, and they never obtain it without great exertions. But the pleasures of equality are self-proffered: each of the petty incidents of life seems to occasion them; and in order to taste them nothing is required but to live.<sup>17</sup>

But it is Tocqueville's forebodings about this that make *Democracy in America* so riveting. He feared that Americans' untempered passion for equality would suppress liberty and degrade their public life into a tyranny of fickle majorities driven only by soul-narrowing cupidity. That wasn't the danger worrying Orwell even in the equality-mad international Left of the 1930s and 1940s and certainly not in the familiar British delusions of hierarchy, militarism, and inbred cultural elitism amid economic depression and war. Reading Tocqueville's reflections would have accelerated and perhaps deepened the most heartbreaking lesson of Orwell's long, personal revolt against "knowing your place" in a class society: that having *no* place in a classless society could be even worse.

Because the America Tocqueville studied had no medieval estates or other countervailing powers to resist the tyranny of the majority, it had too few of the precious interstices and eccentricities that countervailing powers do accommodate and that made even throne-and-altar England seem more humane in the little ways Orwell portrayed so endearingly. He dreaded the dissolution of those redoubts, whether under socialism or corporatist fascism, which would atomize civil society. So prescient had Tocqueville been about precisely such perils in America that while he had opened with paeans to the passion for equality, his anticipations of the despotism of public opinion seem almost a prolegomenon to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. He understood, more starkly than Orwell would, that the dystopia lurking in the febrile heart of equality is more than the *trahison des cleres* which Orwell encountered in "the intelligentsia." It is more, too, than an unfortunate consequence of the fact that "capitalist oppression" may damage "the people" more than it ennobles or equips them for freedom. For Tocqueville, the most nightmarish vision of social organization lurks in the nature of democratic man, a nature divided and corrupt in ways that antedate capitalist alienation all the way back to the Garden of Eden—or to the Edenic American heartland that Tocqueville surveyed.

He lamented that by diffusing political and other powers so widely and minutely that they eclipse higher authorities and standards, "[d]emocratic republics extend the practice of currying favor with the many, and introduce it into all classes at once."<sup>18</sup> They make people ever unsure of their standing in ways that diminish character and opinion. Not everyone is heroically self-making enough to become Emerson's "Man Thinking" or even just Orwell the home gardener and furniture-



maker. Melville, Hawthorne, and Thoreau shared Tocqueville's fear that while untrammelled democracy and commerce might liberate the strong they would also engender gnawing vulnerabilities and a chronic hunger for security among many who would lead "lives of quiet desperation." They would be the more susceptible to clever marketing or soft demagoguery in a "majority" culture more constraining of the individual than was the old monarchy and an established church. As if anticipating Orwell's intimations of the "fear of public opinion," Tocqueville wrote that

no monarch is so absolute as to combine all the powers of society in his own hands, and to conquer all opposition, as a majority is able to do, which has the right both of making and of executing the laws.

In America, the majority raises formidable barriers around the liberty of opinion: within these barriers, an author may write what he pleases; but woe to him if he goes beyond them. . . . [H]e is exposed to continued obloquy and persecution. His political career is closed forever, since he has offended the only authority which is able to open it. Every sort of compensation, even that of celebrity, is refused to him. Before publishing his opinions, he imagined that he held them in common with others; but no sooner has he declared them, than he is loudly censured by his opponents, while those who think like him, without having the courage to speak out, abandon him in silence. . . .<sup>19</sup>

While a monarch might attack the body in order to subdue the soul, Tocqueville observed,

such is not the course adopted by tyranny in democratic republics; there the body is left free and the soul is enslaved. The master no longer says, "You shall think as I do, or you shall die"; but he says, "You are free to think differently from me and to retain your life, your property, and all that you possess; but you are henceforth a stranger among your people. . . . Your fellow-creatures will shun you like an impure being; and even those who believe in your innocence will abandon you, lest they should be shunned in their turn."

We are at least partly back to Orwell's warning of 1944 that writers faced not government censorship but publishers' fear of public opinion in "accepting the principle that a book should be published or suppressed, praised or damned, not on its merits but according to political expediency."<sup>20</sup> Expediency was determined not only by the crown, church, or lords but also by a Fourth Estate that claimed to serve the people, sometimes in collaboration with their self-anointed "revolutionary" vanguard. Watching that collaboration, Orwell complained that "others who do not actually hold this view [of what is expedient] assent to it from sheer cowardice," so that a writer who declares the Soviet regime "evil" finds himself shunned as an impure being.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, he concluded, "One can only explain this contradiction [of proclaiming freedom while betraying it] by a cowardly desire to keep in with the bulk of the intelligentsia."<sup>22</sup> And it is here that I think Orwell could have learned from Tocqueville and America, earlier than he eventually did learn it, that often it's the other way around: It's the intelligentsia that is trying to "keep in" with an unguided, elusive, and fickle but pervasive majority. In America it need not be only a liberal intelligentsia that does this; the country's conservative elites, most of them



really classical liberals, not throne-and-altar Tories, hunger for "silent majorities," "moral majorities," and worse. As Tocqueville foresaw, consumer sovereignty has consumed so much else that only a bigger market share or a winning (i.e., bought and paid-for) electoral majority seems to carry cultural or intellectual force.

Has it really come to this? At first glance, the silencing and shunning Tocqueville and Orwell bemoan seem not to characterize today's American public discourse, with its cacophony of shouts in a "crossfire" between "Left" and "Right" and of cries from myriad religious, ethnic, racial, and other groupings that seem to defy the floor plan of the nineteenth-century French Chamber of Deputies. But lost, if not suppressed, in this buzzing, blighting confusion are voices that don't roar in a Manichaeian way—voices reminding us that everyone has both a left foot and a right one and urging us to walk politically in what Orwell called "a grown-up manner." It's not that the conglomeration of public discourse has imposed an ideological or party line in the nineteenth- and mid-twentieth-century manner of Orwell's "intelligentsia." Rather, when the only party line is the bottom line, every other public priority, including freedom of speech, is inundated by distractions fomented by corporate entities that are not the thinking beings whose political speech the First Amendment was meant to protect. Their "ideas" are merely tactically deployed reiterations of one unexamined imperative—the pursuit of profit and market share. Their ability to overwhelm and deform public discourse, buying up political debate while assembling huge audiences for profit, swamps democratic deliberation in titillation and gross degradation that moves socially and emotionally atomized consumption. As the promotion of such "consumer sovereignty" displaces political sovereignty, a quiet riot of self-regarding consumption displaces the subtle, canny self-discipline of a civic discourse that might lift everyone's sights to the good of the whole. Such lifting is an art. People need to be trained to do it to stimulate one another in achieving a good in common that they cannot know alone.

Against such Tocquevillian forebodings, Orwell sounds almost archaic when he grounds his 1944 appeals for freedom of speech and publishing in Milton's "known rule of ancient liberty." It is deeply embedded in Western thought and tradition, he argues. But even then he must have known that invocations of Milton were little more than incantations against the tyranny which he foresaw and which Tocqueville had long since forecast. Perhaps it was Orwell's immersion in a lingering British civility, still graven in the heart (and in "wholesome" boys' weeklies) and not merely in law, that inclined him to rely on Milton's "known rule." But in the United States today, surely, the written Constitution, no longer very decently draped by Burkean custom, may have the paradoxical effect of stimulating endless, anomic litigation within ever more slippery webs of contracts and rights. That would appall Orwell, as the prospect of it did Tocqueville. Within the uncontested sovereignty of a faceless majority, law can't protect and may even undermine the social amenities and decencies Orwell loved. If the legislation that is ground out like sausages in Washington becomes the *only* embodiment of social order, what defense of comity and indeed order itself can it offer against media that "morph" commercial initiative into casino gambling, cultural entertainments into mob circuses resembling the prolecut of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and public discourse into hate-mongering—all while catering to "majority" impulses for higher quarterly returns?

Like Tocqueville in early nineteenth-century America, Orwell had the courage to face such bleak prospects and to expose the corruption of all that had kindled



his social and political imagination in Barcelona. But he also contended that even if we lose a romantic faith in "the people" as we uncover evil in the irreducible divisions of the human heart, still we must choose between a stoic "act of faith" in the people or surrender to the security of Authority. If Orwell's example is any guide, at least the inevitable disillusionment need not subvert an almost stoical ability to carry on. But that may depend in part on the integrity of publishers and editors who present new social visions when old paradigms are crumbling and brighter social prospects seem dim. Those choices seem especially fateful just now in America, not only because the United States is so powerful but also because, if Tocqueville's and Orwell's warnings are right, "tyranny of the majority" is so advanced that soon it may need only a Big Brother to persuade everyone that his whims embody their will.

Each of us comes in his or her own way to prospects like those Tocqueville and Orwell confronted. In 1977, after twelve years spent mostly in and around universities, I moved to inner-city Brooklyn, New York. There I lived for five years with mostly black and Hispanic neighbors in tenement walk-ups, losing myself in local neighborhood politics and activist journalism enough so that on my rare forays into Manhattan, the density of white faces was disorienting. In time I ran a now-long-defunct small weekly newspaper in the Williamsburg and Greenpoint sections of Brooklyn (my column in it was called "At Large") and later wrote for the then-still-bohemian, muckraking *Village Voice* and Irving Howe's democratic-socialist quarterly *Dissent*. Later, for more than two years, I wrote a thrice-weekly op-ed-page column for the *New York Daily News*, whose reading "intelligentsia" consisted of local politicians; parochial and public-school teachers; community leaders in neighborhoods like Archie Bunker's white-ethnic redoubts, and the Roman Catholic prelates of the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. The latter's pews were filling with Spanish-speaking immigrants; and, finally and most poignantly for me, older black New Yorkers who'd had decent high school educations and would mail me back my columns with their underlinings and notes in the margins.

I describe this odyssey briefly in *The Closest of Strangers*.<sup>23</sup> But only years after writing that book did I read, for the first time, and well into middle age, *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *Homage to Catalonia* and discover that I had written my own homage to Brooklyn. It wasn't just political innocence that I had lost there, as Orwell had in Catalonia. Living and working with nonwhites who had some power over my immediate prospects boiled out a campus radical's racial romanticism and brewed deeper interracial affinities and bonds. Far more than I had expected, my interest in a common American identity and in an American democratic exceptionalism was shared by nonwhite neighbors and coworkers. A surprising number of them felt diminished by liberal oversolicitude almost as much as by the conservative racism that dominates the liberal imagination. That distanced me from what seemed earlier incarnations in Cambridge and New Haven: One night, when my unpaid-for telephone could only receive calls, not make them, a Yale classmate trading currencies for Citibank rang me up to ask for an alumni contribution. Sitting on the floor of my apartment in the smoky Brooklyn dusk, I explained I had only a subsistence living. Taken aback, he gently wished me well. I hadn't words to add that I was deeply, darkly contented and that Yale was a million miles away.

The Orwell who sojourned at Wigan and in the slums of his own London might have understood how quickly a place very close to home can become one's bleed-



ing Spain, how inner-city Brooklyn became my Catalonia. Many of the same harsh social and political truths emerge, and while there are crucial differences—otherwise, I would not be wishing that Orwell had spent time in the United States—I can't help but wonder if some talented, morally acute, upper-middle-class young American writers aren't running from problems that feel oddly too close for comfort when they skip over domestic probings like Orwell's at Wigan to report—as he also did—on more dangerous conflicts far away. Might there be a vague need to correct an older generation's displacements of American political frustrations and fantasies onto "third world" peoples and problems?

Certainly if one wanted to bear witness to a politics of death, one could have moved in the 1980s to parts of Brooklyn where the sense of living in a war zone and of negotiating its duplicities got coded into my body language and would remain for years. In the bleeding, beautiful Brooklyn of those years I witnessed a precipitous decay of opportunity, authority, and civility and an ascendancy of force and fraud in calculations of everyday life. By the time of the 1989 mayoral election that produced David Dinkins, a glittering Manhattan real estate boom had receded, exposing not just the perennial ethnic clashes and jockeyings of elites but also a frightening disintegration of families and neighborhood institutions amid reports of soaring child abuse and housing abandonment. Everywhere, it seemed, were encroachments of the drug economy, of roaming packs of violent youths, and of the homeless and mentally helpless, human wreckage which no one knew how to repair. In a growing civic vacuum, politics moved increasingly in cycles of tribal recrimination, along racial lines.

Even as newcomers whose understandings of race were more fluid and ecumenical than those of American blacks and whites promised a new cosmopolitanism, the city's public racial disputes turned less on the hopeful claims of the civil rights movement, or for employment, housing, schools, and welfare, and more instead on death, on emblematic, murderous interracial assaults in the streets. Howard Beach, Tawana Brawley, Bensonhurst, the Central Park Jogger, Crown Heights; long before the Rodney King and O. J. Simpson psychodramas convulsed Los Angeles and riveted the nation in a politics of racial paroxysm, the New York I knew learned, as Orwell had in Catalonia, that a politics turning on a discourse of death heralds only the death of politics.

New York had 2,500 homicides annually through most of my time of inner-city immersion. Some were terroristic, as in the Son of Sam serial murders and the gunning down of more than a dozen children caught in the crossfire of warring drug gangs. Some were riotous, as during the mass lootings of neighborhoods I worked in during the 1977 electrical power blackout. A large number were almost random, in that they were committed on strangers in encounters untempered by anything like the twinge of compassion Orwell felt for the humanity of an "enemy combatant" he saw running across a ridge in Spain, trying to hold up his pants. I stepped over two still-warm bodies on Brooklyn streets in those years and saw an elderly man pull a gun on a young mugger on a subway platform. I watched whole underground transit passageways slip rhythmically in and out of civil authority, like provinces in a country gripped by a guerrilla war. My apartment was cleaned out by burglars twice. By the time an unassuming white computer technician named Bernhard Goetz shot four black youths who had been harrasing him on a crowded subway car in 1987, I understood viscerally what most of the city's



intelligentsia would not acknowledge: that something more and less than racism was in play, something more and less, too, than what goes into battlefield and political shootings. Polls suggested that, had one of Goetz's victims died, a surprisingly large proportion of New Yorkers, black as well as white, would have considered it a "necessary murder"—the term Orwell rebuked W. H. Auden for using with reference to some of the political killings in Spain.

*Tout comprendre ce n'est pas tout pardonner*; when I say that I understood, it is not that I approved. I learned, rather, that understanding is worth more than ideological moralizing ginned up for political action. Whatever the historical and structural explanations for the violence and the racial street theater collecting around it, an apolitical coldness in the killings dimmed the coordinates of political action in Brooklyn. No matter how nuanced and compelling the New York left's causal analyses, it repeatedly and almost defiantly displayed its helplessness before these accessions of thanatos or nihilism. Slowly I concluded that even in the midst of oppression—indeed, in order to organize against oppression—lines of personal responsibility must first be drawn and policed, morally and legally, even as they are being tested spiritually or politically. Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. and even Louis Farrakhan understood very well that the least one can do to affirm the dignity of the oppressed is hold them to the basic human standards one would set for one's own children.

Rudolph Giuliani understood this, too, and was willing to be called a conservative and a racist to say so. And hunger for such candor, not racism, was the main reason why, in 1993, with some guarded support from my perch at the *Daily News*, he defeated the city's first African American mayor. Racism there was, of course, but the politics of antiracism had imploded by so obviously hedging the truths I have just mentioned: Giuliani became mayor because liberals had lost the art of public deliberation that affirms those basic truths and lift people's sights.

Nowhere was this clearer than in the hideous failure of the *New York Times* to be the "paper of record" of anything but an over-solicitude about race that had so clearly become one of liberal Democrats' liabilities among decent New Yorkers of all colors. The central problem, visible so clearly through my "down and out," Orwellian lenses—as I explained relentlessly and to no avail for a decade in many venues and with varying shades of humor, satire, and sober analysis—was that the paper's young publisher, Arthur Sulzberger Jr., had joined his own impish, vaguely countercultural moralism to the intensely penitential, often retributive southern racial liberalism of his editorial-page editor and, briefly, executive editor, Howell Raines. Both men shared a larger misapprehension to whose correction I had devoted *The Closest of Strangers*: Few New Yorkers, black or white, conservative or liberal, who followed the city "on the ground" could rely on the *Times*'s iconographically "correct" coverage or commentary on any of the signal crises involving race.

For example, even as the *Times* published an average of three stories a day for eight months and many hectoring editorials about the police killing of the African immigrant Amadou Diallo, sparing no effort to amplify a cacophony of long-pent-up Giuliani-hatred orchestrated by Al Sharpton, it could not or would not report that in Giuliani's then-seven years as mayor the number of black New Yorkers killed by police officers had been half that of Mayor David Dinkins's four-year term. Under the tutelage of the publisher and editorial-page editor, reporters sim-



ply were not inclined to ask about these numbers or, hearing of them, to consider them relevant. And although the general murder rate, too, had been halved, it mattered to no gatekeeper of New York City's public discourse—at least it was never mentioned by any—that thanks to the controversial new policing policies, thousands of blacks and Hispanics who would otherwise have been killed were up and walking around. Like the fellow-traveling “intelligentsia” in London during Orwell's time, New York's chattering classes simply would not process this information, let alone argue about what it might mean.

In 1997, I devoted a chapter of a new book, *Liberal Racism*, to warning, explicitly and specifically, that the strange symbiosis between Sulzberger's political correctness and Raines's florid, penitential racialism was responsible for a long train of such myopic reporting and for setting up the sort of journalistic debacle that occurred six years later in the disgrace of Jayson Blair, the young black reporter whose fabrications were overlooked by dozens of editors desperate to promote him in the name of “diversity.”<sup>24</sup> For writing this chapter and defending and expanding its arguments in other venues, I had to undergo some of the shunning Tocqueville anticipated and Orwell experienced.

American editors who silence writers this way are committed not so much to a “liberal” or leftist ideology as they are to sniffing the company wind, which tracks the publisher's understanding of how to reconcile certain moral conceits with the bottom line. They seek writers whose work will bring the desired “market” of readers to the publication's advertisers. Of course, even vapid publications have an ideology of sorts. But, in a double irony, the only remaining American publishing counterpart to the Stalinist cohort Orwell faced is today's conservative-corporate media combine—dubbed the “Con-intern” by *Slate* editor Jacob Weisberg—over which owners such as Rupert Murdoch hold so much sway.

The conservative news media's political contradictions and moral hypocrisies are quite as yawning as those of the leftist publishers Orwell faced: They pretend to uphold cultural values that in the long run cannot be reconciled with the corporate priorities, morality, and behaviors to which their editors and publishers are joined at the hip. The media's “party line” is a kind of hyper-bottom line—not just of profit but of the relentless *celebration* of profit—even if this or that magazine survives only on subventions drawn from the other profits of ideologically driven owners. Joined at the hip: The Calvin Klein fashion-cum-kiddie-porn ads that showed up on New York City public buses in 1995 weren't put there by liberal elites or sexual liberationists, as the Con-intern's kept conservative cultural warriors charged, but by private investors in free markets. Only nonmarket civic forces rallied to yank them off, as most conservatives stood speechless. Similarly, it is not leftists but huge corporations that pump pornography into hundreds of thousands of American hotel rooms and Internet screens, along with spectacles of the live degradation and humiliation of Americans before television-studio audiences on live daytime shows.

Left and Right are sometimes complicit in these assaults on civic culture, the Left as an addled junior partner that has abdicated its noble ideals of insurgency by mistaking seductive gyrations for political action: American Indian “tribes,” some virtually concocted by activist-entrepreneurs and investor-friendly officials, use their “sovereignty” to set up casinos that, in a bitter poetic injustice, hook busloads of flaccid whites on gambling as surely as whites once hooked Indians on firewater.



The Left, flummoxed by racist fantasies of liberation, and the Right, flummoxed by free-market idolatry, are speechless about the spread of this addictive, regressive tax of casino betting. Living at the edge of a white-ethnic, working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, I often saw blue-haired Ediths and paunchy Archies boarding "luxury" buses to the casinos.

Within parameters like those I have just sketched, conservative media team players virtually mimic Stalinists such as the *Daily Worker's* Harry Pollitt or Victor Gollancz, whether in braying "the people's" resentments against selected targets to deflect attention from their own more dubious goals, as Pollitt did, or in crying piously about (their own) freedom of speech and other liberal protections. Barely a level or two below the Cheshire-cat grins of Murdoch's *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol swarm "movement" operatives whose behavior and prose Orwell would have recognized at the *Daily Worker*. But even outside such ideologically defined limits, the players are bound so tightly and unthinkingly to the consumer sovereignist mind-set that they are satisfied to feign public discourse if participants can be induced to shout loud enough to draw an audience. Such an audience, in Walter Lippmann's view, is no longer a deliberating public because it is a "buying" public and therefore a fickle one.<sup>25</sup> The simulacrum of combat is what sells, not the serious thinking about our common destiny that may come out of one school of thought or another.

Faith in "highbrow" editors and publishers has been a major casualty among beliefs about politics and race I carried from Cambridge to Brooklyn. I have learned that romantic or ideological projections of political liberation onto the "oppressed" reflect little but moral self-indulgence. White liberals of a certain temperament, such as Sulzberger and Raines, become passionately committed to busing or racial preferences because they need to re-stage morality plays that pass through the white conviction of the sin of racism; penitence; and then conditional, edgy absolution. Some join in these morality plays to sustain their own shaky self-regard or their moral self-importance, often with the cynical assistance of impresarios of the racial street theater like Sharpton, who enact them in real time, at the expense of real people and justice. Journalists write these morality plays into their stories, political choices, and even friendships. Pity the objects of such solicitude. As if enduring racism hasn't been enough, now they must endure being turned into props.

A closely related casualty of my Brooklyn experiences has been faith in leftist schemes for organizing the oppressed by prescriptions based on class analysis or on using race as a stand-in for class. Such strategies lead to the telling of many lies, which the dissemblers themselves come to believe and which too many decent but distracted citizens suborn out of a diffuse racial guilt or cowardice like that which Orwell described in his preface. Although racism and capitalist exploitation are real, some of what passes for antiracism and anticapitalism among otherwise-intelligent "progressive" political chroniclers and activists is unreal because it is self-referential enough to do subtle but corrosive harm to the dignity of its intended beneficiaries through the articulation of a common destiny.

Learning to know when and how this is so, and saying so, can put one at odds with the "antiracist" orthodoxy that is this country's most powerful analogue of the anticapitalist orthodoxy Orwell defied. I have taken this brief personal excursion in order to revivify, with an American twist, at least something of what I cannot help but believe he endured. Let me close by proposing some Stations of the Cross that I see in Orwell's journey as I read him after taking my own.



The first such station on a leftist political writer's road toward strength amid disillusionment is the unforgettable first flush of one's encounter with "true" equality—in Barcelona for Orwell, but for others in Russian collective farms of the early 1930s, Israeli kibbutzim of the early 1950s, Cuban sugar cane harvests and American black-power struggles of the 1960s, and on. A second station marks the encroachment of disillusionment itself, not so much with "the people" as with any overly ideologized faith in "the oppressed," or in "race and class" analysis as a road map to justice. The readers of that map are so wishful that soon enough they are telling lies. The damage reinforces Tocqueville's caution, and Orwell's chastened discovery, that the most furious pursuit of equality blinds its celebrants to abdications of freedom and falsifications of fraternity.

A third station: Part of becoming disillusioned is being shunned by keepers of orthodoxy, including academics, editors, and other members of the self-avowedly liberal, independent intelligentsia whom Orwell derided in his preface for *Animal Farm*. They avoid writers like him and anyone who reminds them—as Orwell surely did in writing about Spain and the workers of Wigan—that as parlor champions of "the people" they have stopped thinking precisely where they should have begun. These increasingly self-insulating apologists—for Stalinist anticapitalism in Orwell's time, or for race-industry "antiracism" in our own—include several types. There are smooth interpreters of orthodoxy, like Orwell's sometime publisher Gollancz, some of them avuncular arbiters of what is safe now for progressive people to say. They are deft enough in deploying the larger society's reigning liberal pieties and forms of address to suggest that they're open to grounded decency like Orwell's. They are not.

There are also ingratiators, like the jittery Jonathan Cape, who turned down *Animal Farm* on second reading, struggling earnestly to sustain their liberal respect but unable to deviate from orthodoxy in the end. And there are ideological enforcers like the *Daily Worker's* Pollitt. And there are legions of academic, literary, journalistic, and political hacks like those with whom Orwell had to deal in order to get work. They do not so much take political positions as look over their shoulders before positioning themselves. These are the diminished, conformist "democrats" whom Tocqueville found bereft of any independent thought or expression and of whom Orwell wrote, simply: "they are afraid of public opinion."<sup>26</sup>

The more such placeholders comport themselves (and think of themselves) as independent professionals, the more assiduously they shield themselves against the moral discomfort of their servility to the orthodoxy of the day. The isolation that so puzzled and frustrated Orwell as he wrote "The Freedom of the Press" had come to him simply because he irritated and even frightened these people by sharing his observations, which had the effect of showing how myopic the editors and publishers had become. The irony in his literary isolation that spring of 1944 is that while he stood for ordinary people, he had no illusion he actually spoke for them (or even to them, at least before *Animal Farm*). He did not consider himself their tribune; *Tribune* was the name of the newspaper he wrote for, but his column there was called "As I Please." It is because he refused to shield himself with higher pretensions that he wound up speaking so reliably for others.

Another Station of the Cross marks the temptation to fall into the arms of the Right upon becoming disillusioned with the Left, or, less often, the converse. The morphology of minds that flip this way doesn't change with the switch; it is



reinforced, because they yearn always to be rising against evil cant and convention. When the first ideological sodality isn't liberating anyone and isn't even right about how the other side was wrong, the quivering hurt of that discovery can make the other side seem better than it is. The real enemy, Orwell wrote in the preface, is "the gramophone mind, whether or not one agrees with the record that is being played at the moment."<sup>27</sup>

The gramophone mind, which has jumped from one orthodoxy to another without ever really thinking for itself, accounts for the uncanny resemblance between so much of today's American conservative opinion journalism and the media Stalinism of Gollancz and Pollitt: Many of the tactics and tropes one finds in the work of today's Con-intern mirror those recounted in *The Age of Suspicion*, an acute, humorous account of habits of mind in the Stalinist, Comintern-run American left of the 1930s and 1940s by my cousin James Wechsler, the anticommunist liberal who edited *The New York Post* before Murdoch turned it into a daily reminder that Australia was founded as a penal colony.<sup>28</sup>

When one has reached the Stations of the Cross through which writers Orwell and Wechsler passed, one can tell pretty quickly which station any opinion journalist is writing from. One appreciates why the most important courage is the kind that is willing to anger true believers on all sides. One learns, too, that although it is lonelier to be shunned by both sides than by one, one is freer to stand for the liberal civic center that still respects "the known rule of ancient liberty" and sustains some hope, however chastened, in "the people." That is the only morally trustworthy basis of politics, but because it is so fragile it has too few friends who can address political questions "in an adult manner."

To become a chastened liberal after an ordeal like Orwell's is also to become a connoisseur of bad faith and simple weakness. It is to discover that what left-leaning cultural gatekeepers like those whom Orwell disdained call "politics" is a compensatory moralism—gestural, deceitful, counterproductive, and sometimes even oppressive. On the left, it is the default position of the cohort who, like the British intelligentsia of Orwell's time, blame capitalism for all evil and their own alienation; they find more obvious villains, such as Hitler or George W. Bush, and sacralize its opponents like Stalin or . . . Well, since there is no new "Uncle Joe," this Left has little to say.

In the London of the 1940s this leftist default position escaped Orwell's condemnation because it could not spare its holders the harsh burdens of war against fascism; he confronted it mainly in his last two novels. But in the far more secure and insulated America of the last thirty years of the twentieth century, gatekeepers of what Murray Kempton called "progressive goodthink"<sup>29</sup> discovered racism, and then sexism and homophobia, as the most compelling, if complicated, moral representations of evil, and these have served not only as perfectly legitimate targets but also as mere foils to moral posturing. Keepers of this orthodoxy place undue reliance on gestures and symbols of moral redress because they will never do the heavy lifting to describe, let alone redress, the inequities and injustices of a political economy which they dare not actually oppose yet cannot quite bring themselves to defend.

I have spent too many years offering too many definitive accounts of the American racial orthodoxy not to know that no "genre" of appeal—investigative, ingratiating, humorous, satirical, or jeremiadic—will loosen its grip before events conspire



to drive the point home. For now, Orwell's insistence that liberty is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear figures mainly as a maxim for distant places and or a drapery for titillations closer to home. His insistence is honored only in the breach, contained and dismissed in the few slots that are licensed to dissent for the sake of appearances. And this strategy, which suffuses even the craft of reporting, is what makes so much in the American news media so disappointingly vapid. The news media and publishing worlds are weakened further by the understaffing and overwork that keep editors and reporters from thinking.

"Thought is not, like physical strength, dependent upon the number of its agents; nor can authors be counted like the troops which compose an army," wrote Tocqueville in a section of *Democracy in America* called "Liberty of the Press in the United States." "On the contrary, the authority of a principle is often increased by the small number of men by whom it is expressed. The words of one strong-minded man, addressed to the passions of a listening assembly, have more power than the vociferations of a thousand orators; and if it be allowed to speak freely in any one public place, the consequence is the same as if free speaking was allowed in every village. . . . Thought is an invisible and subtle power, that mocks all the efforts of tyranny."<sup>30</sup>

One might argue that the common inclination to join in "the vociferations of a thousand orators" is a consequence of alienation and despair that are unacknowledged or finessed, or of exploitation and bamboozlement, of the perversities of class and the playing fields of Eton. And one might argue—as I did for years—that if somehow this web of oppressions could be untangled, publishers and political actors would stand taller and the misleaders before whom so many cower would be shown up at last.

I don't know anymore. Like Tocqueville in America, Orwell traced the problem of slavery back to Eden, where no exploitation incited it. It would be good to have faith, as Orwell did fleetingly in Barcelona and as even the more aristocratic Tocqueville did at times in America, in democratic man's ability to lift himself and others from sinkholes of illusion and despair and to begin the world anew, as Tom Paine put it; there is some religion in that hope, these writers understood, even though I doubt that they prayed. One keeps trying—Orwell did—and at the last station of this secular cross, one moves from being disillusioned to being unillusioned. Perhaps one keeps faith with a Madisonian, constitutionalist, checks-and-balances realism that accepts the weakness in human nature but is willing to act a bit as if it didn't accept it, and that hedges its bets for the good, with a few protections against majority tyranny.

The figure ground of the journey for me is the hard-bitten journalist's wisdom, a stoical, for others sometimes Christic belief: No matter how hard you fight and how grand or noble your vision, the world will break your heart in the end, but how you bear yourself in the face of that certainty is the test of both friendship and politics. That faith is what confers the liberty to tell people what they don't want to hear, tell them forcefully but without a chip on your shoulder, satirically but not tauntingly, and, at bottom, simply and decently. Only if Tocqueville is still right, about the power of "the words of one strong-minded man," and only if editors stand up for truth tellers like Orwell, will democracy in America or anywhere else live to fight another day.



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