IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES IN GEORGE ORWELL'S WORKS; A STUDY OF BURMESE DAYS, KEEP THE ASPIDISTRA FLYING AND NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

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ABSTRACT

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NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

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This thesis analysis George Orwell's three novels; Burmese Days, Keep the Aspidistra Flying and Nineteen Eighty-Four in terms of the main political ideas expressed through these works. It begins with an overview of Orwell as a political writer and the political atmosphere of the era. The thesis then asserts that the novels are used as a form of propaganda by the writer. The central political ideas that appear in the novels are imperialism in Burmese Days, capitalism in Keep the Aspidistra Flying and totalitarianism in Nineteen Eighty-Four. This dissertation is therefore primarily organized around these topics, and Orwell's use of his novels as a way of conveying his political message will be illustrated and exemplified in the study.

Keywords: Orwell, Imperialism, Capitalism, Totalitarianism

ÖZ

GEORGE ORWELL' IN ESERLERİNİN FİKRİ TEMELLERİ;
BURMA GÜNLERİ, ZAMBAK SOLMASIN VE BİN DOKUZ YÜZ
SEKSENDÖRT ADLI ESERLER ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Bu çalışma George Orwell'ın Burma Günleri, Zambak Solmasın ve Bin Dokuz Yüz Seksendört adlı romanlarını yazarın bu eserlerdeki temel siyasi fikirleri açısından incelemektedir. Öncelikle siyasi bir yazar olarak Orwell ve çağın siyasi atmosferi ele alınmaktadır. Ardından yazarın romanlarını bir propaganda aracı gibi kullnadığı öne sürülmektedir. Romanlarda en belirgin işlenen işlenen siyasi fikirler Burma Günleri'nde emperyalizm, Zambak Solmasın'da kapitalizm ve Bin Dokuz Yüz Seksendört'te de totalitarizmdir. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma öncelikle bu konuları inceleyecek ve Orwell'ın romanlarını siyasi mesajını yayma aracı olarak nasıl kullandığını örneklendirip ortaya koyacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orwell, Emperyalizm, Kapitalizm, Totalitarizm

To My Family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The thesis intends to analyze Orwell's three novels *Burmese Days, Keep the Aspidistra Flying, and Nineteen Eighty-Four* through the political perspectives of the writer in these works. It attempts to demonstrate how Orwell handled imperialism in *Burmese Days*, capitalism in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, and totalitarianism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and express his views of them.

In order to do this, the thesis focuses on the way Orwell expressed his political ideas in his works so as to communicate his inner world and ideological standing. Today Orwell is a key figure of the 1930s and 1940s. According to Connelly, Orwell's reputation lies in his independent standing in an era dominated by rigid party lines (2). He wrote clearly and directly without hesitating. He was brave enough to attack the existing system or writing dystopian scenarios for the future. He valued personal liberty more than anything and he feared that it could be lost in this existing system which day by day diminishes individual vision, power, and freedom (Connelly 2). In all his novels he exemplified the importance of group pressure over the individual. Orwell's works had always been related to the social and political issues of his time. He tried to explore the effect of political ideologies and the contribution of these ideologies to human life. He was not only an artist but also a conscious political activist who aimed at enlightening ordinary people to the hidden realities behind the social problems. He believed in the social responsibility of literature and thought that in an age like ours, literature should not be interested in just the aesthetic considerations (Chandra 110). In his essay "Writers and Leviathan" he wrote:

> The invasion of literature by politics was bound to happen. It must have happened, even if the special problem of totalitarianism had never arisen, because we have developed a sort of compunction which our grandparents did not have, an awareness of the enormous injustice and misery of the world, and a guilt stricken feeling that one ought to be doing something about it, which makes a purely aesthetic attitude towards life impossible. No one, now, could devote himself to literature as single-mindedly as Joyce or Henry James (4: 202).

As political writing invites political criticism, much of what is written about George Orwell is related to political considerations. In Orwell's case different camps of people claim Orwell to be one of their own and this leads to a major problem. George Woodcock emphasizes that if a writer is claimed to be one of their own by different camps of people this means that he is a complex character and each of them is skipping something while dealing with his works (55).Donald Crompton mentions the difficulties critics encounter in analyzing Orwell:

> Here, however, the difficulty begins, for as so many critics have found, there is not one Orwell but many, and the act of recognition becomes not a simple matter of responding to a familiar presence but rather that of deciding which of the several Orwells one is dealing with in a particular work. Like the child in front of the camera, he just will not stand still; his image seems constantly to blur, dissolve, and reform so that one can never be quite sure in which guise he will appear next (150).

Contributing to this problem is the wide range and diversity of Orwell's works. As an essayist, Orwell wrote about gardening, cooking, and fashion in addition to literature and politics. Contradiction and conflict are two of the most essential features of Orwell's works. A constant pattern of orthodoxy cannot be identified in his writings. His complex feelings towards the Burmese when he served as a policeman were reflected in his essay "Shooting An Elephant": "With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, *in saecula saeculorum*, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts" (1: 94). Another controversial example for Orwell's excessive honesty is his wartime book review of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Orwell's comments demonstrate that he is not a conventional Leftist at all:

> I should like to put it on record that I have never been able to dislike Hitler ... I have reflected that I would certainly kill him if I could get within reach of him, but that I could feel no personal animosity. The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him. One feels it again when one sees his photographs – and I recommend especially the photograph at the beginning of Hurst and Blackett's edition, which shows Hitler in his early Brownshirt days. It is a pathetic, dog-like face, the face of a man suffering under intolerable wrongs. In a rather

> more manly way it reproduces the expression of innumerable pictures of Christ crucified.... He is the martyr, the victim, Prometheus chained to the rock, the self-sacrificing hero who fights single-handed against impossible odds ... One feels, as with Napoleon, that he is fighting against destiny, that he can't win, and yet that he somehow deserves to (2: 13-14).

Such examples are thought to be proofs for Orwell's brave honesty and his search for truth. He was not afraid to write about the Red Army when it committed war crimes at the end of the Second World War. He condemned their actions with the same vigour he employed against the Nazis (Connelly 10). However this led to severe criticism of Orwell's enemies and they even implied that he was a traitor or a secret agent of the government:

> His effect on the English Left might be compared to that of Voltaire on the French nobility; he weakened their belief in their own ideology, made them ashamed of their clichés, left them intellectually more scrupulous and more defenseless (qtd. in Connelly 10).

As Orwell is a multi-dimensional, complex, and a secretive man, it is difficult to define Orwell; for that reason "the debate as to whether Orwell was an anarchist, socialist, a humanist, or a conservative reactionary seems likely to continue" (Connelly 10). According to Beadle, Orwell's contradictions result from his dream to "maintain an essentially Christian view of life and society in a post-Christian world" (qtd. in Connelly 10). Those who claim that Orwell was a moralist have satisfactory evidence to prove this. Orwell believed that political reform and structural change were needed in order to have a better world, and he expressed this in his essay "Charles Dickens":

> Progress is not an illusion, it happens, but it is slow and invariably disappointing, there is always a new tyrant waiting to take over form the old-generally not quite so bad, but still a tyrant. Consequently two viewpoints are always tenable. The one, how can you improve human nature until you have changed the system? The other, what is the use of changing the system before you have improved human nature? ... The moralist and the revolutionary are constantly undermining one another. Marx exploded a hundred tons of dynamite beneath the moralist position, and we are still living in the echo of that tremendous crash (2: 117).

In a letter to Humphrey House, the Dickens scholar, Orwell repeats his ideas on progress. He tells House that improvement in the human condition is possible but common decency is a prerequisite for this (Crick 385). Orwell criticizes Marx because he destroys common peoples' hopes by diminishing their long believed values. Orwell expresses this by saying: "My chief hope for the future is that the common people have never parted company with their moral code" (qtd. in Crick 386).

As mentioned earlier, Orwell's works have a wide range. Although today he is known as a novelist of the last century, he wrote not only novels but also pamphlets, essays, and autobiographical books. However, in this thesis the political and ideological thought of Orwell that is reflected in his novels will be studied. Orwell's upbringing, education life, especially his Eton years, and the English society shaped his thought system. For the subject matter of his novels Orwell made use of the problems of his time. He lived in an atmosphere of chaos and political turmoil. As Mowat says; "It was a time of social surveys, of mass observation, of public alarm about the nation's future" (480). The situation in England after the war was not bright. Economic depression and unemployment were reflected in the works of post-war generation of writers in the thirties. Orwell's experience as an imperial officer helped him to have a better understanding of the situation (Chandra 8). He wrote six novels and in all of them his main theme was the problems of the society at different levels. As Subhash Chandra states, "His novels might be taken to be an extraordinary comment on the social and political situations of contemporary England" (9). Therefore, according to the critics, Orwell's novels can be defined as a form of propaganda that aims to direct the readers to a certain point. Orwell criticizes the writers of the twenties in his essay "Inside the Whale" for their lack of interest the social problems:

> In cultured circle art-for-art's saking extended practically to a worship of the meaningless. Literature was supposed to consist solely in the manipulation of words. To judge a book by its subject matter was the unforgivable sin, and even to be aware of its subject-matter was looked on as a lapse of taste (2: 129).

The writers of the twenties supported the motto "art for arts sake" and their emphasis was not on the subject matter of the book but on the form and language. This does

not mean that the subject matter can be an excuse for bad writing, but, Orwell emphasizes the value of writing as a kind of weapon that must be directed against the vices of the system (Crick 362). He despises this arrogant attitude and accuses his contemporaries of living in an ivory tower (Chandra 10). According to Orwell, good novels can be written only in a liberal and an unorthodox atmosphere free from all pressures:

> The atmosphere of orthodoxy is always damaging to Prose, and above all it's completely ruinous to the novel, the most anarchical of all forms of literature. How many Roman Catholics have been good novelists? Even the handful one could name have usually been bad Catholics. The novel is practically a protestant form of art; product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual... Good novels are not written by Orthodoxy-sniffers, nor by people who are conscience-stricken about their own unorthodoxy. Good novels are written by people who are not frightened (IW, 2: 153).

According to Subhash Chandra, Orwell decided to write novels because this genre enabled him to express his ideas about the current issues freely (11). Orwell professed the reason in his essay "Why I Write":

> What I have most wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself 'I am going to produce a work of art'. I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing, but it is impossible for me to write 'If, it were not also an aesthetic experience' (4: 126).

In the thirties, social issues began to enter into the novel. Novels of the thirties were influenced by the social tensions. "In the hands of Orwell the novel acquired a new dimension" (Chandra 12). Orwell used the novel as a means of propaganda. Thus, he is primarily a political novelist. He conveys his message through a political perspective. Formal devices, like characters and plot, were used as weapons in Orwell's hands.

On the whole, the aim of this study is to analyze the ideological issues in George Orwell's novels *Burmese Days, Keep the Aspidistra Flying, and Nineteen*

Eighty-Four with regard to the political atmosphere in which these works were created. Consequently, this thesis will reveal that, as a writer Orwell had a political mission. He believed that the existing system has many defects and a new political system based on democracy must be established. By writing, he tried to convey his message through his works.

CHAPTER 2

IMPERIALISM AND RACISM IN BURMESE DAYS

2.1. Imperialism in *Burmese Days*:

Orwell's experience in Burma as an imperial police officer is the first decisive turning point in his life. Imperial service was a family tradition for Orwell and after graduating from Eton, Orwell followed this tradition. According to John Newsinger, Orwell's interest in politics and his enlightenment began here, and when he returned from Burma in 1927 Orwell was already a strong anti-imperialist determined to take sides with the poor and down-trodden (x). He realized that he could no longer be a tool for that evil system. He spent five years in Burma and his Burmese years left him with a feeling of guilt and bad conscience (Newsinger 4). Fowler thinks that *Burmese Days* includes many autobiographical elements (120). The hero of the novel, John Flory, somehow represents Orwell: he likes the company of the Indian doctor, he recognizes the richness of the culture and for the most part he does not think in accordance with the other white community. He regards colonialism as an evil system and he feels angry and guilty for being a servant of colonialism (120). Like Flory, Orwell enjoyed the local culture and the country. However, as Jeffrey Meyers notes, the fierce tropical conditions affected his health terribly (68). Orwell later wrote: "I gave it up partly because the climate had ruined my health, partly because I already had vague ideas of writing books, but mainly because I could not go on any longer serving an imperialism which I had come to regard as very largely a racket." (qtd. in Meyers 68). Ian Slater thinks that, *Burmese Days* carries the typical characteristics of the Orwellian novels in its treatment of the individuals as representatives of different world views (30). Moreover, Orwell focuses on the most deviant individual of a group so as to give a picture of the conformist. In *Burmese Days,* the conformist is the typical imperialist who regards himself superior to the natives and supports exploitation for that reason (Slater 30). Like Orwell, who believed that "no man, in his heart of hearts, believes that it is right to invade a foreign country and hold the population down by force," Flory thinks that

imperialism is in principal an evil system (qtd. in Slater 30). In his struggle to protect his honesty within this system, he shares his feelings with his loyal friend doctor Veraswami. Even so Flory feels like an outcast. The "hideous birthmark" on his face reminds him all the time that he is alienated from his fellow Europeans and also the ideological differences between him and his friend Veraswami create a distance. While Weraswami thinks that British presence is an advantage for the Burmese and accepts imperialism, Flory regards it as sheer exploitation and robbery:

> 'My dear doctor,' said Flory, 'how can you make out that we are in this country for any purpose except to steal? It's so simple. The official holds the Burman down while the businessman goes through his pockets. Do you suppose my firm, for instance, could get its timber contracts if the country weren't in the hands of the British? Or the other timber firms, or the oil companies, or the miners and planters and traders? How could the Rice Ring go on skinning the unfortunate peasants if it hadn't the government behind it? The British Empire is simply a device for giving trade monopolies to the English- or rather to gangs of Jews and Scotchmen' (BD 38).

Orwell's heroes in his novels are complex characters with flaws and contradictions. While Flory speaks harshly against the British Empire, this does not mean that he regrets being in Kyauktada as a vehicle of imperialism. His dialogues with the Indian doctor are the intervals when he is most honest and direct. Despite his feverish desire to live in a world where the black and the white are the same, he also badly wants to belong to his own kind. In order to survive among the other white Europeans he has to be hypocritical. When the doctor praises the English for their loyalty to each other, Flory explains that actually they hate each other but they have to act like friends as a political necessity (BD 37). According to Flory the most disgusting hypocrisy is the way the British justify their exploitation of the natives; they propose that the natives are backward, so they feel obliged to help them develop their industry and to bring progress in all areas (Slater 31). Although Flory doesn't want the British Empire to recede from Burma, at least he is honest enough to tell their real intention to the doctor:

> 'Seditious?' Flory said. 'I'm not seditious. I don't want the Burmans to drive us out of this country. God forbid! I'm here to make money

> like everyone else. All I object to is the slimy white man's burden humbug. The pukka sahib pose. It's so boring. Even those bloody fools at the Club might be better company if we weren't all of us living a lie the whole time' (BD 37).

In his book Ian Slater states that Orwell sees imperialism as a parasitic undertaking of the colonialist upper classes in order to create jobs for their sons and maintain their power at home. Orwell puts his ideas in Flory's mouth by describing imperialism as "a kind of up-to-date, hygienic, self-satisfied louse," and he makes fun of the most famous metaphor of his time, namely "slimy white man's burden humbug" (31). In this part of the novel the reader feels that Orwell is speaking to the reader disguised himself as Flory:

> 'Why, of course, the lie that we are here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them. I suppose it's a natural enough lie. But it corrupts us; it corrupts us in ways you can't imagine. There's an everlasting sense of being a sneak and a liar that torments us and drives us to justify ourselves night and day. It's at the bottom of half our beastliness to the natives. We Anglo-Indians could be almost bearable if we'd only admit that we're thieves and go on thieving without any humbug' (BD 37).

Though Flory seems honest and talks like a real humanist when he is with the doctor, he could not show the same courage against the European community of the Club. Moral hypocrisy of imperialism corrupts Flory, and from time to time he thinks that even the most racist members of the club are better than him because when they say they hate the 'niggers' at least they really mean it (Slater 31). Sensing the hypocrisy of Flory, doctor Veraswami says that if Flory really disapproved of the Empire, he would declare his ideas in public. Flory's answer is an evidence for his weakness of character:

> 'Sorry, doctor; I don't go in for proclaiming from the housetops, I haven't the guts. I "counsel ignoble ease" like old Belial in *Paradise Lost.* It's safer. You have got to be a pukka sahib or die, in this country. In fifteen years I've never talked honestly to anyone except you. My talks here are a safety-valve; a little Black Mass on the sly, if you understand me' (BD 41).

Neither Flory's conversations with Veraswami nor his drinking habit help him forget his guilt and the hypocrisy of the white community. As a result of this, he spends his

time among the natives as much as possible. During a visit to the bazaar with Elizabeth he confesses that when he is brave enough he imagines he is not a pukka sahib (BD 118). Keeping in mind that the character of Flory is somehow representative of Orwell and Flory was called Orwell in an early draft of *Burmese Days*, the report below is quite an interesting note on Orwell's service in Burma:

> But if in public he conformed to what was expected of him at Headquarters and the club, in private he could indulge his eccentricities. Beadon, who came out to see him one day when he was living in Insein, found his house a shambles, with "goats, geese, ducks and all sorts of things floating about downstairs." Beadon, who prided himself on his own neat house, was "rather shattered," and suggested to Blair that perhaps he might bear down his houseman. The suggestion was shrugged aside: he quite liked the house as it was. Beadon changes the subject-was it true, as he had heard, that Blair was attending services in the native churches? Yes, it was true; it had nothing to do with "religion," of course, but he enjoyed conversing with the priests in "very high-flown Burmese" (Beadon's phrase); and he added in his sardonic (or leg pulling) way that he found their conversation more interesting than that he was forced to listen to at the Club. Whereupon he took Beadon off for a farewell drink -at the Club! - before he set off for Rangoon (qtd. in Slater 32)

In his struggle to get rid of his guilt, Flory not only attacks metaphors that try to reflect imperialism as the white man's duty to help other nations, he also makes fun of the unfounded belief in the white man's biological superiority over the natives. Examples of superiority complex can be found throughout the novel as when Mrs. Lackersteen claims, "Really I think the laziness of these servants is getting too shocking. We seem to have no *authority* over the natives nowadays, with all these dreadful Reforms, and the insolence they learn from the newspapers. In some ways they are getting almost as bad as the lower classes at home" (BD 28). In another occasion the timber merchant Ellis fervently argues, "The only possible policy is to treat 'em like the dirt they are.... *We are the masters*" (BD 30). Elizabeth, as a stereotypical *mem-sahib,* also discloses her sense of superiority after Flory says that it is more natural to have a brown skin than a white one. She replies back, "You *do* have some funny ideas" (BD 113).

Slater notes that just like Flory who rejects the idea that European skulls are more sensitive to sunstrokes than those of the natives, Orwell would later write:

> But why should the British in India have built up this superstition about sunstroke? Because an endless emphasis on the differences between the "natives" and yourself is one of the necessary props of imperialism. You can only rule over a subject race, especially when you are in a small minority, if you honestly believe yourself to be racially superior, and it helps towards this if you can believe that the subject race is *biologically* different. There were quite a number of ways in which Europeans in India used to believe, without any evidence, that Asiatic bodies differed from their own. Even quite considerable anatomical differences were supposed to exist. But this nonsense about Europeans being subject to sunstroke and Orientals not, was the most cherished superstition of all. The thin skull was the mark of racial superiority, and the pith topi was a sort of emblem of imperialism (qtd. in Slater 33).

Founding his ideas on such observations, Orwell warns his readers that "once you have the habit" of using phrases that stem from imperialist attitude, such as "the white man's burden" then, you will end up believing what you have invented because "if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought". He adds, "When you think of something abstract (such as imperialism) you are more inclined to use words from the start, and unless you make a conscious effort to prevent it, the existing dialect will come rushing in and do the job for you, at the expense of blurring or even changing your meaning" (qtd. in Slater 33).

Orwell makes no difference between colonialism and imperialism, and he defines imperialism as a "self-satisfied louse" which means that imperialism is always related to gaining profit rather than being an economic burden on the home country (Slater 33). By looking the subject through this angle, Orwell excludes the moral obligation of the white man's burden. In *Burmese Days* Orwell draws a portrait in which none of the British officials in Kyauktada feels responsible for spreading civilization and advancing the local industries. Flory's assumptions about the essence of imperialism reflect the disappointment and disturbance of a sensitive human being when faced with the hypocrisy of the pukka sahib's code in a station of Empire. The fact that no one believes such phrases as "the white man's burden" now is due to the continuous attacks of Orwell and those like him. These writers engrained in people's mind that such phrases were just gilded lies and the real motive behind imperialism was only economic profit and exploitation (Slater 34). Orwell

was well aware of the perils of imperialist propaganda and Flory signals of a time to come when "all the gramophones (will be) playing the same tune"- the same slogans.

Despite all his anger for his race's intentional exploitation of a subject nation, Flory tries to belong to the white society. He reveals to his friend Veraswami that he is afraid of being excluded from his fellows. Orwell believes that this fear influences the imperial officers' lives and even those individuals like Flory, who don't believe in the pukka sahib's code, have to submit to the five main rules of this code (Slater 35). These rules are:

> Keeping up our prestige,
> The firm hand (without the velvet glove),
> We white men must hang together,
> Give them an inch and they'll take an ell, and
> *Esprit de Corps* (BD 181).

Slater notes that, such a code creates a mutual basis for the club members and the newcomers from England like Elizabeth Lackersteen. This traditional code in the Club offers some shelter even to those imperialists like Flory who feel alienated from the rest. Whatever its faults, the Club is at least a place to meet, and to read newspapers from home (36). Here even Flory, can find solace in drinking rituals. The danger in being there is that the hypocritical atmosphere of the Club can captivate the individual in time (BD 35).

> It is a stifling, stultifying world in which to live. It is a world in which every word and every thought is censored....You are free to be a drunkard, an idler, a coward, a backbiter, a fornicator; but you are not free to think for yourself. Your opinion on every subject of any conceivable importance is dictated for you by the pukka sahib's code.
>
> In the end the secrecy of your revolt poisons you like a secret disease. Your whole life is a life of lies. Year after year you sit in Kipling-haunted little Clubs, whiskey to right of you, *Pink'un* to left of you, listening and eagerly agreeing while Colonel Bodger develops his theory that these bloody Nationalist should be boiled in oil. You hear your Oriental friends called "greasy little babus," and you admit, dutifully, that they *are* greasy little babus. You see louts fresh from school kicking grey-haired servants. The time comes when you burn with hatred of your own countrymen, when you long for a native rising to drown their Empire in blood. And in this there is nothing honorable, hardly even any sincerity. For, *au fond*, what do you care if the Indian empire is a despotism, and if Indians are bullied and

> exploited? You only care because the right of free speech is denied to you. You are a creature of despotism, a pukka sahib, tied tighter than a monk or a savage by an unbreakable system of taboos (BD 66).

In this suffocating atmosphere the result is that the whites, for fear of being excluded form the society, become the stereotypes of imperialism. They are exposed to prejudices and as a result, they end up believing these prejudices. Those who mildly consent to this, most of the time lose their self-respect. There is another option: committing suicide as Flory does when he can no longer find consolation in his secret world.

Flory is the exception and the system continues with the stereotypical imperialists. In the hands of imperialism, they go on acting like puppets. For Orwell, this proves the strength of imperialism; its power to stand against any change and adherence to the pukka sahib's code. As Flory expresses "it would be better to be the thickest-skulled pukka sahib who ever hiccupped over 'Forty years on,' than to live silent, alone, consoling oneself in secret sterile worlds" (BD 67). Orwell was haunted by the idea that the world would one day become a place where "every word and thought is censored" and he elaborated on this idea in his last novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Here the Inner Party acts like the Club by forcing the individual to strictly follow the official rules and by destroying all kinds of individual freedom (Slater 36).

In *Burmese Days*, in the character of Mrs. Lackersteen Orwell shows women as well as men can be stereotypical imperialists. U Po Kyin notices that European women are very powerful on men and, for this reason, he writes one of his agitating letters to Mrs. Lackersteen. She plays her part well in the imperialist structure and fits the "burra memsahib" pattern. She has certain unchangeable beliefs about the natives and expects her husband to support her ideas all the time. Mr. Lackersteen is a man with a weak character who is not interested in politics and who is not clever enough to understand the evils of the imperialist system. Even so he nods to what his wife says as he is afraid of her. When his wife declares her hatred for the natives, Mr. Lackersteen full-heartedly announces that he is "loyal" and he would never consent to the "niggers'" acceptance to the Club:

> Lackersteen could always be replied upon for sound sentiments in a case like this. In his heart he did not care and never had cared a damn for the British Raj, and he was as happy drinking with an oriental as with a white man; but he was ready with a loud "Hear, hear!" when

> anyone suggested the bamboo for disrespectful servants or boiling oil for Nationalists. He prided himself that though he might booze a bit and all that, dammit, he was loyal. It was his form of responsibility (BD 222).

By presenting such characters, Orwell helps the reader to understand how imperialism produced social as well as political stereotypes. Restrictions placed upon the husbands by wives like Mrs. Lackersteen guarantee the security of the Empire by strictly obeying the traditional patterns. While Flory expects marriage to help him put his life into order and gain his self respect again, he is aware that a woman like Mrs. Lackersteen may turn his life into hell. Flory explains this by saying: "some damned memsahib, yellow and thin, scandalmongering over cocktails, making kit-kit with the servants, living twenty years in the country without learning a word of the language" (BD 69). Much to Flory's disappointment, Elizabeth Lackersteen is a younger model of her aunt, Mrs. Lackersteen. In the end she marries Macgregor and becomes another ordinary stereotype of imperialism: "Her servants live in terror of her, though she speaks no Burmese. She has an exhaustive knowledge of the Civil List, gives charming little dinner-parties and knows how to put the wives of subordinate officials in their places- in short, she fills with complete success the position for which Nature had designed her from the first, that of a burra memsahib" (BD 272). According to Slater, Orwell thinks that the reluctance of officials to discuss and criticize the Anglo-Indian Empire stems from the fear that such an action can damage their careers (38). In fact Flory mentions this several times in the novel. He notes an instance when one night he meets a stranger, a white educational officer, and only after each men has understood "that the other was 'safe'", they curse the Empire for hours in the darkness; but "in the haggard morning light when the train crawled into Mandalay, they parted as guiltily as any adulterous couple" (BD 64).

Dramatic irony in *Burmese Days* appears when Flory swims across the river to rescue his friends in the Club from a native attack. In his heroic action Flory does not take side with the natives whom he seems to support most of the time. Instead, he helps his fellow whites at the cost of his life. This demonstrates that no matter what he thinks, Europeans instinctively stick together; a crucial item in the pukka sahib code. At that instance, "none of them (the whites) thought to blame Ellis, the sole cause of this affair; (and) their common peril seemed, indeed, to draw them closer together for the while" (BD 235). Hence, Orwell claims that imperialism has a

certain life style and the only way is to conform to the rules. In a small society like Kyauktada no matter what an individual thinks, he has no chance to escape from the "stifling, stultifying world" because of the pressures and the needs of collective life. Indeed, Elizabeth is the only hope for Flory and when he realizes the impossibility of having a relationship that would save him from the tensions he suffers between his conscience and the rules of the imperialism, he shoots himself.

Orwell himself has direct experience about group pressure when we consider his famous essay "Shooting an Elephant" in which he draws a vivid portrait of an individual torn between individual choices and the group pressure on him. When he was serving as a police officer in Lower Burma, he was called to execute an elephant which had gone mad and destroyed some local property and killed several people. By the time he reached the scene the elephant was mild as a cow but a large crowd was watching him and they all expected him to shoot the elephant. Although he didn't want to kill the animal, he understood:

> I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it....And it was at this moment, as I shoot there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the shallowness, the futility of the white man's domination in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd- seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind (1: 94).

Michael Shelden, the writer of the authorized biography on Orwell, points out that one lesson Orwell learned in Burma is that the system is at the same time enslaving its masters in so many ways (115). Thus Orwell argues, although on the surface it seems that the white man dominates the others, his behaviour is in fact modeled by the subject nation's expectations. The pressure put on the imperialist official by the expectations of the native folk could diminish his personality. In his view, group pressure on the individual is repeated again and again, and the dark tone of the novel reflects that the imperialist-totalitarian mentality would prevail against all who attempt to resist it. As one critic has noted, "The white society in upper Burma, as Orwell portrays it, is the earliest prototype of the ruling elite of Oceania which he described fourteen years later in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*" (qtd. in Slater 41).

The ending of *Burmese Days* shows that there is no "in between" for the imperialist system. Even a small deviation is not overlooked for the fear that it may lead to questioning the whole system. For the imperialist system, no one is irreplaceable. The same code of behaviour must be obeyed by all the white community. The conformity is so harsh that the individual has only two options- either to submit totally to the system or to draw back totally. This theme and sense of hopelessness resulted in Orwell's obsession with totalitarianism. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as in *Burmese Days*, the deviant individual is seen as a threat to the system and discharged at once.

According to Slater, Flory doesn't have a middle ground and through his eyes we label all the imperialists as bad people. Orwell's protagonist never accepts the possibility that there may be good-hearted people who work for the improvement of the natives in an imperfect system. Orwell's comments on imperialism ignore the possibility that there may be guilt-free, happy imperialists. This results from Orwell's accepting his own experience in Burma as a typical representative and his inclination to assume that in all the headquarters of the Empire officials have the same emotions and life styles (43). Since he generalizes his experience to the whole system, Orwell is unable to evaluate the imperialist system in an objective way. As a result of this, he has a critical attitude towards the system.

2. 2. Racism in *Burmese Days*:

While Orwell deals with imperialism in *Burmese Days*, he gives lots of evidence in relation to the racist attitude of the pukka sahibs. David F. Waterman defines *Burmese Days* as a novel of exposure, explaining the assumptions that support British authority, especially the theory of racial superiority which is founded on skin colour and nationality (81). According to Waterman, nationality and race are essentially synonyms in *Burmese Days* (81). Throughout the novel it is seen that the typical imperialist officers of the Club all focus on the racial differences between themselves and the subject nation in order to justify their beastly actions and superiority complex. Orwell wrote in *The Tribune* from 1943 to 1945, and in an article named "Notes on Nationalism" he explains that nationalism is inseparable from the desire for power and the nationalist aims to gain more power and prestige

for the unit he is serving and sacrifice his individuality for the sake of the community (4: 178). Orwell's definition of nationalism is not different from the racism that is displayed by the white society of *Burmese Days.* He identifies nationalism with obsession, instability, and indifference to reality which are also the characteristics of the white society in the book. Nationalism for Orwell is: "power hunger tempered by self-deception. Every nationalist is capable of the most flagrant dishonesty, but he is also-since he is conscious of serving something bigger than himself-unshakably certain of being in the right" (4: 177). According to Jeffrey Meyers, Orwell had been brought up to believe that British Imperialism was right in exploring other countries because British civilization was superior to that of the barbaric nations they ruled (72). This mentality is dominant in the stereotypical imperialist characters of the novel, and their belief in racial superiority lies behind their brutal actions and belittling words towards the Burmese.

Even though it is impossible to cross the borders of race, there are some characters in the novel whose actions do not fit into the accepted rules of their race. For instance while Dr. Veraswami and U Po Kyin try to become more British, Flory resists his role as a pukka sahib and disrupts the set rules of his race (Waterman 82). When he was a little child, upon seeing the British troops march victorious into Mandalay, U Po Kyin thought that: "his own people were no match for this race of giants. To fight on the side of the British, to become a parasite upon them, had been his ruling ambition, even as a child" (BD 6). Flory is like the Eurasians in the novel since none of them fit into either the society of the Club or native life. The hideous birthmark on his face is the greatest characteristic of Flory's appearance and this darkness on one side of the face emphasizes his racial duality and points out to the fact that when a person does not fit into his accepted race/nationality he becomes an outcast (Waterman 82). Flory finally commits suicide because he rejects his role as a member of the ruling elite. In the novel Orwell reveals the nature of racial superiority and concludes that the British, even non conformists like Flory, do not belong to India as long as they pursue their capitalist urges of exploitation, because racism and imperialism are based on inherent differences. Waterman states that: "The ideology of racism/imperialism depends upon a performance of superiority centered on the body, where codes of dominance and submission are assumed and enforced according to race" (82). In this respect, Homi Bhabha claims "colonialist authority

requires the production of differentiations," hence it eliminates the confusions about who holds the power and who yields to power (153).

The central character in the novel, Flory, does not become bi-racial as a result of his intimacy with the natives, on the contrary he is isolated from the society and as David Seed calls, he is culturally and racially disoriented. Although Burma becomes a home for Flory, going native is not possible since the social codes of both the British and the Burmese disallow such an action (cited in Waterman 82). Moreover, even though he scorns Britain to the point of rejecting his home leave and the racist community of the Club, he continues to hang around with the Club members (Waterman 82). Even more, he signs the notice, written by Ellis, which rejects the inclusion of any native members to "the all white Club" and publicly insults his native friend Dr. Veraswami (BD 23). While Flory opposes his role as a typical racist representative of British Imperialism, he still thinks that he is superior in the racial hierarchy. When his friend Veraswami warns him against the machinations of U Po Kyin, Flory replies: "Good gracious, no one would believe any thing against *me. Civis Romanus sum.* I'm an Englishman-quite above suspicion" (BD 46) and again because he is English, he never feels "in real danger from an Oriental" (BD 75). In this respect, Waterman expresses:

> Flory, and the other characters who perform and/or resist a role of racial superiority, reveal the contradictions of performance/resistance in a complex ideological system, where even those who are oppressed are often complicit in reproducing the very conditions against which they struggle (83).

Not only Flory as a colonizer but also some of the native characters in *Burmese Days* want to become more British in order to gain more wealth and prestige. Both U Po Kyin and Dr. Weraswami try to be elected to the Club which they see as the "real seat of the British power". In a conversation Dr. Veraswami tells Flory:

> If our prestige is good, we rise; if bad, we fall. A nod and a wink will accomplish more than a thousand official reports. And you do not know what prestige it gives to an Indian to be a member of the European Club. In the Club, practically he is a European. No calumny can touch him. A Club member is sacrosanct (BD 45).

However, they fail to understand the fact that such an attempt to cross the borders of culture often fails because colonial power is a structure which includes a complicated system of ideology and subversion. Social transformation is not possible for any resistance which cannot comprehend such a system of opposition and Flory's resistance fails for the same reason (Waterman 83).

The concept of racial superiority and resistance to racism has different forms in the novel. The racist members of the Club resist the new "more humanitarian laws" which demand to accept native members to the Club and to treat the natives more decently. When taking a native member to the Club is under consideration, Ellis reacts by saying:

> Here's that old fool Macgregor wanting to bring a nigger to this Club for no reason whatever, and you all sit down under it without a word. Good God, what are we supposed to be doing in this country? If we aren't going to rule, why the devil don't we clear out? Here we are, supposed to be governing a set of damn black swine who've been slaves since the beginning of history, and instead of ruling them in the only way they understand, we go and treat them as equals (BD 24).

The most detestable white man in the book is Ellis, the district manager of a timber firm, who personalizes the worst characteristics of all the bad Europeans in the East (Shelden 121). He is the one who most vehemently protests against choosing an Oriental member for the Club when Mr. Macgregor posts a notice on the Club board:

> Anyway, the point's this. He is asking us to break all our rules and take a dear little nigger boy into this Club. *Dear* Dr. Veraswami, for instance. Dr. Very-slimy, I call him. That *would* be a treat, wouldn't it? Little pot-bellied niggers breathing garlic in our face over the bridge-table. Christ, to think of it! We've got to hang together and put our foot down on this at once (BD 22).

When anything related to Orientals is spoken, Ellis loses his mind. As Flory puts into words: "Ellis really did hate Orientals- hated them with a bitter, restless loathing as of something evil or unclean....He was an intelligent man and an able servant of his firm, but he was one of those Englishmen -common, unfortunately- who should never be allowed to set foot in the East" (BD 23). Ellis is a devoted advocate of the

idea that the relationship between the white men and the Orientals is that of a master-slave and their responsibility is holding the slaves in chain (Chandra 15). Ellis's racism is so severe that he is enraged upon hearing the butler's accurate English (BD 25). For Ellis, not only the membership of the Club, but also the Christian religion must be monopolized by the white Europeans:

> Oh hell! I'd snivel psalms to oblige the padre, but I can't stick the way these dammed native Christians come shoving into our church. A pack of Madrassi servants and Karen school-teachers. And then those two yellow-bellies, Francis and Samuel- they call themselves Christians too. Last time the padre was here they had the nerve to come up and sit on the front pews with the white men. Someone ought to speak to the padre about that. What bloody fools we were ever to let those missionaries loose in this country! Teaching bazaar sweepers they're as good as we are. "Please sir, me Christian same like master." Damned cheek (BD 25-26).

Interestingly Dr. Veraswami, although a native, takes sides with the British even though most of them treat him with disdain. In his conversations with Flory, he continuously defends British Imperialism against the attacks of Flory. According to Dr. Veraswami, the English gentlemen are the most honourable people in the world and they have improved Burma a lot. He is filled with admiration for the loyalty among the English and he praises their sense of humour. When Flory accuses his fellow countrymen of stealing the national treasures of Burma, Dr. Veraswami resents Flory for "uttering seditious opinions that are worthy of the Burmese Patriot" (BD 37). The conversations between Flory and Dr. Veraswami reflect their ideas and beliefs quite clearly:

> It was a topsy-turvy affair, for the Englishman was bitterly anti-English and the Indian fanatically loyal. Dr. Veraswami had a passionate admiration for the English, which a thousand snubs from Englishmen had not shaken. He would maintain with positive eagerness that he, as an Indian, belonged to an inferior and degenerate race....Flory's seditious opinions shocked him, but they also gave him a certain shuddering pleasure, such as a pious believer will take in hearing the Lord's Prayer repeated backwards (BD 38).

The inability of the characters to contradict and resist the imperialist system demonstrates the impossibility of success against a power that is made up of hierarchical racial differences (Waterman 84).

Class division is most apparent in the social club of Kyauktada. It is a place which the members use as a stage for the performance of racial superiority. The population of the town is four thousand, seven of them are European and all of the Europeans including Flory are members of the Club. Apart from the permanent members, any white European who is temporarily in town may visit the Club as a demonstration of solidarity among the Europeans. As Waterman states: "the Club is Britain in miniature, symbolizing what Flory and the natives recognize as England's worst points: capitalist exploitation and imperial authority, an unquestioning sense of racial and national superiority, and racial exclusivity-no non-whites are allowed as members" (84). As expressed in the novel:

> In any town in India the European Club is the spiritual citadel, the real seat of the British power, the Nirvana for which native officials and millionaires pine in vain. It was doubly so in this case, for it was the proud boast of Kyauktada Club that, almost alone of Clubs in Burma, it had never admitted an Oriental to membership (BD 17).

Actually, the local administration suggests the Club to take a native official of high rank in order to restore their racist image (BD 21). However, they postpone the admission of a native member, and the Club remains as an all white institution which symbolizes the racist attitude of its members and as a result of this, it is attacked during the native rebellion.

As a joke, Flory and Dr. Veraswami pretend that the British Empire is an old female patient with "grave complications setting in" (BD 35). While it seems just as a joke two friends share, in fact it means that like the old patient, the British Empire is living its last days in Burma. Despite being anti-British and his hatred for the Club and all that it symbolizes, Flory is unable to see the connection between racism and imperialisms. As he tells Dr. Veraswami he doesn't want the Burmese to drive the British out of the country (BD 37). This explains the ineffectiveness of his struggle against British ideology. "His performance as a liberal humanist does not go as deep as his pocketbook" (Waterman 85).

The representatives of the Empire in Kyauktada, the racist, all-white community of the Club, are either the managers of the British firms or Imperial Police and army officers. This is a deliberately set group of people. In this respect Foucault claims that, in order to get hold of the raw materials and native labour, which are the targets of capitalist exploitation, the Empire requires the help of police, army and court system (158). Paul Gilroy argues that racial hierarchy is founded on capitalist system. According to Gilroy, the struggle against racism means the struggle against capitalism because "race is nothing more than an ideological effect, a phenomenal form masking real, economic relationships" (qtd. in Waterman 86). This can be in the form of both class differences within Britain and differences between the British colonizers and native subjects.

Flory is mistaken in his belief that he can be both a capitalist and a humanist who resists to racism. Unlike what Flory thinks, race cannot be separated from economic considerations. In a conversation with Dr. Veraswami he admits that he doesn't want the Burmans to expel the British out of the country and he is there in order to make money (BD 37). Throughout *Burmese Days*, race and class go together. This situation is most clearly seen in the second rate club that Veraswami visits in his new town Mandalay. Although the Club members are high-ranking native officials, its main glory "is a single European member" a drunken electrician from Glasgow (BD 269). According to the criteria of the Kyauktada club, race and class are rigid boundaries and neither the natives nor the Europeans can pass to the other side (however sexual relations between British men and native women are tolerated) (Waterman 86). Race is a symbol of authority and it influences every member of British colonialism including people like Flory who see themselves as liberal social reformers. The valid code is that of the white colonizer and Flory is excluded from the white society since he performs as a Burmese (Waterman 86). Because of his "Bolshie" ideas and his criticism of the white men's solidarity, the Club members do not fully accept Flory as one of their own. Other members of the Club are afraid of a friction within the European community which may harm their authoritative image. Ellis is the most fanatic of them and he is also the one most hated and feared by Flory. For Ellis, race is a natural fact; thus, anyone who is non-white is innately inferior (Waterman 86). Ellis wants to annihilate all the natives, categorizing people according to their anatomical rather than ideological/cultural

properties (Waterman 87). In a discussion of the Manichean allegory in colonial texts Abdul R. JanMohamed suggests that:

> This process operates by substituting natural or generic categories for those that are socially or ideologically determined. All the evil characteristics and habits with which the colonialist endows the native are thereby not presented as the products of social and cultural difference but as characteristics inherent in the race-in the 'blood'-of the natives (67).

As Flory has some unsuitable ideas and "pals up with the natives", Ellis even hints that Flory is racially mixed: "I shouldn't wonder if he's got a lick of the tar-brush himself. It might explain that black mark on his face. And he looks like a yellow-belly, with that black hair, and skin the colour of a lemon" (BD 32). Waterman suggests that: "Ellis is able to justify his hatred of Flory by constructing him as a racial "Other," and, following his thinking, as naturally inferior and deserving of contempt (87).

Even if they are innocent, Ellis wants the natives to be beaten and executed. Evaluating human beings on the basis of race, he despises all of the natives for their black skin. According to the pukka sahib's code, moral qualities and skin colour are parallel to each other. For this reason, blackness connotes guilt and whiteness connotes innocence; a white life is fifty times more valuable than a black life. When Westfield arrests two natives for Maxwell's murder, Ellis suggests: "and when you've arrested them, if you aren't sure of getting a conviction, shoot them, jolly well shoot them! Fake up an escape or something. Anything sooner than let those b--s go free" (BD 228). Ellis is not satisfied with the number of people hanged for Maxwell's murder. He thinks that fifty natives should be killed for a white man's murder, guilty or not (BD 227). When he passes 'a mild, middle-aged Burman' he wishes that the native would offend him so that he would find an excuse 'to smash him' (BD 229). At the same time his mind is occupied with images of the natives slaughtered brutally by the soldiers (BD 229). When he is full of hatred towards the natives, a group of native school boys pass by him and Ellis does not lose his chance to reflect all his hatred towards them, as a result, he hits one of the boys with his cane and blinds him (BD 229) which leads to the revenge attack on the Club.

The natives do not intend to harm all the Europeans in the attack; they only want to take revenge on Ellis. However all the white men act in solidarity and they do not put the blame on Ellis (BD 233). The native witnesses "lied in perfect unison", saying that "the boys had attacked Mr. Ellis without any provocation whatever, he had defended himself" (BD 231) thus, helping the most severe racist among the Europeans. Waterman claims even without such a testimony, Ellis is not considered guilty by his fellow Europeans, not even by Flory. By virtue of his racial superiority over the inferior native victim, he is assumed to be innocent (88). Ironically, Flory rescues the Club members whom he despises. He swims across the river and finds the police commander, who is a native. When Flory asks why they have not opened fire, the commander explains that the order must come from a white man (BD 239). Flory orders him to fire over the heads of the crowd since he does not want anybody to be injured. Ellis is discontented because none of the rebels has been killed in the event . Flory defends himself by saying that there were policemen in the crowd, to which Ellis replies, "they were niggers anyway" (BD 244).

Native revolt proves that, although Flory respects the Burmese culture and tries to become more like a native, he is on the side of his fellow Europeans. Like the other Europeans, he is afraid of losing British control and he struggles to regain it. Flory still considers the British authority to be right, and he is shocked to see that Orientals could be dangerous to a white man (BD 238). The white community is stunned to find that their "superiority" questioned by outrageous native revolt (Waterman 88-89).

The Club members more or less share the same ideas with Ellis. They criticize the policy of the British government that instructs them to treat the natives more like equals. Instead, they prefer a system which is based on fear and protected by the army. Mrs. Lackersteen states this by saying: "We seem to have no *authority* over the natives nowadays, with all these dreadful Reforms, and the insolence they learn from the newspapers" (BD 28). The government's laws are in fact hypocritical; they are only designed to prevent a native revolt by seeming more humanitarian and less suppressive. When Mr. Lackersteen's niece Elizabeth comes from Paris, Flory begins to believe only with Elizabeth's help would he regain his self respect and stand more firmly against the British dogma (Waterman 89). As it turns out, Flory's hopes are bound to fail because Elizabeth is the female counterpart of Ellis. During

their relationship Flory "was too eager in his attempts to interest her in things Oriental" (BD 112). Elizabeth "was grasping, dimly, that his views were not the views an Englishman should hold. Much more clearly she grasped that he was asking her to be fond of the Burmese, even to admire them; to admire people with black faces, almost savages, whose appearance still made her shudder!"(BD 112-113). The Burmese women disturb her even more than the Burmese men because she hates the fact that she is "kin to creatures with black faces" (BD 113). Elizabeth finds the natives "*revoltingly* ugly" with sloping foreheads which suggest "criminal type", and black skin that she finds unbearable (BD 113).

After the disgraceful scene in the church, Flory understands that he has lost Elizabeth, his last hope, forever. He is trapped in a situation which is beyond his control, and he fails to find a way out. He realizes that he cannot find solace in his former life any more. He goes home and commits suicide. Flory's death also ruins Dr. Veraswami's career. U Po Kyin succeeds in making the doctor untrustworthy. In the end he realizes his greatest ambition and becomes a member of the European club. As Chandra claims: "Orwell is ironical and bitter in exposing the Britishers in their short-sightedness and failure to distinguish the friends from the enemies. This ultimately led to the end of the Raj" (24).

Burmese Days stands out as an anti-imperialist and anti-racist work. Although the main ideological themes are successfully worked up in the novel, the hero of the novel namely John Flory has some defaults as a character. Orwell does not present a hero with certain ideological standing. The main character does not hold a definite standing against the system he criticizes. The book ends with a note of prophecy. Tom Hopkinson sums up the prophecy thus:

> *Burmese Days* appeared in 1934... Few at that time would have listened to his argument that the benefits conferred by British rule were insufficient to justify its maintenance; little more than ten tears later, however, to withdraw from Burma was the official policy of the British Government (qtd. in Chandra 29)

CHAPTER 3

CAPITALISM IN KEEP THE ASPIDISTRA FLYING

"Along with the British imperialism, poverty is one of the major themes in Orwell's early writing" (Guild 146). After his return from Burma, Orwell decided to explore the nature of poverty with mixed feelings of adventurousness and guilt (Woodcock 105). Orwell believed that, while imperialism restrains the individual and denies him of free thinking, poverty isolates the poor from the society by preventing any healthy relationships. Lack of money debases the relations between men and between men and the opposite sex. This theme is thoroughly studied by Orwell in his essays and the autobiographical *Down and Out in Paris and London*, and through Gordon Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. According to Gordon, the problem with living on two quid a week is basically social:

> Gordon thought of Ravelston, his charming, rich friend, editor of *Antichrist*, of whom he was extravagantly fond, and whom he did not see so often as once in a fortnight; and of Rosemary, his girl, who loved him-adored him, so she said-and who, all the same, had never slept with him. Money, once again; all is money. All human relationships must be purchased with money. If you have no money, men won't care for you, women won't love you; won't, that is, care for you or love you the last little bit that matters. And how right they are, after all! For, moneyless, you are unlovable (KAF 19).

Sometimes even the money he owns makes him ashamed of his condition because it doesn't mean anything when the sum is so small:

> Because how can you buy anything with a threepenny-bit? It isn't a coin, it's the answer to a riddle. You look such a fool when you take it out of your pocket, unless it's among a whole handful of other coins. "How much?" you say. "Three-pence," the shop-girl says. And then you feel all around your pocket and fish out that absurd little thing, all by itself, sticking on the end of your finger like a tiddleywink. The shop-girl sniffs. She spots immediately that it's your last threepence in

> the world. You see her glance quickly at it- she's wondering whether there is a piece of Christmas pudding still sticking to it. And you stalk out with your nose in the air, and can't ever go to that shop again (KAF 8).

In *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, Orwell is less objective in presenting the hero, Gordon Comstock because he reflects all his bitter feelings towards the Capitalism through Gordon. While criticizing Gordon, Orwell is in fact criticizing his own ideas. Gordon's rejection of capitalism for a miserable existence is seen as an unreal romantic ideal:

> To get out of the money-world- that was what he wanted. Vaguely he looked forward to some kind of moneyless, anchorite existence. He had a feeling that if you genuinely despise money you can keep going somehow, like the birds of the air. He forgot the birds of the air don't pay room-rent. The poet starving in a garret- but starving, somehow, not uncomfortably- that was his vision of himself (KAF 56).

According to Terry Eagleton, Orwell reflects his own dehumanizing perception in Comstock: "The pink doll faces of upper-class women gazed at him through the car window. Bloody nit-witted lapdogs. Pampered bitches dozing on their chains. Better the lone wolf than the cringing dog" (KAF 72). Eagleton claims that, the novel's criticism of its hero allows Orwell to assert his own less intelligent feelings under the cover of critical detachment from them (120). The self-pity which was generally hidden in Flory's case is directly reflected in Comstock's case:

> It was the feeling of helplessness, of insignificance, of being set aside, ignored- a creature not worth worrying about. They'd changed the day and they hadn't even bothered to tell him. Told everybody else, but not him. That's how people treat you when you've no money! Just wantonly, cold-bloodedly insult you (KAF 77).

In a more indirect way under the name of "realism", the same feeling is presented in many other places in the novel: "He was thirty, moth-eaten, and without charm. Why should any girl ever look at him again?" (KAF 81) Eagleton states, Gordon believes that money is the answer for everything in every human relationship, and thus, the novel creates a tension between the traditional, ordinary world and the attempts to

escape it. However, ironically, any resistance against the money world is abortive since it will also be economically undermined (120). As a result of this, any resistance will fail without influencing the established capitalist society. Furthermore, once Gordon's money-doctrine is accepted, his behavior towards other people is somehow tolerated as lack of money becomes an excuse for all types of weaknesses:

> For after all, what is there behind it, except money? Money for the right kind of education, money for influential friends, money for leisure and peace of mind, money for trips to Italy. Money writes books, money sells them....It was the lack of money, simply the lack of money, that robbed him of the power to "write". He clung to that as an article of faith. Money, money, all is money! (KAF 13-14).

In believing this, Gordon is evaluating the world according to the bourgeois values that he bitterly despises. As Eagleton says: "Gordon rejects middle-class society from what are essentially middle-class premises" (122). He is too sensitive to the social significance of "things", like aspidistras or the doorbells, which indicates that he is obsessed with the symbols of a social structure he seems to reject. Ironically, Gordon judges the human beings in the same way as does the society he criticizes: "No woman ever judges a man by anything except his income" (KAF 122). He undervalues the view that even within the decayed capitalist system; men are still men, and their relationships are still partly determined by the humanistic limits (Eagleton 122).

"Corner Table" poster is the emblem of Capitalism for Gordon. Behind its grin, hollowness, imbecility and despair are hidden. Orwell opposes the merchant mentality and reflects his views thorough Gordon. Gordon feels that society is in a desperate situation, and the only way out is war, as everything must be destroyed and rebuilt from the beginning. He looks forward to war and he even prays for war (KAF 95). He condemns the situation of the Capitalist society. Capitalism empties people, buys their soul and what is left behind is the corpse. Gordon defends this by saying: "This life we live nowadays! It's not life, it's stagnation, death-in-life" (KAF 95).

It is interesting that, Gordon's ideological opponent in the novel is not a working-class socialist, but the middle-class, rich, guilty left winger Ravelston. He is

an over sensitive anarchist who tries to behave like a member of the proletariat, despite his considerable income, and he seems artificial and awkward in his effort. He lives in the Regent's Park district in order to live in working class quarters, and he believes that, although he is living in a comfortable flat, living there is the same as living in the slums. In the novel, this attempt is explained as a part of his lifelong struggle to escape from his own class and become an "honorary member of the proletariat" (KAF 90). This creates a typically Orwellian conflict between the experience and the abstract and romantic ideology: "Ravelston ... knew... that life under a decaying capitalism is deathly and meaningless. But this knowledge was only theoretical. You can't really *feel* that kind of thing when your income is eight hundred a year" (KAF 94). What is more, while Gordon does not believe that there will ever be a workers' revolution, Ravelston is sure about it. Maybe the sum of money he possesses makes him more hopeful. Ravelston tries to persuade Gordon that this situation is only temporary, and it is just a phase that must be endured before the proletariat take over. His Socialism is theoretical. It is learned not from the realities of life but from the books by Marx. He remains at a safe distance form the working classes with whom he should struggle together (Slater 98). He is a "parlor Socialist" as Orwell names. Orwell bitterly criticizes the adherents of Socialism and states that, as with Christianity, these so called Socialists are the worst advertisements for Socialism. He asserts that, if they sincerely want to change the existing Capitalist society these people must first change their attitude (Slater 98). Contrary to Ravelston, Gordon, as a real member of the proletariat, does not believe in such romantic ideals. While Ravelston tries to convince him, he protests, "Oh, Socialism! Don't talk to me about Socialism" (KAF 95). He believes that, things have always been like this, and will always be like this. Sensing the ineffectiveness of the Marxist theory with its "thesis, antithesis, and synthesis", Orwell defends that socialism should be based on ideals of liberty and justice (Woodcock 107). He believes that instead of being theoretical, socialism should be applicable.

Gordon's primary defense against socialism is the state of his own miserable life. He is so occupied with his own wretched condition that his sole argument is his private feelings on his financial situation:

> "All this about socialism and Capitalism and the state of the modern world and God knows what. I don't give a – for the state of the modern world. If the whole of England was starving except myself and the people I care about, I wouldn't give a damn."
> "Don't you exaggerate just a little?"
> No. all this talk we make-we're only objectifying our own feelings. It's all dictated by what we have got in our pockets" (KAF 100).

Gordon's pessimism is at the same time the novel's own perspective in evaluating the world: "It's all dictated by what we have got in our pockets" (KAF 20). Eagleton states that the idea of the meaninglessness of life is at first presented as Gordon's, but from time to time it is not clear whether the speaker is Gordon or Orwell (122). "At this moment it seemed to him that in a street like this, in a town like this, every life that is lived must be meaningless and intolerable. The sense of disintegration, of decay, that is endemic in our time, was strong upon him" (KAF 21).

The significance of experience is emphasized throughout the novel: "Lack of money means discomfort, means squalid worries, means shortage of tobacco, means every present consciousness of failure- above all, it means loneliness" (KAF 37). Gordon realizes that it is not possible to communicate his destitution, other people cannot understand him, and this denies him the chance to change the society he criticizes: "He perceived that it is quite impossible to explain to any rich person, even to anyone so decent as Ravelston, the essential bloodiness of poverty" (KAF 102). Thus, Gordon's experience remains totally private. As a result, Ravelston stands distant from realities of Gordon's and all the other lower-class people's existence (Eagleton 124). His old clothes, his house in the workers' districts, and his Socialist terminology lose their persuasiveness when we encounter his conversation with his girl friend Hermione. Her words very clearly explain the real ideas of the "supposedly" Socialist who use the title as a fashion of the time: "I know you're a Socialist. So am I. I mean we're all Socialists nowadays. But I don't see why you have to give all your money away and make friends with the lower classes. You can be a Socialist *and* have a good time, that's what I say" (KAF 109).

Similar to Flory's choice in *Burmese Days*; one must either be a pukka sahib or die, the choice in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* is very sharp: "Serve the money-god

or go under: there is no other rule" (KAF 19). Eagleton claims that, the attitude in *Aspidistra* is mechanically determined by the economic situation and this hinders a reasonable compromise. In the end Gordon re-enters the capitalist society, which he bitterly despises, by the forces of decency manifested both by Ravelston and Gordon's pregnant girl-friend Rosemary. When it uses "the sense of decency" as an excuse, the money-god cannot be fought; in the end "common sense" wins the battle against the "moral commitment" (124). Gordon's return to society implies the impossibility of living in a social limbo where he can neither sink down into the lowest in the social rank, nor rise to a respectable position without sacrificing his principles. He planned to free himself from the bourgeois claims by sinking low in the social structure: "Down in the safe womb of earth, where there is no getting of jobs or losing of jobs, no relatives or friends to plague you, no hope, fear, ambition, honour, duty ...That was where he wished to be" (KAF 221). For Gordon, this means escaping from the necessities of the capitalist society, where he would be "free from the nagging consciousness of his failure; free to sink, as she had said, down, down into quiet worlds where money and effort and moral obligation did not exist" (KAF 213). According to the middle class socialist Ravelston this is a mistake: one cannot live in a corrupt society and escape corruption. However, the book does not particularly defend that such kind of a social protest is inadequate. Ravelston accepts this in a conversation with Rosemary: "Well- I grant you it wasn't very wise. But there is a certain amount of proof in what he says. Capitalism's corrupt and we ought to keep outside it- that's his idea. It's not practicable, but in a way it's sound" (KAF 214). Rosemary replies to this statement from a realistic point of view: "Oh, in principle! We can't afford principles. People like us. *That's* what Gordon doesn't seem to understand" (KAF 214). Eagleton thinks that, Gordon is mistaken in his idealization of the people at the bottom of the social rank whom he believes to be most free from oppression but in reality who are most deeply exploited. It is suggested that such a life might be possible for saints, but not for Gordon (125). While returning to lower middle-class life is seen as a concession, as Gordon will "sell his soul" to his firm, it is also seen as a return into "decent, fully human life". After his decision Gordon begins to describe middle class life in a much more positive way (Eagleton 125).

> He wondered about the people in houses like this. They would be, for example, small clerks, shop-assistants, commercial travellers, insurance touts, tram conductors. Did they know that *they* were only puppets dancing when money pulled the strings? You bet they didn't and if they did, what would they care? They were too busy being born, being married, begetting, working, dying. It mightn't be a bad thing, if you could manage it, to feel yourself one of them, one of the ruck of men. Our civilization is founded on greed and fear, but in the lives of common men the greed and fear are mysteriously transmuted into something nobler. The lower middle-class people in there, behind their lace curtains, with their children and their scraps of furniture and their aspidistras- they lived by the money-code, sure enough, and they contrived to keep their decency. The money code as they interpreted it was not merely cynical and hoggish. They had their standards, their inviolable points of honour. They "kept themselves respectable"- kept the aspidistra flying. Besides, they were *alive*. They were bound up in the bundle of life. They begot children, which is what the saints and the soul-savers never by any chance do (KAF 260).

There is an interesting transition of attitude: Gordon makes an external analysis of middle class life. People are still puppets but Gordon begins to find value in their lives. As Eagleton notes, the lower middle class are still dehumanizingly described, but they are, at least, decent and alive. As a way of approving Gordon's return, life and respectability are presented as equivalents. Thus, the novel finally grasps the humanity that remains at the root of capitalism which regards Gordon's submission to the system acceptable (126). On the other hand, Orwell still reflects his own negative feelings towards the "little men": "He would sell his soul so utterly that he would forget it had ever been his. He would get married, settle down, prosper moderately, push a pram, have a villa and a radio and an aspidistra. He would be a law-abiding little cit -a soldier in the strap-hanging army" (KAF 259). Maybe "it was better so" because rejection of society can be morally admirable but it is at the same time impractical (Eagleton 126). Even principles are for the "moneyed" people. Those in the lower steps of the social ladder are denied the luxury of holding principles. Reality is different, and common people are so occupied with satisfying their basic needs that, protesting against the capitalist system and the society are unwise for them. Consequently, Gordon is reintegrated into the society he criticizes so bitterly. We do not know to what extent this decision has damaged Gordon's character because "Orwell remains ambiguously stranded between two positions:

once more, an intensely emotional rejection of the decent aspidistra world clashes head-on with a sense of pragmatic decency which rejects such intense emotions as privileged luxury" (Eagleton 126). Once he surrenders to the capitalist system, Gordon is aware that there is no turning back. He comprehends the impossibility of nourishing his creativity when he is a slave of the money-god, and he throws away the manuscripts of his "London Pleasures". This action has a symbolic importance. By doing this, he not only says farewell to his passion for poetry, he also says farewell to his individuality and creative power. Although, most of the time he has been low-spirited in his war against the money-god, at least he has tried. He has tried and lost. Nevertheless, it has been an honour as he has dared the impossible.

The shift of attitude at the end of the book, that intends to demonstrate Gordon's reintegration to the capitalist society somewhat excusable, is bitterly criticized by some critics. This shift of attitude creates an ambiguity on Orwell's part as he begins the novel by criticizing the capitalist society and ends in praising it. When Gordon Comstock eventually submits to the requirements of real life by giving up his war on money, marrying his pregnant girl-friend Rosemary, and going back to his advertisement job in the New Albion Publicity company, he is adjusting to the society and the stream of life, and yet by most of the critics of the novel, this ending is regarded as its greatest fault (Guild 144). According to Sir Richard Rees, eventually Gordon is a terribly defeated rebel like most of the other Orwellian heroes (36). John Wain claims:

> Orwell originally intended the story to be a sardonic, bitter little parable about what happens to the soul of a society that plants itself in money and still expects to flower, in the closing pages everything collapses, tripped up by one of the author's basic confusions....what ought to be a fine, gloomy satiric ending turns unexpectedly into a renascence (qtd. in Guild 144).

Both of these comments suggest that, the novel would have a more suitable ending and Gordon would have been a more admirable character if he had never been obliged by Rosemary's pregnancy into re-entering middle-class life. It would have been more honourable if he had continued to sink into the deepest poverty. This idea supports Gordon in his war on money, and his poor life as a shop assistant is

seen as a moral victory against the money-god (Guild 144). However, there is a disagreement on whether the book is a criticism of the "money-world". At first glance it may seem so. Lionel Trilling regarded the novel as "a *summa* of all the criticisms of a commercial civilization that have ever been made" (qtd. in Guild 144). Interestingly, although Gordon is continuously talking and thinking about the evils of the money-world and the general corruption of the twentieth century, his main obsession is not related to the evils in the possession of money or the wish to posses it but the evils of being without it. Gordon's war against "a civilization of stockbrokers and their lip-sticked wives, of golf, whiskey, ouija-boards and Aberdeen terriers called Jock" seems unreal (KAF 129). It is doubted, whether he would readily have changed places with his wealthy parlor-socialist friend Ravelston. In a selfish manner he tells Ravelston that he does not care about Socialism or Capitalism or the state of the world. He is only interested in his own state and as long as he and the people he cares about are well, he would not bother to think about the rest of the world (KAF 100). He is most persuasive when he explains the difficulties of living on two quid a week:

> Ah, but you only understand it out of Marx! You don't know what it means to have to crawl along on two quid a week. It isn't a question of hardship-it's nothing so decent as hardship. It's the bloody, sneaking, squalid meanness of it. Living alone for weeks on end because when you've no money you've no friends. Calling yourself a writer and never even producing anything because you are always too washed out to write. It's a sort of filthy sub-world one lives in a sort of spiritual sewer (KAF 101).

According to Nicholas Guild, claiming that Orwell changed his point of view in the course of writing, as he begins *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* as an attack of "commercial civilization" and ends the novel by praising middle-class values, means overlooking his ideas on the basis of Gordon's rebellion (145).The war on money stems from Gordon's hatred of the genteel poverty of his lifeless relatives and his sense of inferiority:

> Gordon thought it all out, in the naïve selfish manner of a boy. There are two ways to live, he decided. You can be rich, or you can deliberately refuse to be rich. You can possess money, or you can despise money; the

> one fatal thing is to worship money and fail to get it. He took it for granted that he himself would never be able to make money. It hardly even occurred to him that he might have talents which could be turned to account. That was what his school masters had done for him; they had rubbed into him that he was a seditious little nuisance and not likely to "succeed" in life. He accepted this. Very well, then, he would refuse the whole business of "succeeding"; he would make it his especial purpose *not* to "succeed." Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven; better to serve in hell than serve in heaven, for that matter. Already, at sixteen, he knew which side he was on. He was *against* the money-god and all his swinish priesthood. He had declared war on money; but secretly, of course (KAF 51).

Guild asserts that, Gordon's philosophy of failure results from his idea that if he makes any effort to succeed, this will only continue the miserable, lifeless order of the other members of his dismal family. He will make a virtue of necessity. He has a proud standing against success; he is not dragged passively into the inevitable. As he knows he can never be successful in life, he deliberately rejects to be successful and jumps willingly into poverty (146-47). In the novel by saying "nothing *ever happened* in the Comstock family", it is expressed that failure is the fate of the family (KAF 45). Even as a child Gordon's main consideration is money. In those days he hates his family and relatives because they are poor. But as he grows up, he realizes that this is the way of life for the lower middle-class families and there is nothing he can do to change this situation. As time passes Gordon grasps that money-worship is the new religion of people. He understands the problem with his own family is the way they live; living in the money-world without money. Not poverty but "the respectable poverty" ruins them (KAF 51).

He refuses to enter into the money-world by not taking a good job. This results in fervent protests from his family and as a result of these protests he works in an office job for several years. That is the kind of job he hates every minute. He works there for several years till his mother's death. He is still dedicated to his war against money. "But it was still a secret. The people at the office never suspected him of unorthodox ideas" (KAF 55). Ironically enough, Gordon's next job is in a publicity company. Publicity is regarded as the dirtiest ramp that Capitalism produced. The employees are typical money-worshippers. Although Gordon is now the part of this system, nothing has changed in his ideas. He makes plans about

escaping from it. "He was *in* the money-world, but not *of* it" (KAF 59). Gordon is really frightened when his wages are raised by ten shillings a week. "Money was getting him after all". He decides to get out of the money-world before it is too late. He wants help from Ravelston. He tells Ravelston that he wants a job but not a good one, the kind of job which meets his basic needs without buying his soul. When he finds a job as an assistant in a second-hand bookseller, Gordon thinks that he succeeds in not to get caught in the money-world. It is the exact job he has been looking for; a "blind-alley" job (KAF 62). Although Gordon deliberately chooses this way of life for himself, he continuously complains about the hardships of being moneyless. His poverty makes him feel inferior and he connects every kind of failure with his economic condition. He is obsessed with money. He deliberately chooses such a living in order to get rid of his responsibilities towards the society and the people around him. Guild thinks that, Gordon's neurosis is special to his condition. Orwell experienced similar things in Paris when he was tying to live on six francs (approximately one shilling) a day. Orwell writes that "it was too difficult to leave much thought for anything else" (Down and Out 16). Although Gordon earns more than Orwell, he feels the same. Gordon's obsession with money makes the reader despise him as a weak, self-pitying character. However, when Orwell's other writings on poverty are examined, it is noticed that Gordon is only reflecting what Orwell himself has gone through with poverty (Guild 147). For instance, Gordon talks about his relationship with women all through the sixth chapter and complains that lack of money makes him abominable to women. The same opinion is confirmed in *Down and Out in Paris and London*: "For the first time I noticed, too, how the attitude of women varies with men's clothes. When a badly dressed man passes them they shudder away from him with a quite frank movement of disgust, as though he were a dead cat" (Down and Out 120). His dealings with women led Gordon to ask: "In the last resort, what holds a woman to a man, except money? (KAF 112)

Another frequent complaint of Gordon is that, the lack of money has destroyed his capacity to write: "Of all types of human being, only the artist takes it upon him to say that he 'cannot' work. But it is quite true; there are times when one cannot work. Money again, always money! (KAF 37). The same opinion is true for Orwell himself. A year after the publication of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, Orwell

mentions the tie between artistic accomplishment and money: "You can't settle to anything, you can't command the spirit of *hope* in which anything has got to be created, with that dull evil cloud of unemployment hanging over you" (RWP 78).

Guild asserts that, Orwell uses Gordon even as a vehicle to reflect his less rightful prejudices. For example, Gordon believes that, literary world, of which *Primrose Quarterly* is a typical example, is a closed society which humiliates the outsiders like him no matter how talented these people may be. When his poem is rejected by *Primrose Quarterly* Gordon considers:

> Money, money! Money and culture! It was a stupid thing he had done. Fancy sending a poem to a paper like the *Primrose*! As though they'd accept poems from people like *him* ... He thought of the people who wrote for the *Primrose*; a coterie of moneyed highbrows-those sleek, refined young animals who suck in money and culture with their mother's milk. The idea of trying to horn in among that pansy crowd! But he cursed them all the same. The sods! The bloody sods! 'The Editor regrets!' Why be so bloody mealy-mouthed about it? Why not say outright, 'we don't want your bloody poems. We only take poems from chaps we were at Cambridge with. You proletarians keep your distance'? (KAF 86)

Though uttered by Gordon, these words seem to be Orwell's own ideas (Guild 147). As reported by George Woodcock, "at the best of times, Orwell was inclined to a kind of mild paranoia in his relationships with the literary world, which he regarded as a racket run by 'nancy poets' and mutual-back-scratchers from Cambridge (14).

The ending may seem problematic but it must be kept in mind that Gordon's choice was never between the New Albion Publicity Company and the heroic struggle he gave against the capitalist society which tried to kill his character and individuality. He made a choice between the New Albion Publicity Company and spiritual death. By returning into lower-middle class life, he sacrificed his dreams and ambitions. He ends his struggle for the sake of royalty to Rosemary and their unborn child. Interestingly enough, when all the things are settled, instead of feeling guilty, he feels relieved. It is as if he waited for all those things to happen from the beginning. He tells Rosemary: "I expect we'll settle down all right, though. With a house of our own and a pram and an aspidistra" (KAF 264). This is the familiar ending for many idealistic people who begin life with similar emotions and opinions

like Gordon. Living in the money-world according to its own standards brings a measure of spiritual corruption but at least it is living. Cutting oneself from the things that remind people to feel alive is the only alternative. The price for purity is too high to resist for long and Gordon does the inevitable in the end. Through Gordon Comstock, Orwell suggest that it is impossible to escape from the wheels of the system. As the novel expresses at the ending; "Well, once again things were happening in the Comstock family" (KAF 269).

CHAPTER 4

TOTALITARIANISM IN NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

The last novel by George Orwell is his utopian work *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In order to understand the reason behind writing this work, it will be helpful to make a definition of utopia and examine its associations with the political atmosphere in which the book was written. Gorman Beauchamp explains utopia as a civilization with well-organized limitations over the individual and over the society as a whole. It is true that civilization is in a way founded upon restrictions and limitations on the individual for the sake of society. These limitations are sometimes in conflict with man's elemental and instinctual drives which result in "repression" in Freudian terms. Since repression is the prize to be paid for civilization, on an instinctual inner level man will always be its opponent (66).

In the tradition of utopias, an increase in the degree of civilization is parallel to the increase in the portion of security. This means, readjusting the society into a more unified, efficient and at the same time more repressed and disciplined whole in which every unit is only engaged in its socially intended role (Beauchamp 66). This repression is so strong in Oceania that, every movement of the citizens is strictly controlled by the Thought Police. People are punished not only for their actions, but also for the slightest deviations from the set limits of thinking. "A nervous tic, an unconscious look of anxiety, a habit of muttering to yourself... In any case, to wear an improper expression on your face (to look incredulous when a victory was announced, for example) was itself a punishable offence" (NEF 53). According to Lewis Mumford, the utopian model is similar to military one: "total control from above, absolute obedience from below". He says that the prize for utopia is very high. It requires "total submission to a central authority, forced labour, lifetime specialization, and inflexible regimentation" (19). The religious god of previous civilizations is replaced by the State which is a secular religion that dominates people's lives. The State is the embodiment of power-god. As O'Brien declares in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: "The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake... Power is

not a means, it is an end" (NEF 211). Utopianism demands a godlike potency for the State. Beauchamp comments:

> The new god is not jealous than the old, and, like the old, aspires to omniscience and omnipotence, for only with such divine powers can it know of and punish the deviations of the sinner who would resist its enforced salvation. Thus, even the most benevolently intended utopias are, by the very nature of their claims, totalitarian, demanding the ultimate concern of their subjects and asserting ultimate concern of their destinies (67).

The hope of social salvation of the State, born after the French Revolution and continued through the nineteenth century, became a nightmare for the people in the twentieth century. The reason is historical; the rise of totalitarian regimes whose methods ended not in man's salvation but his damnation (Beauchamp 67). While many people accept Nazism and Stalinist Communism as deviations from true utopia, Lewis Mumford has defended that, these regimes arose from the ancient utopian ideals:

> Isolation, stratification, fixation, standardization, militarism-one or more of these attributes enter into the conception of the utopian city, as expounded by the Greeks. And these same features, in open or disguised form, remain even in the supposedly more democratic utopias of the nineteenth century ... In the end, utopia merges into the dystopia of the twentieth century; and one suddenly realizes that the distance between the positive ideal and the negative one was never so great as the advocates or admirers of utopia had professed (51).

This realization explains the appearance of the twentieth century subgenre; the dystopian novel whose main aim is to declare man's innate urge for freedom in the face of assumed suppression of utopian civilization over the individual. The emergence of the dystopian novel in the twentieth century is directly related to the regimes that appeared in this century. As Hannah Arendt puts forward, these regimes pretend "to have found a way to establish the rule of justice on earth" which is the main assurance of utopianism (41). Arendt's definition of totalitarianism's goal- to force men into "a band of iron which holds them so tightly that it is as though their plurality disappeared into One Man of gigantic proportions" is similar to that of the

dystopian writers (105). Similar to Arendt, Beauchamp thought totalitarianism to be an unparalleled threat in human history, more frightening because more total than any previous form of tyranny (77). George Bowling, the hero of *Coming Up For Air*, sincerely explains his worries about this new threat:

> Old Hitler's something different. So is Joe Stalin. They aren't like these chaps in the old days who crucified people and chopped their heads off and so forth, just for the fun of it. They're after something quite new-something that's never been heard of before (186).

After the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, Orwell grasped the danger in an agreement between two totalitarian States, one fascist and one communist. He thought of this event as a "huge system of organized lying" and understood that the rulers of both Russia and Germany can easily deceive their followers. Since press and education were under the control of the State, it was quite easy to distort the reality (Crick 366-367). Later he made a detailed explanation of this thought in a book review:

> The terrifying thing about modern dictatorships is that they are something entirely unprecedented. Their end cannot be foreseen. In the past every tyranny was sooner or later overthrown, or at least resisted, because of "human nature," which as a matter of course desired liberty. But we cannot be at all certain that "human nature" is constant. It may be just as possible to produce a breed of hornless cows. The Inquisition failed, but then the Inquisition had not the resources of the modern state. The radio, press-censorship-standardized education and the secret police have altered everything. Mass-suggestion is a science of the last twenty years, and we do not know how successful it will be (qtd. in Crick 367).

In the face of the totalitarian threat, Orwell had to sharpen the awareness for a humanitarian political system, and a just social order. His sensitiveness to the social issues cannot be reduced to class-guilt and self-discontent. He believed that human life is valuable and he fought against all kinds of totalitarianism; political, social, or economic. He was very disappointed with the revolution he had waited and idolized throughout his life and he felt it necessary to reflect this disillusionment about the Soviet Union in his works. (Chandra 111). In his essay on Arthur Koestler he wrote:

> England is lacking ... in what might be called concentration camp literature. The special world created by secret police forces censorship of opinion, torture and frame-up trails is, of course, known about and to some extent disapproved of, but it has made very little emotional impact. One result of this is that there exists in England almost no literature of disillusionment about the Soviet Union. There is the attitude of ignorant disapproval, and there is an attitude of uncritical admiration, but very little in between (3: 45).

Another writer of the time, John Lehmann, held similar opinions. In his autobiography he explains how they blindly supported the Soviet Russia without seeing its faults. He indicates that, thousands of people like him regarded Marxist revolution as the perfect antithesis of cartel capitalism and thought Russia to be the proletarian paradise where all the members of the society were equal in theory. However, none of them realized that "some were more equal than the others". They had not only convinced themselves that Russia had established a liberal and equal State, but they also thought that USSR succeeded all these without violating human rights. He explains the reason for their naivety thus: "The delusion that 'Moscow, of all places, was the sole source of light' came partly from wish-dreaming; partly from the absence of adequate facts on which to base our views; and partly from the extremely skilful and widely ramified propaganda emanating from Moscow" (qtd. in Page 52). As years passed, the intellectuals adopted a fuller knowledge of what was actually happening in Stalin's Russia and works such as Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* helped them to reshape their attitudes (Page 53).

In an article John Atkins explains the meaning of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in terms of totalitarianism. He states that, Orwell has attributed great meaning to the year 1984 which is, otherwise, not different than any other year. Orwell labels 1984 as a symbol of the victory of totalitarianism. He preferred to use this word instead of Communism or Fascism because the term includes all kinds of repressive regimes. He draws a picture of the modern world ("everything slick and streamlined, everything made up of something else. Celluloid, rubber, chromium-steel everywhere, arc lamps blazing all night, glass roofs over your heads, radios all playing the same tune, no vegetation left, everything cemented over"), and he believes that such a future come true equally well under Marxism-Leninism as under Toryism (Atkins 35). Orwell himself was a devoted socialist and although

Communism is a sub branch of Socialism, and many people use the terms reversibly, he made a clear distinction between them, since one of the most prominent features of Socialism was democracy for Orwell, which Communism lacked. According to Orwell, Socialism should be based on freedom and justice, instead of Marxist theory. He criticized the adherents of Socialism and thought the form it was presented as inadequate and inhuman (Connelly 154-155). His full realization of Socialist theory occurred after his visit to Wigan. In his documentary novel *The Road to Wigan Pier* Orwell explains that, after witnessing the human suffering and inequality in this place, his ideas changed a great deal. In the novel he conveys his idea as follows:

> ...for before you can be sure whether you are genuinely in favour of socialism, you have got to decide whether things at present are tolerable, and you have got to take up a definite attitude on the terribly difficult issue of class. Here I shall have to express and digress and explain how my own attitude towards the class question was developed. Obviously this involved writing a certain amount of autobiography, and I would not do it if I didn't think that I am sufficiently typical of my class, or rather sub-caste, to have a certain symptomatic importance (*RWP* 113).

According to Atkins, British Socialists disregarded the flaws of the Soviet Union under the pretext that although the system was not perfect, it was at least Socialist. They did not want to accept the fact that the imperfections overshadowed the virtues. Orwell was not an orthodox in this matter because he met some socialists who visited Russia and who were disillusioned by the Soviet myth (32). A passage from Eugene Lyons' book *Assignment in Utopia*, which was an analysis on Stalinism, ingrained in his mind:

> Optimism ran amuck. Very new statistical success was another justification for the coercive policies by which it was achieved. Every setback was another stimulus for the same policies. The slogan 'The Five-Year Plan in Four Years' was advanced, and the magic symbols '5-in-4' and '2+2=5' were posted and shouted throughout the land (qtd. Crick 367).

Total control of even the external reality greatly impressed Orwell, and in his totalitarian nightmare *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he allocated some pages for this

situation. To exemplify, in one of the torture sessions O'Brien and Winston argue about the power of the Party. O'Brien claims that the Party can control all kinds of records and all memories, namely everything. While the individual's mind is imperfect and untrustworthy, the collective mind of the Party is perfect and immortal. According to him, reality cannot be seen elsewhere than the eyes of the Party and Winston will learn it sooner. Then he reminds Winston that in his diary he has written "freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four" and tortures him till he really sees five fingers ,as O'Brien commands, instead of five. (NEF 200-201). Winston summarizes the ultimate aim of the Party: "The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command" (NEF 68). And in Winston, like all the other rebels, they reach their aim.

Orwell argued that, the British intellectuals were mistaken to believe that the Russian Communists were completely the opposite of German Nazis. In his essay on Arthur Koestler, pointing to the year Hitler took power, he said: "The sin of nearly all left-wingers from 1933 onwards is that they have wanted to be anti-Fascists without being anti-totalitarian" (3: 40). "He had always refused to accept that the Soviet Union had anything to do with socialism, believing instead that it was an example of a new form of exploitative class society, oligarchic or bureaucratic collectivism" (Newsinger ix). His experience in Spain was the second most important turning point in Orwell's life after his experience in Burma. While fighting in the Spanish Civil War he witnessed the betrayal of the revolution by the USSR government. As he explains in his novel *Homage to Catalonia*: "....in particular the Communist Party, with Soviet Russia behind it, had thrown its whole weight against revolution. It was the Communist thesis that revolution at this stage would be fatal and that what was to be aimed at in Spain was not workers' control, but bourgeois democracy (*HC* 193). For a short time he witnessed the classless society in Barcelona. As John Newsinger tells us in *Orwell's Politics*, this strengthens his belief in the working class and he conveys this message in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by saying "if there is any hope, it lies in the proles". Newsinger shows the influence of the Spanish Civil War in the following passage:

> He arrived in Barcelona at a time when the revolution was already coming under increasing pressure ... What particularly struck him was that as far as he could see the rich has disappeared. This was, he

> recognized, something worth fighting for. What Orwell encountered in Barcelona was a working class that was becoming a class for itself. Later on he looked back at this time when 'people were acting consciously, moving towards a goal which they wanted to reach and believed that they could reach' (45).

Newsinger further emphasizes the importance of this experience for Orwell by explaining that, in the prime of the revolution all the traces of class division disappeared in Catalonia which was the most important aspect of Socialism for Orwell. The POUM militia, he served, formed 'a sort of microcosm of a classless society'. This experience strengthened his belief in Socialism and his desire to establish it (47). However, the betrayal of the revolution by the Communists ended in his hatred of Communism. After Spain, he became an anti-Stalinist socialist and this hostility marked his political writing (Newsinger 97). Newsinger argues that, Orwell's opposition to Communism became increasingly important in his thinking towards the end of the war. What he saw in Spain was the distortion of reality and objective truth according to the advantages of those in power. He commented that, one day under a totalitarian regime it would be possible to rewrite the history and control not only the past but also the future and this foresight frightens him more than any bombs. He began to give more attention to such misuses of power after Spain and this identifies a shift of attitude in his work. Before Spain, in such books as *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, his view of moral relativism was founded upon money, expressing the main conflict to be rich versus poor. After Spain, the basis of moral relativism shifted from money to power. While Gordon Comstock concludes that "god is money"; Winston Smith concludes that "god is power" (Slater 165-166). This influenced *Animal Farm*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Homage to Catalonia* which is, in Newsinger's words, "a unique literary Trotskyist trilogy" (Newsinger xi).

According to Newsinger, in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell's aim was to show the evils of Stalin's communism to the British intelligentsia that could not imagine how tyrannical it was and thus liable to the totalitarian temptation. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the most repressed group is this middling group and

especially the intelligentsia. By doing this, Orwell tried to attract their attention to the implications of the totalitarian regimes (121). As Newsinger defends:

> O'Brien's statement of the Party's intentions and objectives is not intended as a terrible vision of what humanity's future is going to be ('if you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face- forever') but is rather a satire of totalitarianism, a stripping away of the rationalization of Fascist and Communist rule to reveal the reality. Smith, the Last Man, could be any of the millions of concentration- camp victims swallowed up by the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s and 1940s. This was Orwell's intention rather than any prediction of the future (130).

There is considerable amount of evidence to support Orwell's ideas on Stalin's regime. The Soviet Union was a cruel police state where the majority of people were denied political and civil rights. Instead of establishing the classless society it promised at the beginning, the Stalinist regime ruthlessly exploited the peasants and the workers. Thousands of people were killed in the forced labour camps and during the inhuman purges while privileged bureaucratic ruling class enjoyed the advantages of power. The entire Eastern Europe suffered from this system. Moreover, Stalin demanded every individual to demonstrate perfect submission. They were expected to praise Stalin and his works in the most pretentious way. Orwell believed, all of these aspects were in no way suitable to Socialism (Newsinger 133). The same events happen in Oceania whose regime was also "so called" Socialism. Those who have the slightest sign of discontent and opposition were forced to announce in the most humiliating way the crimes they did not even commit. In the great purges thousands of people were publicly judged and then executed. Many people suddenly disappeared and never heard of again (NEF 39). Moreover, like Stalin, Big Brother demanded appraisal from his subjects in a pompous way. In the daily "two minutes hate" sessions, party members gather, sit in front of the screen that shows Emmanuel Goldstein's picture, "the Enemy of the people", who was long ago one of the leading figures of the Party and then became a traitor and was condemned to death, and direct all their hatred towards this man:

> The programmes of the Two Minutes Hate varied from day to day, but there wasn't one in which Goldstein was not the principal figure. He was the primal traitor, the earliest defiler of the Party's purity. All

> subsequent crimes against the Party, all treacheries, acts of sabotage, heresies, deviations, sprang directly out of his teaching (NEF 13).

It is clear that, while Trotsky was the scapegoat of Stalin's Russia, Goldstein was the scapegoat of the Big Brother's Oceania. These two states needed such figures in order to put the blame of all kinds of accusations and failures on them. Orwell claimed, in the name of Socialism the Soviet Russia committed every crime. However by doing this, it ignored the virtues of Socialism 'unless one redefines that word in terms that no Socialist of 1917 would accepted'. Orwell could not endure this even under the pretext of Socialism (Newsinger 149). Here it is obvious, while writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Orwell was influenced by the "so called" socialism of Russia. Similar to Soviet Russia, "the Party rejects and vilifies every principle for which the Socialist movement originally stood, and it chooses to do this in the name of Socialism" (NEF 172).

In his preface to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm*, Orwell explains the problems with the Soviet system. He criticizes the system for not suiting the Socialist ideals at all. He believes that a false view of Socialism would spread as long as the general public accepted that USSR was a socialist state (Atkins 34). Orwell believed that, the Socialism of USSR told the world how it should *not* be done. His Socialism does not call for an unknown Utopia but turning back into the old times which was, although unsatisfactory, at least predictable and more equal. He did not suggest solutions to reach this aim. He just knew that it should be done and he believed that it was possible (Atkins 36). Orwell's longing for the old times is best reflected in his pre-war novel *Coming up for Air*. The book was published in 1939 before the Second World War and by the time it was written, Orwell had already realized the truth behind the totalitarian regimes disguising themselves as Communism, Fascism, Imperialism, Feudalism, Capitalism and the like. He noticed that regardless of its origin, left or right, power could be corrupted (Slater 239). In the face of the approaching war, the forty-five year old protagonist of the novel, George Bowling feels insecure like millions of others:

> Illusion! Baloney! It doesn't matter how many of them there are, they'll all for it. The bad times are coming, and the streamlined men are coming too. What's coming afterwards I don't know, it hardly interests me. I only know that if there's anything you care a curse

> about, better say goodbye to it now, because everything you've ever known is going down, down into the muck, with the machine guns rattling all the time (CUA 268-269).

The transformation of the society is so sudden and unbelievable that Bowling remembers his childhood like an old story. Under the disguise of George Bowling, Orwell reflects his own ideas about the approaching war and its impact on people. The previous generation could not guess what was awaiting the country. However, both Bowling and Orwell were well aware how the future would be in the following years, maybe in *1984*. As Atkins states: "The old people's condition was by no means admirable, yet it seemed to breed contentment. Orwell's point was that bad legs, stewed tea, endlessly buzzing flies and trashy women's magazines were nevertheless preferable to the five a.m. knock at the door and all that it implied". Bowling's parents "lived at the end of an epoch, when everything was dissolving into a sort of ghastly flux, and they didn't know it." This sentence is taken from *Coming Up For Air*, but its meaning creates an effect as if it was written in the year 1984 (36).

Nineteen Eighty-Four calls the reader's attention to a revolution which begins with good intentions but turns out to be a hell. The same subject is handled in his beast fable *Animal Farm*. Published in 1945, this novel was a meaningful analysis of all political revolutions. As A. E. Dyson says, *Animal Farm* "is by no means about Russia alone. Orwell is concerned to demonstrate, how revolutionary ideals of justice, equality and fraternity always shatter in the event" (qtd. in Lee 41). As Robert A. Lee claims, the age Orwell lived in with its great scale wars and pessimism made him believe that the essential concepts of human freedom come to an end. Revolutions live through the same phases in both novels (41). In *Animal Farm*, under the rule of Napoleon's totalitarian management, very little changes. Years pass and a new generation of animals have grown up. For most of the animals the situation of the farm is the same. Although the farm is more prosperous than before, the animals other than Napoleon and his comrades cannot benefit from this prosperity. The animals cannot decide whether they were better or worse under Jones. Revolution offers nothing to ordinary beings. It introduces no improvements or changes into the lives of the common:

> Sometimes the older ones among them racked their dim memories and tried to determine whether in the early days of the rebellion, when Jones's expulsion was still recent, things had been better or worse than now. They could not remember. There was nothing with which they could compare their present lives: they had nothing to go upon except Squealer's list of figures, which invariably demonstrated that everything was getting better and better" (AF 143).

Big Brother's totalitarian government is not different. Everyday telescreens declare fake figures about improvements in all areas of life:

> "... people today had more food, more clothes, better houses, better recreations- that they lived longer, worked shorter hours, were bigger, healthier, stronger, happier, more intelligent, better educated, than the people of fifty years ago. Not a word of it could ever be proved or disproved.... It was like a single equation with two unknowns" (NEF 63).

Lee comments that; "the condition is depressing; more significant is the loss of rational criteria. Human judgment has, it seems, become impossible. The denial of the possibility of memory enables control of the present, and hence the future" (51). In the novel, sometimes Winston comes on the edge of madness because there is a continuous alteration of the past, and nobody except him seems to be aware of this. The things he remembers exist only in his own mind and there is nothing to prove the truth which he finds more frightening than "torture and death" (NEF 31). In his essay "England Your England" which was published in *Inside the Whale*, Orwell explained this point by saying: "Totalitarianism demands, in fact, the continuous alteration of the past, and in the long run probably demands a disbelief in the very existence of objective truth. The friends of totalitarianism in this country usually tend to argue that since absolute truth is not attainable, a big lie is no worse than a little lie" (2: 164). The situation is the same for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. "The past not only changed but changed continuously" (NEF 67). In the novel Winston informs the reader that, there were not many people left who were raised up before the revolution. This was a party policy and the older generation was vaporized in the great purges of the fifties and sixties. By doing this, the party aims at preventing any logical comparison between the Capitalist era before the Revolution and the Ingsoc era (NEF 73). Surely, the figures declared by the telescreens are forged just like Squealer's lists.

The famous motto of *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than the others" is completely valid for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* too. Although they are all comrades and supposedly equal, it is seen that "the inner party members are more equal than the others". Both novels emphasize that power inescapably ruins good intentions no matter who possesses the power. Capitalism, Fascism and Communism are all the same alike no matter what their theoretical basis are (Lee 52).

In an article on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Irving Hove comments that in the thirties the idea of a world divided among a few totalitarian superpowers, which is the background of Orwell's book, was not unreasonable. In those years people talked about a world ruled by Hitler, Stalin and remnants of democracy in North America. Such predictions seemed quite possible in the pre-war era, and when Orwell published his book ten years later in 1949, he was implying something well-known (95-96). Hove explains that, the idea of a totally controlled society does not seem absurd. On the contrary, the idea of a total state is one of the options concerning the way people live. Hove thinks: "the thought that totalitarianism is a constant, even commonplace possibility in the history our time- this may prove to be as terrifying as the prospect that we might be sooner or later be living under an Orwellian regime" (97).

George Woodcock, in his book *The Crystal Spirit*, states that deviation of time is a characteristic of all dystopias. In the realm of God and in utopias time loses its importance as everything is exactly ideal. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* time is a trivial issue because the permanence of imperfection has been achieved. At this point Woodcock raises a question: "Did Orwell really think 1984 as a certain deadline for the victory of totalitarianism?" In fact the choice of the date was random, and at the beginning Orwell planned to name his book *The Last Man in Europe*. Then, in order to convey the seriousness of this issue, he changed the last two digits of the year he wrote the book. Orwell did not intend it as any factual point in time. Later in 1949 in a letter to Francis H. Henson Orwell clarified this point by saying:

> I do not believe the kind of society I describe will arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something resembling it could. I believe also that the totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences. The scene

> of the book is laid in order to emphasize that the English speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if not fought against, could triumph everywhere (qtd. in Woodcock xviii).

The threat of the totalitarian regimes and the tricks of Stalin's Communism he saw in Russia led Orwell to hold a pessimistic view on the world's future. In 1940 he said, "I have known since about 1931 that the future must be catastrophic." The upper part of the society, which Orwell first showed in *Burmese Days* as a group of British imperial officials and traders, achieved its most frightening form as the Inner Party of Oceania (Woodcock 140). This cruel totalitarian state is the ultimate evolution of Orwell's caste world. This system is like a pyramid with the Inner Party at the peak, the Outer Party in the middle, which represents the English middle class, and the proles, namely the working class, at the bottom. The differences between the classes are so rigid that it is impossible to maintain a contact between them (Woodcock 141). In the same year he wrote in "Inside the Whale": "Almost certainly we are moving into an age of totalitarian dictatorship, an age in which freedom of thought will be at first a deadly sin and later on a meaningless abstraction. The autonomous individual is going to be stamped out of existence" (qtd. in Woodcock xviii-xix).

Orwell's pessimism about the future is related to his doubts about the consequences of progress. Contrary to the socialist opinion of his time, he thought evidence did not support progress to be useful for human beings. According to him, the future would be worse than the past (Woodcock 161). And in the picture of the future he drew, the totalitarian regime of Oceania manipulated progress and mechanization according to its needs: "The ideal set up by the Party was something huge, terrible and glittering -a world of steel and concrete, of monstrous machines and terrifying weapons" (NEF 62). Science and technology are still important in the totalitarian nightmare of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; however, "progress" in the old sense has disappeared. Scientists use all their time and energy to create products that restrict human freedom. Progress has two aims in Oceania: "one is how to discover against his will, what another human being is thinking, and the other is how to kill several hundred million people in a few seconds without giving warning beforehand" (NEF 156). Distressed by this totalitarian nightmare, Orwell states, he would rather see the world get "simpler and harder instead of softer and more complex" (qtd. in Woodcock 170). Progress may become a vehicle in the hands of the power groups to

strengthen their places instead of facilitating the daily lives of the ordinary men. This possibility is studied in *Animal Farm*, where the mechanization does not make life easier for the ordinary animals, and in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, this possibility evolves into its final form where mechanization is used by the repressive government to make their instruments more cruel (Woodcock 170-171). As stated in Alan Sandison's *The Last Man in Europe*: "There will be no free mind and no own self to be true in the totalitarian world, where an identity of any sort is entirely conditional upon complete obedience to the prescribed ideological dogma"(136).

The largest part of the population is formed by the proles. Sensing the potential danger in making them aware of the political injustices, the Party prevents the proles from having strong political ideas. However, Winston does not give up his hopes. Woodcock claims, Orwell's pessimism does not mean that the individual is hopelessly defeated in the face of repression (171). The fact that Winston Smith at least tried to rebel, proves that there is hope. Although the proles are not regarded even as human beings by the Party, Winston sees their potential and says: "If there is hope, it lies in the proles" (NEF 59). However, the Party always occupies their minds by trivial things like lotteries, football and cheap entertainment and disdains them:

> The Party thought that the proles were natural inferiors who must be kept in subjection, like animals, by the application of a few simple rules. In reality very little was known about the proles. It was not necessary to know much. So long as they continued to work and breed, their other activities were without importance (NEF 60).

Nevertheless, no matter how repressive the system is, it is impossible to keep back the individual perpetually (Woodcock xx). Woodcock defends that the result is not so important, and being able to show the courage to express one's rebellion is the most valuable thing (156). Orwell's heroes may not be admirable in the common sense; yet, in the name of defending some truth, they turn into rebels. Winston Smith's determination against a system that denies all kinds of human rights to those who live under it is the essential point (156).

Gorman Beauchamp compares Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the Christian myth of man's first disobedience in terms of the individual's rebellion. He states that, like Adam's rebellion against God that demanded unconditional

obedience and admiration, Winston rebelled against the godlike figure, Big Brother, for the love of an Eve, in his case Julia, and he was expelled from the utopianistic Eden (67). According to Freud, authority is always "personified" by a powerful figure that is the symbol of the state (25). It is personified as Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As Freud states, love for this personified power is "the most fundamental source of authority" (CID 28). In the dystopian civilization, the individual's duty is to love and serve this authoritative figure and Winston's last words exemplify this total submission in the end: "I love Big Brother". However, there will always be new Winston Smiths who will rebel and at least try to regain their individuality. Freud defends this by saying: "It does not seem as though any influence could induce a man to change his nature into a termite's. No doubt he will always defend his claim to individual liberty against the will of the group" (CID 27). The conflict between the individual, "I," and the State, "We," is unavoidable according to Freud (CID 30). "I-ness" symbolizes individuality and it is threatening for the authority of the godlike State. Sex is one of the most dangerous instincts for the State, because the first disobedience to God resulted from it. Freud explains the reason why sexuality is dangerous for the State in his work *Civilization and Its Discontents*: "The State does not like sexuality as a source of pleasure in its own right and is only prepared to tolerate it because there is so far no substitute for it as a means of propagating the human race" (CID 32). Similarly, the Party struggles to abolish all pleasure from the sexual act in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. If two party members want to get married, they must first get the approval of a committee and the committee never consents the marriage if the couple give the impression that, they are physically attracted to one another. The sole purpose of marriage is to produce children for the service of the Party. Celibacy is encouraged by the Party organizations like the Junior Anti-Sex League. "The Party was trying to kill the sex instinct, or, if it could not be killed, then to distort it and dirty it" (NEF 56). They aim to abolish the sex instinct altogether sooner or later. As O'Brien explains to Winston: "We shall abolish the orgasm. Our neurologists are at work upon it now ... There will be no love, except love for Big Brother" (NEF 215). For the Party sexual act including pleasure for both partners is a rebellion and desire is thoughtcrime. Julia explains the reason behind condemning the sexual act:

> When you make love you're using up energy; and afterwards you feel happy and don't give a damn for anything. They can't bear you to feel like that. They want you to be bursting with energy all the time. All this marching up and down and cheering and waving flags is simply sex gone sour. If you're happy inside yourself, why should you get excited about Big Brother and the Three-Year Plans and the Two Minutes Hate and all the rest of their bloody rot? (NEF 109)

Winston understands the power of animal instincts and believes, "that was the force that would tear the party to pieces" (NEF 103). Under the totalitarian regime of the Party, sexual act gains new implications: "Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act" (NEF 104). The Party opposes sexual intercourse so bitterly, because it creates a private space for people, where it cannot control. Freud explains the reason why the totalitarian regimes are so hostile to privacy and sex:

> Sexual impulsions are unfavourable to the formation of groups ... Two people coming together for the purpose of sexual satisfaction, in so far as they seek solitude, are making a demonstration against the herd instinct, the group feeling ... The love relation between man and woman remains outside these organizations ... Even a person who has in other respects become absorbed in a group, the directly sexual impulsions preserve a little of his individual activity. If they become too strong, they disintegrate every group formation (GPAE 11)

This conflict that Freud theorized between the individual and civilization is the main struggle of the dystopian novel (Beauchamp 69). Julia and Winston's crime is primarily emotional. Although they are expected to love Big Brother more than anything, their love for each other takes the place of this love. Therefore, when they are arrested, the Party extinguishes not their lives but their love. In fact, from the beginning they knew that they would be arrested. Their secret meetings were "suicidal folly" (NEF 106). They also knew that they would confess everything related to each other because "they torture you" (KAF 119). However, they believed that "they can't get inside you" and they promised not to betray each other (NEF 135). When he is tortured by O'Brien in the most inhuman way, Winston clings to this promise. He tells them everything he knows about Julia. Yet he does not betray her because "he had not stopped loving her; his feelings towards her had remained

the same" (NEF 220). Winston wants them to kill him quickly so that he would die still loving Julia and still hating the Big Brother. Despite the first two torture sessions he does not betray Julia. He accepts everything "he had accepted the frivolity, the shallowness of his attempt to set himself up against the Party" (NEF 222). However, the Party has not reached its aim yet. "He obeyed the Party. But he still hated the Party" (NEF 225). The great Inquisitor O'Brien is aware of this. He tells Winston, intellectually he is "cured" but on the emotional level he has not fully developed yet. Then he asks Winston: "tell me, what are your true feelings towards Big Brother?" "I hate him" Winston replies (NEF 227). Beauchamp comments that, the ultimate aim of the Party is to empty all kinds of worldly love and to install the love of Big Brother. Thus, Winston is taken to the last torture session, "the Room 101" (75). O'Brien explains the Room 101 to Winston as "the worst thing in the world". It "varies from individual to individual" (KAF 226). In Winston's case it is rats (NEF 227-228). Winston's fear of rats is so great that, in order to prevent this punishment he betrays Julia and pleads them to transfer his punishment to Julia: "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me! (NEF 230). At last they get inside him and kill his love for Julia. Nobody can endure the merciless psychological horror of totalitarianism (Beauchamp 76). Later when they meet, Winston and Julia confess they have betrayed each other. "And after that, you don't feel the same towards the other person any longer" (NEF 235). Now they only feel guilt and antipathy towards each other. Their love is their last shelter, as they lost it, they feel empty, meaningless and vulnerable. Winston is not a man anymore. He is a "shell" of a man. As O'Brien explains, the purpose of totalitarian Oceania State is to tear individuality and soul into pieces and put into the shape chosen by the State (Beauchamp 76). There would be no exceptions. At the end of the novel, Winston is sitting at the Chestnut Tree Café. He is now one of the Party traitors, defeated by the Party and lost his honour in people's eyes. He rationalizes his situation with the chess metaphor. In an ideal chess game white symbolizes the good and it always wins, then he comments that the winner must be always good. Since Big Brother always wins, as he has won over Winston and Julia, he must always be good. In this game metaphor, in the society of *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* Big Brother always defeats the

individual player (Patai 61). Winston's defeat is strikingly narrated in the last paragraph:

> He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother (NEF 239).

Nineteen Eighty-Four is Orwell's last revelation for the readers. By this work he influenced not only his contemporaries but also the later generations. He is still widely read all over the world and the new words he created; such as "thought police", "doublethink" and "thoughtcrime" are still used. He opened people's eyes to the reality about Stalin's totalitarian regime (Rovere ix). This last work is a collection of all the major themes of Orwell's earlier work: "Flory's subjugation by imperialism, Comstock's hatred of capitalism, Dorothy Hare's loss of faith, and Bowling's loss of the past" (Slater 240). Orwell also added some details form his London of 1948 into the novel in order to increase the effect of approaching threat of totalitarianism and to reduce the psychological strain on him (Plank 122).

On the whole, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has always been the subject of discussion for "its sources, its satirical elements, its political content, the ambiguous or complex nature of its critique of totalitarianism and socialism, its psychological meanings, and the nature of Orwell's views on 'Newspeak'" (Fowler 181). The novel attracts public attention mainly for its individual creativity. The atmosphere of the book, its effective combination of violence, moral degradation and grim humour disquiets the readers' minds. It's the greatest work of Orwell in terms of its reception and influence, but, it is a culmination of all the ideas in his previous works and their development into a final form. It is the last stage of Orwell's career (Fowler 181).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to analyze Orwell's political ideas and indicate how his focus changed in the course of his writing career. Having demonstrated that he had always been an activist in politics, and used writing as a form of propaganda, the analysis displayed that Orwell emphasized different political ideas according to the tides in the political atmosphere. Three novels were taken as typical specimens of his early period, middle period, and late period. While his focus is on the vices of imperialism in *Burmese Days*, he deals with Capitalism and money god in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, and lastly his focus shifts from money-god to power-god in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and he reveals the unendurable pressure that totalitarianism exerts.

Having done "the dirty work of the Empire at close quarters," Orwell had seen the hidden truth about the British Empire while he was working as a police officer in Burma. He spent five years in Burma, and when he left this country in 1927 he was already a determined anti-imperialist. He witnessed the exploitation of the natives in the name of improving their condition and bringing democracy to their country. Thus, in his first novel *Burmese Days* Orwell's mission was to declare the hypocrisy of "pukka sahib pose" and "the slimy white man's burden humbug". In his novels, Orwell chooses the most deviant member of the group in order to show the defects of the system in a more objective way. All his novels carry biographical elements, and in *Burmese Days* it is understood that the main character of the novel, Flory, outcries Orwell's ideas about the imperialist system. Both Flory and Orwell think that imperialism is an evil system and they feel guilty for serving the interests of this system. One recurring theme in all the novels studied in the thesis is the role of the group pressure on individuals and the effects of this pressure as seen in the individual's behaviours. In *Burmese Days*, Flory has to act in accordance with the group he belongs to even when he does not want to do so, or else he may be alienated from the group and become an outcast. This pressure is so strong that the individual

has either to submit or draw back. In the novel, Flory cannot find a middle ground and chooses to commit suicide as he is in a desperate situation.

In later years, the simple master-slave world of *Burmese Days* with a limited number of exploiters in an unknown outpost of the Empire expanded into larger scale exploitations by the whole system. In *Burmese Days*, Flory's desperation only ends by suicide, however, in later novels pessimism is sometimes broken with crumbs of hope.

In the second chapter, by analyzing *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, Orwell's ideas on class differences and the corruption caused by poverty are explained. In this work, Orwell points out the facts about the nature of poverty and its diminishing effects on human relationships. The hero of the novel, Gordon Comstock, rejects capitalism as he believes that, being a part of this system kills his creativity and destroys his individuality. He resists the effects of capitalism but at the same time he is full of self pity and contempt for the upper-class people. This creates a tension between the traditional world of capitalism and the individual who tries to escape from the restraints of this system. Like all the other Orwellian heroes, Gordon attempts to assert his freedom and is unsuccessful in this struggle. His resistance against the money-god fails. In his struggle, Gordon's fatal mistake is to reject money and at the same time to evaluate the outer world and human relationships according to the money doctrine and bourgeois values. He uses lack of money as an excuse for all kinds of failures. It is explained that there is no middle ground for the hero of the *Burmese Days;* he has to submit to his role or die. The same conflict is also valid for Gordon in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*; he has to submit to money-god or quit totally. In the end, Gordon has to surrender to the Capitalist system as required by the sense of decency. Although he is reintegrated into the society and begins to live according to "aspidistral standards", nevertheless, he loses his war against the money-god.

Orwell's focus shifted from the evils of capitalism and money-god, to the evils of totalitarianism and power-god through the end of his life. His experience in Spain and the defects of Russian Communism reshaped his ideas on the nature of revolution and the totalitarian regimes. For this reason, the last chapter of this study

has been allocated to Orwell's last and most popular novel, the dystopian nightmare, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. England is named as Oceania in the novel and it is ruled by totalitarianism which demands total submission from the citizens. The Party has a god-like potency in the novel, and it practices the most incredible restrictions in order to guarantee its continuity. In the novel, people are controlled in every step by telescreens and the Thought Police. As it is stated earlier in the thesis, by writing this novel, Orwell tried to attract people's attention to the threat of approaching totalitarianism which was demonstrated by Nazism and Communism in Orwell's time. Orwell thought that Stalin and Hitler opened a new era as they communicated an extreme terror that was never heard before. Orwell did not want people to think that Socialism and Communism were the same ideologies, and in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he criticized Stalin's Russia for posing like a Socialist country. As it was stated earlier, in order to convey his message Orwell chooses the most deviant individual of the group and reflects his ideas through him. Winston Smith is the hero of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and like the other Orwellian heroes presented in this thesis, he tries to gain his individuality and is defeated by the system.

When Orwell's political ideas are examined according to the works studied in this thesis, it is seen that the dose of group pressure increased from his first novel *Burmese Days* to the last, and the pressure put upon by the imperial officers of the local club, expands into pressure of the societal rule in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, and reached its most frightening final form with the Party of Oceania. Psychological repression and group pressure of the first two novels are intensified by physical torture in the last novel. Winston cannot endure to the Party which continuously diminishes individuality and, like the others; he is defeated in the end.

As stated earlier, Orwell collected all his major themes in his last novel, successfully drew the picture of how life might have been under a totalitarian regime and he influenced not only his contemporaries but also the later generations.

To conclude, as mentioned in the introduction, Orwell undertook the role of a propagandist and in his novels he tried to raise consciousness about political realities. While doing this, he had been objective and brave. For this reason, he will stay as an immortal figure and continue to enlighten the following generations.

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