

minds us that Woolf's entire writing career was devoted to wrestling with the relationship between everyday experience and the experience of our century of total war. The signal difference, in my opinion, between Woolf's attitude to human life and that of many "modernists," consists of the fact that, in the face of her devastating personal and political experiences, she continually transcended nihilism in an affirmation of life.

In Kapur's hypothesis Woolf's interest in the particular moment, in the solid particularity of everyday life, derives from a dialectical juxtaposition of this daily life with the abyss, with sudden death, premature sexual invasion, total war, and her own periodic bouts with insanity. The individual deaths that marked her biography and the public deaths that marked her lifetime were thus always present to Woolf's consciousness, constituting one pole of the "reality" she is so often accused of ignoring. In the face of this world created for war and for men which was the context of her life experiences, her affirmation of life seems especially courageous, a celebration of existence quite different from nihilism, though responsive to a "social canopy" only thinly veiling rape, violence, and military terror. Kapur's recognition that Woolf produced novel after novel affirming "a fundamental belief that there is a pattern underlying this universe" identifies the essential achievement of Woolf's opus, and her study provides a welcome reassessment of Woolf's role not only as an experimentalist in modern literature but as a quester able to transcend the despair coloring so much of the literature produced by less intrepid writers. "She remained to the end a humanist as well as a great artist," Kapur concludes, "It is with the 'vision' of a human being that she looks 'in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night,' and discovers the value and meaning of existence from experiences which are universal and primordial" (p. 165).

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Why Is the Collected Orwell Not the Complete Orwell?

The debate around George Orwell has continued steadily through the years since his death. A close look at this critical debate reveals that a number of set ideas about the author and his work have predetermined the course of discussion. The early critics of Orwell, often his personal friends and acquaintances,¹ wrote their studies without the knowledge of Orwell's complete oeuvre. Their judgments remained influential for all the criticism that was to follow. The conclusions were based on Orwell's major works and not on the whole body of his writing.

The situation changed when the late Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus published *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* in 1968. The Secker & Warburg edition was followed within two years by the Pelican edition. This suggests that there was a need for more information about the man. Only then was it possible to look at Orwell's work as a whole. Or was it?

¹Tom Hopkinson, *George Orwell* (London: Longmans, 1953); Laurence Brander, *George Orwell* (London: Longmans, 1954); Richard Rees, *George Orwell: Fugitive from the Camp of Victory* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1961); George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit* (Boston: Little/Brown, 1966).

The question has seldom been asked, how complete the so-called collected essays are. There can be no doubt that what is printed has been well edited, that the texts are "good texts," which is obviously the main work of Ian Angus. But it is less obvious that there was selection. Selection was mainly Sonia Orwell's responsibility and her choice of texts shows a certain tendency. Her collection of published letters is not under discussion here. I want to concentrate on the essays and the journalism.

In the editor's introduction to *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, Mrs. Orwell made it very plain what she thought her late husband to have been. He would have been a novelist if it had not been for the times he lived in. It is true that Orwell admitted on several occasions he would have liked to be a novelist, but these are statements of a man who wished he would relax more. Orwell was not only a novelist nor was he only a political journalist; he was both at the same time. He enjoyed his journalistic work and both activities are complementary with Orwell. There is no doubt that a lack of contextual reading leads most of Orwell's critics to false conclusions about the person and his ideas.

It is at this point that we have to turn back to Sonia Orwell's idea of Orwell the novelist. In her introduction to the four volumes, she wrote that everything which had not been reprinted was ephemeral to Orwell's literary oeuvre or repetitive. On the other hand she included "anything he [Orwell] would have considered as an essay," pieces of journalism for the sake of one or two phrases which, she claimed, were typically Orwellian. This suggests an arbitrary and strongly aesthetic concept of selection.

Jeffrey Meyers, in a review of the four volumes,² mentioned most of the material that had remained unreprinted: Orwell's theater reviews for *Time and Tide*, his war-correspondence for *The Observer* and the *Manchester Evening News*, pieces of his columns for the same papers, his political essays in Victor Gollancz's *The Betrayal of the Left* and in G.D.H.Cole's *Victory and Vested Interest*, a large number of book reviews, his essays to journals like *Junior* and *Commentary* in 1945 and to *Progressive and Commentary* in 1948. One may add the posthumously published essay-cum-introduction to *Animal Farm* "Freedom of the Press," which had been lying unnoticed among the papers of the Orwell Archive at University College London.³ It is difficult to discover much repetition in them, and who is to judge whether or not they are essays in Orwell's understanding of the genre? They are political rather than literary as far as their contents is concerned. All of them were written at a time—and here I quote Mrs. Orwell—when Orwell was able to write "more or less what he wanted." Is not this omission a misrepresentation of Orwell's work and ideas?

The same question may be raised with regard to the "As I Please" column in *Tribune* and the book reviews, not all of which have been included. Orwell himself recorded the pleasure he derived from the column and reviews, and Mrs. Orwell repeated as much in her introduction.

Is it possible that so much of Orwell's material, pieces he was not forced to write, is ephemeral? Even Mrs. Orwell admitted in her introduction that many of the ideas in *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* appeared first in the journalism after 1939. William Steinhoff's *The Road to 1984* is one of the first serious attempts to follow up this idea. It shows that most of the unreprinted material mentioned above is a rich source for the ideas and concepts put forward in *Nineteen Eighty-*

²Jeffrey Meyers, "George Orwell the honorary proletarian," *Philological Quarterly*, 48 (1969), 526-49.

³*Times Literary Supplement*, 15 Sept. 1972, p. 2, 4.

Four. One does not have to agree with Steinhoff's conclusion that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was the *telos* Orwell was working for all his life, but one must admire his effort to follow up a great many ideas and concepts through all of Orwell's published work. Steinhoff demonstrates that most of the ideas for the book have their roots in Orwell's journalism: Orwell's first attempts to come to terms with the new political systems of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, his understanding of the role of intellectuals, his ideas about Basic English (model for Newspeak), his experiences in postwar France (hateweek) and his liking for junk shops (a leitmotif in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*). This is only a small list that immediately springs to mind.

What are the reasons for the omission of items which are so important for the understanding of Orwell? The superficial excuse, given by the late Mrs. Orwell in the introduction, is that Orwell's personality and work escapes academic treatment, and that the history of the period still has to be written. If by academic treatment Mrs. Orwell refers to an edition on the principles of textual criticism, then she is certainly correct. Such an undertaking is not needed. But Orwell was a man of ideas with whom every piece of writing was very important. There was, and still is, the need for a complete edition of Orwell's work. The true reason—in my opinion—for the omission is Mrs. Orwell's understanding of her husband as a novelist, and her definition of literature.

To stress my point of criticism, that she based her selection on an arbitrary concept or understanding of literature, and that this helped to further the misrepresentation of Orwell, I can point to the interpretation of critics who stand in the same tradition as Orwell himself, men like Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson. Both of them worked with the published sources only.

Ever since the publication of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell stood firmly within the tradition of British Socialism. Men like William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, and Richard H. Tawney were part of this tradition, a tradition that is continued into the present by the *Tribune*-group of the British Labor Party. For each of them, traditional party lines proved too limited to describe their political ideas, a characteristic the British New Left shares with them. In their attempt to formulate a theory, they all combined values from bourgeois and working-class culture, which makes it difficult for any critic to appreciate their work and activities properly. The reception of Orwell's work is a long story of critics misinterpreting aspects of his books and ideas, because they rarely escape their own political allegiance. Morris, Shaw and the others shared a similar fate. I am not arguing against political commitment in criticism, but against a continuing misrepresentation of certain facts. One ought to be able, in spite of political feelings, to recognize a man's ideas and then take issue with them. In Orwell's case, this stage has not been reached, and Thompson and Williams have not managed to rectify this state of affairs.

Both critics blame Orwell for the pessimism that was widespread among the postwar generation of intellectuals, who regarded the possibility of a radical change in the political reality after the Second World War as minute. To conclude from one essay—as Thompson did with "Inside the Whale"¹—that it was Orwell who indirectly spread the "Natopolitan ideology" among the young intellectuals, is giving too much credit to a single man and one essay. Similar criticism has to be raised against Williams's idea that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* did the same.² Can one author be blamed for the way his books are received? He certainly could have stopped its

¹Edward P. Thompson, "Inside which Whale?" in *George Orwell: a Collection of critical Essays*, ed. Raymond Williams (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1974), pp. 80-89.

²Raymond Williams, *Orwell* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1971).

publication, but that is not the point. Both Williams and Thompson fail to differentiate between the reception of the work and Orwell's ideas. The reception says more about the times a book was published in and little about the author. An analysis of Orwell's political ideas shows that he remained faithful to his particular brand of "democratic Socialism" (Orwell's capital!) and hoped for its realization somewhere in the world, preferably in England.

Orwell has been challenged for his radical change from pacifist to prowar propagandist at the outbreak of the Second World War. A change in Orwell's position there certainly was, but it was not the change to an all-out support for the existing English political system, as so many critics have tried to make us believe. Orwell genuinely hoped for a revolutionary change within Britain with the help of the Home Guard. Several reviews of books about the Home Guard in 1940/41 highlight his great hopes. His pamphlet *The Lion and the Unicorn*, written in the same period, outlines the model society that Orwell expected to be established by this movement.

What emerges from the pamphlet is the vision of a society with a discriminating respect for its past, for its civilization and values, for its citizens and their interests; but one which will also have to shoot traitors after fair trials, will have to nationalize industry and set up a new education system, level incomes and dissolve the imperial structure of the empire. In these early days of the War it became clear that socialism was more to Orwell than just an economic theory.

From his contributions to Gollancz's *The Betrayal of the Left* it becomes clear that his support for the British war effort stems from his analysis of the political systems of Germany and Russia. Orwell was one of the first to use the term totalitarian in the description of these systems, long before the term got its abusive undertone during the Cold War. Out of this analysis he thought it more likely that a future socialist society could emerge from Western-styled democracies than from totalitarian systems. In 1939, a choice had to be made, and for Orwell it was a choice for the lesser of two evils.

Finally, Orwell's so-called pessimism of the last years of his life emerges in a different light when we look at more of his published—but unreprinted—material of the period 1945-48. I have already mentioned the essays I am referring to. One certainly cannot uphold the opinion that Orwell thought all was lost and the world would take a bad end. He remained true to his ideas of "democratic Socialism," although, it is true to say, he did not see many signs that it would be realized in the near future, not even under a Labor government. With this knowledge in mind, the bleakness of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has to be seen differently. Could it be that it was to some extent a deliberate attempt to provoke reaction?

These aspects shows that Orwell's attitudes and ideas were more complex than any critic until now has realized. I do not want to make Orwell into the political theorist of democratic socialism, but we ought to give him the appreciation that is due for his many valid insights into the problems of English society.

It was Mrs. Orwell's preoccupation with her husband's literary qualities which made her "forget" that the political aspects were part of his oeuvre. We should remember that she was literary editor with Cyril Connolly. He was convinced that literature cannot be political. The introduction to the four volumes shows that the late Mrs. Orwell shared that view. But the introduction also reveals, that she sensed the political dimension of Orwell's work and she has to be praised for the choice of her husband's biographer. The difficulties with Mrs. Orwell that Professor Crick is said to have encountered during his work suggest that she was not absolutely

sure about the political approach of the biographer. In fact the presentation of *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, the chronological order within the volumes, and the biographical notes might have been intended, originally, to make a biography appear unnecessary. However, the new biography⁶ puts Orwell the novelist and Orwell the man of ideas into the more complex context that he demands. But there is still a need for a complete edition of his published work.⁷ His works have been offered as publishing ventures rather than as considered and scholarly attempts to present the whole range of his work.

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⁶Bernard Crick, *Orwell: A Life* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1980).

⁷Rumor has it that 1984 will be the year for such an undertaking. Compare John Thompson's remark in his review of *A George Orwell Companion*, by J.R. Hammond. *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 April 1983. p. 440.

Eroticism in René Maran's *Batouala*

From the African ontological view, the world exists as a harmonious entity. All phases of life, from birth to death, "find themselves logically concatenated in a system so tight, that to subtract one item from the whole is to paralyze the structure of the whole."¹ Within this system, eroticism forms an integral part of the African cosmic reality; an expression of the spiritual universe in harmony with the physical. Since the concept of universal fertility is significant in African philosophy, all aspects of life lead toward procreation. Beings as well as objects have their own sexuality, symbolically dividing the world into maleness and femaleness. Two classic examples serve to illustrate this point. When the poet Aimé Césaire describes the concept of "négritude," as the force which plunges into the red flesh of the soil, he strikes a note of virility and evokes powerful male imagery.

The contrasting overtones in Senghor's poem, "Black Woman," are of a highly sensual and sexual nature, thereby portraying Africa as the personification of woman: "Naked woman, dark woman/ Firm-fleshed ripe fruit, sombre raptures of black wine/ mouth making lyrical my mouth."² Thus, it is upon the strength of this harmony of male and female, and of spiritual and physical symbolism that the complex notion of eroticism may be more fully explored. It is from this point of departure that we propose a literary analysis of this powerful theme in the classic Francophone African novel, *Batouala*, by René Maran.³

¹Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu: the New African Culture* (New York: Grove Press, 1961) p. 97.

²Marie Collins, *Black Poets in French* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 108.

³The distinguished black novelist, René Maran, was born in Martinique, in 1887, to French Guyanese parents, and raised and educated in France. Although he served as an administrator for the colonial government in French Equatorial Africa, the novel, *Batouala*, reflects Maran's literary expression of life for the African, under French colonial rule. Due to its highly authentic nature and poetic sensitivity, this work marks a significant place in black Francophone literature. Léopold Sédar Senghor praises Maran for having masterfully used the vehicle of the French language, to express the poetry of what he calls "the black soul."