



George Orwell – The English Dissident as Tory Anarchist

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Review

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6 **Introduction**
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10 During the course of his life George Orwell described himself in one of two ways. The first
11 of these, the most well-known and celebrated identity, was that of a democratic socialist.
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13 However, Orwell also referred to himself as a ‘tory anarchist’, a term he had coined to
14 describe the writer Jonathan Swift (Crick, 1980: 256).ⁱ Benewick and Green suggest that he
15 used the term ironically, perhaps to resist being too easily pigeonholed into an orthodox left
16 that he was, at best, extremely wary of (Benewick and Greene, 1997: 193). This article aims
17 to examine the idea of Orwell as Tory anarchist. Rather than following Benewick and
18 Greene’s suggestion that Orwell was simply being ironic it is important to take seriously what
19 Orwell meant by the term. It seems most unlikely that a character as committed as Orwell
20 would not have thought very carefully before describing himself this way in public. Bernard
21 Crick alerted us to the danger for anyone writing about Orwell that they should be careful not
22 to find in him the ‘Orwell’ that they wished to find. Thus Orwell has been seen as: ‘tribunite’
23 socialist, Christian socialist, ethical socialist, Trotskyite, conservative or neo-conservative,
24 bohemian Tory, radical liberal, and so on (Ingle, 2006: 4). The point is well made but this
25 article is taking Orwell at his word and examining what the term means, it is not attempting
26 to impose an identity upon him that he had not himself articulated. What did he mean by the
27 term and why did he apply it to himself?
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51 The only systematic study of Orwell as tory anarchist is by the French writer Jean-Claude
52 Michéa (2008). In this paper I will show that it is possible to take seriously Orwell’s claim
53 that he was a ‘tory anarchist’, a role that would appear to sit uneasily alongside his
54 commitment to being a democratic socialist. And far from there being a break in Orwell’s
55 character before and after his experiences in the Spanish Civil War in 1936, as some have
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3 suggested, the qualities that he possessed that had made him refer to himself as a tory
4 anarchist remained throughout his life. In order to do this the paper situates Orwell in the
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6 context of the broader tradition of dissenting British tory anarchists. Who are they and what
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8 do they stand for? It will then examine the two faces of Orwell/Blair, suggesting that they
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10 can be seen as representing contrasting parts of the author's character: Blair the tory anarchist
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12 overlapping with Orwell the democratic socialist - before setting out the way in which tory
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14 anarchism manifests itself in his work. Let me be clear, the aim of the article is not to
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16 demolish the idea that Orwell was a democratic socialist. Despite attempts by the political
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18 right to claim him as a latent conservative, this doesn't stand up to scrutiny.ⁱⁱ Instead the
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20 purpose of this article is to draw out the tension in his life and work that was to remain
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22 unresolved, the tension between his moral and cultural leanings that situated him as a tory
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24 anarchist, and his egalitarian political commitments that led him towards democratic
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26 socialism (Michéa, 2008; Wilkin 2010). At the root of both was an intense, critical sympathy
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28 for and understanding of the complexities of English culture, class and customs. This case
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30 will be made by drawing upon sections of his political novels and essays rather than his
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32 fiction, largely due to matters of space. A case can certainly be made that Orwell's tory
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34 anarchist persona is manifest in such works of fiction as *Coming up for Air*, but that is not the
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36 focus of this paper.
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47 Given the protean nature of Orwell's ideas anyone writing about him is in danger of being
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49 unfairly selective in the material that they think representative of his true character. However,
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51 this article is not defending a position that Orwell did not claim for himself. Thus the material
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53 used is to illustrate what Orwell meant when he called himself a tory anarchist and, by
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55 extension, how this connects with his democratic socialism. Rather than a neat division
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57 between the two positions there are, as will be shown, important connections.
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Tory Anarchism: An English Practice?

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Tory anarchism is not a political ideology in the sense of being a coherent system of principles and beliefs along with ideas about the nature of political power, justice, and the basis for a good society. Rather, it is a conservative moral and cultural critique of the modern world that is embodied in the practices and stances of its practitioners (Wilkin, 2010).ⁱⁱⁱ And as we will see, it connects Orwell with figures that hold quite radically differing political views, such as his contemporary Evelyn Waugh. There is a lack of clarity around the idea of the tory anarchist but in this section I will show that whilst the term is open to some degrees of interpretation there are certain qualities that can be found amongst all those so described.

The idea of a tory anarchist has generally been associated with an array of literary and artistic public figures in British, primarily English, culture. This list includes, most prominently, William Cobbett, Jonathan Swift, Evelyn Waugh, Michael Wharton, Auberon Waugh, Richard Ingrams, Spike Milligan, Peter Cook and Chris Morris, as well as a number of other figures who might usefully be described as fellow travellers who bear a ‘family resemblance’ (following Wittgenstein) to tory anarchism.^{iv} In his essay on Jonathan Swift, ‘Politics Vs Literature: An Examination of Gulliver’s Travels’, Orwell described the latter as a tory anarchist, a misanthrope and a pessimist. For Orwell, Swift was the original critic of what later came to be called ‘totalitarianism’,

‘‘We are right to think of Swift as a rebel and iconoclast, but except in certain secondary matters, such as his insistence that women should receive the same education as men, he cannot be labelled ‘Left’. He is a Tory anarchist, despising authority while disbelieving in liberty, and preserving the aristocratic outlook while seeing clearly that the existing aristocracy is degenerate and contemptible,’

(Orwell, 2005d: 216)

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3 In fact, these very qualities are attributed to Orwell by his friend and early biographer, the
4 anarchist George Woodcock (Woodcock, 1966). However, when one considers the figures
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6 that have either been described as or have described themselves as tory anarchists then what
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8 is immediately striking are their differences rather than any obvious similarities. What, then,
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10 is a tory anarchist? As noted, a tory anarchist is a form of cultural dissident, out of step with
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12 and in opposition to many features of the modern world. What these men (not women) tend
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14 to share in common and what can be found in their works are a number of values and
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16 practices including: the use of satire as a means of expressing their cultural and moral
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18 opposition to aspects of modernity; often an artistic ambition that surpasses all other
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20 motivations; the respect for privacy and the liberty of individual, a fear of the state and its
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22 expanding power over social life; a nostalgic and melancholy temper that laments the passing
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24 of an 'Old England'; criticism of social conformism; and a pervasive sense of pessimism
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26 about the fate of the modern world. Orwell clearly expresses all of these sentiments as I will
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28 show.

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37 Tory anarchists in the C20 have been united by a number of social qualities that tend to
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39 situate them as part of Britain's ruling class, though enjoying a subordinate position within it.
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41 They tend to have been educated at prep and public school (or a Grammar when Grammar
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43 schools were far more exclusive than they are today) followed by Oxbridge. Most had
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45 families in the senior professions. Orwell's father, for example, was a colonial civil servant
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47 working in India, where Orwell was born. Thus their lives were privileged but not so much so
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49 that they could live without working, albeit working in a privileged career. Under normal
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51 circumstances most of these men would have found careers in what is often termed, 'the
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53 establishment', perhaps Whitehall, Oxbridge, the judiciary, the senior Military or politics or
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55 even the Anglican Church. However, tory anarchists are rebels, and for a variety of personal
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57 reasons, they pursue an artistic or literary career in which they undertake satirical and critical
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3 attacks against the very privileges and elite institutions that they were born into. Tory
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5 anarchists should be seen as provocateurs, not revolutionaries. Their aim has been to provoke
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7 and condemn in ironic manner the failings of the society in which they lived. Most frequently
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9 this criticism has been directed at the ruling classes and the middle classes who held the key
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11 positions of social power.
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16 Thus, this is an English cultural and artistic phenomenon and one can see most of these men
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18 as responding to the changing fortunes of Britain in the world-system. Orwell, for example,
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20 born in 1903, lived through a period when Britain could still be seen as the dominant world
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22 force through to a time (1950) when it most decidedly was not. This was a period in which
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24 Britain began the process of losing her Empire, became bankrupted by successive world
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26 wars, and ended up firmly subordinate to the USA in world affairs (Colls, 2002; Lloyd,
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28 2001; Ward, 2001). So much so, in fact, that Orwell saw the best hope for Britain's future in
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30 becoming a member of a federal democratic socialist Europe. So tory anarchism is a
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32 culturally specific phenomenon that reflects the experiences of a group of relatively
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34 privileged men who have been coming to terms with the loss of British power and wealth.
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36 This is not to say that equivalent figures cannot be found elsewhere in the world-system.
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38 France, for example, has a strong right-wing anarchist tradition represented by figures such as
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40 Céline and Philippe Ariès, whose work has affinities with that of their British counterparts.
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Tory anarchists are, then, public figures, pessimists and contrarians, with Orwell perhaps the
most important pessimistic writer of the C20. Indeed, he commented upon this tradition
himself in an attempt to distinguish his own work from theirs when he said of a group of
writers he saw as the 'neo-reactionary school',

'Reading Michael Roberts's book on T. E. Hulme, I was reminded once again of the
dangerous mistake that the Socialist movement makes in ignoring what one might call the

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3 neo-reactionary school of writers. There is a considerable number of these writers: they are
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5 intellectually distinguished, they are influential in a quiet way and their criticisms of the left
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7 are much more damaging than anything that issues from the Individualist League or the
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9 Conservative Central Office ... The thing that is common to all these people, ..., is their
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11 refusal to believe that human society can be fundamentally improved. Man is non-perfectible,
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13 merely political change can affect nothing, progress is an illusion...'

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18 Orwell, (2005c: 63).

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21 These 'important truths' of the pessimists are precisely the concerns of Orwell and other tory
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23 anarchists, a shared pessimism and agony about the nature of progress in the modern world.
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25 For Orwell, large-scale social change was needed to make Britain, and the world, a better and
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27 more humane place. But the means by which this could be brought about might also be the
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29 very thing that destroys liberty and the individual: a powerful socialist state. Orwell was
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31 acutely aware of the dangers of collectivism, not that they were inevitable, but that they were
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33 always present, as he discussed in his review of Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (Orwell,
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35 2005c: 117-119). Hence the agonistic nature of his socialism. He was perpetually distrustful
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37 of the socialism that he was instinctively drawn to, primarily, I think, because he feared that
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39 in practice it would be led and dominated by intellectuals and the middle classes, not the
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41 working classes, and the former would adopt authoritarian means to bring about the progress
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43 that they desired. Orwell's essay on James Burnham's, 'The Managerial Revolution', touches
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45 on this issue, as do countless other comments and quips, perhaps most notoriously in *The*
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47 *Road to Wigan Pier*. So Orwell, like other tory anarchists before and since, remained a
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49 contrarian in his work, likely to switch positions and judgments when he feared that an
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51 unhealthy conformity was emerging, whether it was in defence of P. G. Wodehouse during
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53 WW2 or switching from pacifist to anti-pacifist in the same period. What is clear from a
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55 chronological reading of Orwell's work is that his life was committed to exploring ideas and
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3 evolving his own positions over time, often leading to significant reversals and changes of
4 mind (Newsinger, 1999: x). Hence his fairly dramatic shift, for example, from militant
5 pacifism in, 'Inside the Whale', (March 1940) to militant anti-pacifist and then to a fierce
6 critic of pacifism as being, 'objectively pro-fascist', in, 'Pacifism and the War', (Orwell,
7 September 1942: 2005b). In advocating pacifism and quietism in 1939 Orwell wrote (in tory
8 anarchist vein) that, 'progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles' (Orwell,
9 2005a: 526). The step between, 'Inside the Whale', and, 'Pacifism and the War', was filled
10 by the essay, 'My Country, Right or Left', (September 1940), in which Orwell reveals that
11 his thoughts on pacifism and war changed overnight due to a dream. In the dream war had
12 already started and revealed to him in psychoanalytic fashion the real state of his
13 consciousness - that he was a patriot, a quality true of most tory anarchists. Even in this
14 trajectory from pacifist to anti-pacifist Orwell embraces qualities to be found in all tory
15 anarchists: the pessimist, the vituperative and unfair critic of opponents, and the patriot.

Eric Blair as George Orwell

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18 In order to make sense of the idea of Orwell as a 'tory anarchist' it is important to consider
19 the relationship between Eric Blair, the man, and 'George Orwell', the writer.^v Many
20 biographers have focussed on the relationship between the two men and suggested a range of
21 arguments as to how it related to his work (Crick, 1980; Williams, 1991; Shelden, 1992;
22 Taylor, 2003; Rodden, 1989, Roberts, 2010). This is an important theme and my argument is
23 that it is Blair that best represents the idea of the tory anarchist whilst Orwell, the fictional
24 identity he created, came to represent the honest democratic socialist that Blair aspired to be.
25 Blair was driven by a belief in the need for a democratic socialist world order but he was also
26 a product of his upbringing with all of its prejudices and constraints. The tory anarchist has
27 its roots in the upbringing against which Blair rebelled and out of which emerged Orwell, the
28 democratic socialist fighting against these privileges.

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3 Eric Blair, born into a subordinate fragment of Britain's ruling class (described by Orwell as
4 the 'landless gentry', a position that covers most other tory anarchists), described himself as a
5 tory anarchist to numerous friends and acquaintances at least until he went to Spain in 1936.
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10 It was after that event that he began to espouse his democratic socialist ideals more clearly
11 and went so far as to write in the essay, 'Why I write', that, 'every line of serious work that I
12 have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and
13 *for* democratic socialism, as I understand it' (Orwell, 2005e: 8). Two things are apparent
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15 here, I think: first, Blair never really abandoned the qualities and values of the tory anarchist,
16 he simply transposed them into his fairly loose ideas of democratic socialism. In this respect
17 there is continuity between his tory anarchism and his ideas of 'democratic socialism' that
18 incorporates his belief in such things as: decency, common sense, respect for custom,
19 tradition and heritage.^{vi} Contra biographers such as Bowker, Orwell did not keep his
20 conservatism and his politics neatly separated (Bowker, 2003: 315). Second, Blair and
21 'Orwell' can be read as reflecting two parts of the man's character: The Tory anarchist and
22 the democratic socialist. Peter Davison is correct to argue that there is no sharp division
23 between the two figures (Davison, 1996: 39). 'George Orwell', then, became the vehicle
24 through which Blair could hone and develop his democratic socialist ambitions, his struggle
25 against the class prejudices of his upbringing. As Rodden notes, Orwell has become
26 synonymous with ideas of 'truth, justice, and decency' in line with the way that Blair thought
27 democratic socialism should be (Rodden, 1989: 133). Rodden goes further and argues that the
28 two names enabled the writer to keep apart his public and private lives, Eric to his old
29 friends, George to the new (Rodden, 1989: 146).

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56 The character and literary style of George Orwell became the perfect foil for Blair's socialist
57 political activism and commitments. As is well-known, Orwell wrote in a plain, transparent
58 and simple literary style that was in keeping with the English empiricist tradition (Wilkin,
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3 2010). The hardness and clarity of Orwell's prose reflected well the urgency and need for
4 directness about the truth of the world around him that Blair felt was under attack. As he
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8 commented about the mass political propaganda of his time, 'we are all drowning in filth',
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10 (Orwell, 2005d: 423). This directness of style is reflected in numerous essays such as, 'In
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12 Front of your Nose', or his documentary account of the Spanish civil war, *Homage to*
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14 *Catalonia*. The distinction between these two aspects of Blair/Orwell is never neat and
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16 precise as there are important threads that connect them but nonetheless it is still a distinction
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18 that is manifest in his life and work. George Orwell, for example, was the man who
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20 condemned prep school and public schools whilst Eric Blair was the man who sent his
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22 adopted son to them. Equally, Orwell was the writer who condemned unequivocally the
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24 legacy of British imperialism whilst at the same time Blair was the man, as his friend George
25
26 Woodcock said pointedly, who had joined the colonial police force. These factors do not
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28 diminish his art or its significance but it does bring into light the 'tory anarchist' character in
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30 his life and work that this paper examines.
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37 What is clear is that Blair/Orwell was always a dissident, from practically all political
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39 ideologies, hence the lack of clarity over his ideas on socialism. He developed a wide-ranging
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41 critique of modernity and the direction that he felt it was headed in that informed the nature
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43 of his writing. What becomes apparent in the work of Blair/Orwell is that the two men are
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45 always to be found in his writing. The distinction between them is important but never
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47 absolute. Blair/Orwell's friend the anarchist Nicolas Walter said of him,
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52 'But he should be seen not just as an angry middle-aged man but as an extreme example of
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54 the English middle-class dissenter who, having rebelled against his own group, must always
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56 rebel against any group, even a group of conscious rebels. So he was a puritan who despised
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58 other puritans, a patriot who despised other patriots, a socialist who despised other socialists,
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60 an intellectual who despised other intellectuals, a bohemian who despised other bohemians.

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3 He was a man full of logical contradictions and emotional ambivalences, but the point is that
4 they made him better not worse. He was always able not only to see but to feel both sides to
5 every argument, to realise the imperfections of every position, including his own, and his
6 honesty about the difficulties raised was one of his most valuable characteristics. He was a
7 heretic obliged to betray his own heresy, a protestant protesting against his own faith, a
8 political Quaker reduced to trusting only his inner light',
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18 (Walter, 1998: 74-75).
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21 The Blair/Orwell distinction can also be seen in the contrast between Blair's actions in his
22 private life and Orwell's often aggressive and hostile public writings. The scathing critique
23 that Orwell wrote of his former pacifist allies, condemning them as being proto-fascists for
24 refusing to take up arms against Nazi Germany, was directed against, amongst others, his
25 later biographer George Woodcock. And yet when Blair met Woodcock they became firm
26 friends. A similar experience befell Blair with the poet and writer Stephen Spender, someone
27 he saw as a leading member of the 'pansy left'. On the latter Blair mused, 'when I met him in
28 person I liked him so much and was sorry for the things I had said about him' (Orwell, 1968:
29 328). Orwell represented the clear, committed and unforgiving anti-Stalinist socialist; whilst
30 Blair remained the well-bred and well-mannered member of the 'landless gentry' who found
31 it difficult not to be cordial with many, though clearly not all, of those he criticised when he
32 actually made their acquaintance.
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51 In similar vein the uneasy self-consciousness that Blair/Orwell possessed about his social
52 class manifested itself in various eccentricities including his well-known mock working class
53 accent and his habit of drinking his tea from the saucer rather than the cup (Bowker, 2003:
54 298; Meyers, 2010: 189). This should not be seen as Blair/Orwell patronising the working
55 classes, though, as some of his critics have charged (Campbell, 1989). Rather, this is an
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3 example of Orwell trying to escape his own class background, something that he wrote about
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5 on numerous occasions and which he struggled with throughout his life. If Orwell espoused a
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7 desire for revolution in his work, qualified and hesitant as it was at times, Blair appears to be
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9 much more in line with the kind of 'aristocratic rebel' that tory anarchists tend to be (Orwell,
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11 2005d: 216). So Blair referred to himself as a tory anarchist for good reasons. He shared their
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13 pessimism about aspects of modernity and progress as well as their hostility to the power of
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15 the state and its capacity to engineer society and re-write historical truths. In his tory
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17 anarchism Blair/Orwell bears the closest resemblance to the important C19 tory anarchist,
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19 William Cobbett.^{vii} Like Orwell, Cobbett was a campaigning journalist espousing a popular
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21 patriotism in defence of the 'decent' values of England that were under threat from a variety
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23 of modern developments including a corrupt parliament and the reform of British agriculture
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25 (Ingram, 2006). I want to turn now to the major themes in Blair/Orwell's work that illustrate
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27 why, even when espousing his democratic socialism, he still retained his tory anarchist
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29 outlook and stance.
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37 **Orwell's Tory Anarchist Themes**

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40 I will concentrate here on four significant themes that run through Orwell's work and that are
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42 central to his tory anarchist outlook. To be clear, this does not represent a theoretical
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44 framework; it is not a political ideological response to social change. On the contrary, tory
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46 anarchism is a stance, usually driven by artistic or literary ambitions, and a practice that
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48 reflects a certain temper or emotion that is in significant part a reaction to profound changes
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50 in Britain's place in the modern world-system (Wilkin, 2010). The backdrop to tory
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52 anarchism in the C20 is the decline of the British Empire and of Britain's power from a
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54 position of dominance as hegemon in the world-system (essentially the major writer and
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56 enforcer of what pass for the rules of conduct in geo-politics and capitalism) to a subordinate
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58 position. For Orwell this disintegration was formative upon his outlook on life and part of his
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3 criticism of the ruling classes and their failings. As he famously observed in *The Lion and the*
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6 *Unicorn*,

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9 ‘Probably the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton, but the opening
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11 battles of all subsequent wars have been lost there,’

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15 (Orwell, 2005b: 68).

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18 All tory anarchists are in some sense satirists; as artists of some kind they have tended to
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20 make their moral and cultural criticism through the vehicle of satire, which became an
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22 increasingly important part of Orwell’s work culminating in both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen-*
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24 *Eighty Four*. The whole panoply of institutions that underpinned power in Britain (the
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26 aristocracy, the Church of England, the Monarchy, the moneyed classes, the military,
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28 Whitehall and the dominant political classes) became the target for tory anarchists in their
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30 satire and mockery, none more so than for Orwell. If tory anarchism is not a theory, then, it is
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32 still reasonable to observe that there are a number of things that most tory anarchists tend to
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34 share in common and we can now examine Orwell’s presentation of these recurring themes.

35 36 37 38 39 40 **(a) Living without God: the Problems of Secularism**

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43 Arguably the biggest concern in Orwell’s work is the problem generated by the transition to a
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45 secular society. On numerous occasions, in public and in private, Orwell made clear that
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47 materialism was not enough to underpin the humanistic socialism he espoused; something
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49 that no doubt fuelled his hostility to Marxism. Like other tory anarchists he was responding to
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51 a powerful theme in modernity, the transition to a formally secular society. What is to be the
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53 basis for morality in such a society? How do we know what to do when religious guidance
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55 has lost its legitimacy (Meyers, 2010: 90; Taylor, 2003: 2)? On this point Orwell wrote in his
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57 essay ‘Looking back on the Spanish Civil War’, that, ‘the major problem of our time is the
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3 decay of belief in personal immortality,' (Orwell, 2005c: 265; Rees, 1962: 125). Orwell was
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5 fearful of the consequences of the moral relativism that this tendency opened up, seeing it as
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7 paving the way for the rise (and tolerance) of fascism and Nazism. In itself he felt that a
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9 materialist humanism lacked the spiritual element needed to truly move and motivate people
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11 to defend the humanist values he believed in (Taylor, 2003: 2). Echoing writers like T. E.
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13 Hulme, Orwell argued that something like the idea of the soul was needed to add vitality to
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15 the idea of socialism. If contemporary Orwell epigones such as Christopher Hitchens laud the
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17 certainty of atheism (anti-theism in Hitchens case) Orwell had a more nuanced view of
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19 religion than this.^{viii} Although he was deeply critical of the Roman Catholic Church as a
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21 source of political reaction, and famously (and falsely) observed that religion had played little
22
23 part in the life of the English for 150 years, Orwell recognised the power of Nietzsche's
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25 warning that without God the modern world was ushering in a period where nihilism was a
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27 possible consequence of the Enlightenment. Orwell may have been an atheist but he certainly
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29 was not celebrating that fact and was wary of its consequences for social order.^{ix}
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37 On these points Evelyn Waugh wrote to Orwell when the latter was convalescing towards the
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39 end of his life and he praised his work, specifically *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, but in so doing he
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41 also noted the absence of a spiritual dimension to the book that meant for Waugh Orwell's
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43 analysis of resistance to power was missing a vital ingredient, the love of God that helped
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45 preserve so many people in the face of totalitarianism (Orwell, 1975). Waugh wrote to Orwell
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47 that,
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52 'I think it is possible that in *Nineteen-Eighty Four* we shall be living in conditions rather like
53
54 those you show. But what makes your version spurious to me is the disappearance of the
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56 Church. I wrote of you once that you seemed unaware of its existence now when it is
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58 everywhere manifest. Disregard all the supernatural implications if you like, but you must
59
60 admit its unique character as a social & historical institution. I believe it is inextinguishable,

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2
3 though of course it can be extinguished in a certain place for a certain time. Even that is rarer
4
5 than you might think. The descendents of Xavier's converts in Japan kept their faith going for
6
7 three hundred years and were found saying 'Ave Marias' & 'Pater Nosters' when the country
8
9 was opened in the last century.'

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13 (Waugh, 1986: 302).

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16
17 In *Nineteen-Eighty Four* resistance to power and domination emerges out of Smith's natural
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19 and humanistic desire to feel the emotions denied to members of the party. Hence his affair
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21 with Julia is unpersuasive to Waugh, or at least it is insufficient as the basis for meaningful
22
23 and enduring resistance to power. Although Orwell comments, in passing, that if there is a
24
25 hope it rests in the 'proles', it is not made clear why this is so. In order to answer that
26
27 question we must look elsewhere in Orwell's work and his reflections upon the possible
28
29 triumph of fascism in Britain. For Orwell the working classes would ultimately resist the
30
31 appeal of fascism because they were, as he says,

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36 'Too ignorant to see through the trick that is being played on them, they easily swallow the
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38 promises of fascism, but sooner or later they always take up the struggle again. They must do
39
40 so, because in their bodies they always discover that the promises of the fascists cannot be
41
42 fulfilled... the struggle of the working class is like the growth of a plant. The plant is blind
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44 and stupid, but it knows enough to keep pushing upwards towards the light,'

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48 (Orwell, 2005b: 261).

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52 The proles would resist 'Big Brother' because they lacked the intellectual sophistication to be
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54 'seduced' by his claims; their everyday lives and experiences would eventually run up against
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56 the contradictions between the rhetoric of fascism and its lauding of decent working class
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58 people, and its reality, which is to subordinate the working classes to the power of the Party
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3 and the State. When Orwell said that there was a need to preserve the idea of the soul for
4
5 humanism and democratic socialism then it appears to have been an idea of the soul that he
6
7 saw as being rooted in British culture and customs, things that were very much under threat
8
9 in the modern world. As we will see, Orwell's answer to this lies in his conversion to a left-
10
11 wing patriotism which he saw as filling the emotional and spiritual gap left by secularism
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15 16 **(b) Custom, Class and Common-Sense** 17

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19 'In England such concepts as justice, liberty and objective truth are still believed in. They
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21 may be illusions, but they are very powerful illusions. The belief in them influences conduct,
22
23 national life is different because of them.'
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26
27 Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, (1982: 45)
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29

30
31 Orwell's criticisms of his fellow British intellectuals has left him open to the charge of being
32
33 anti-intellectual in his outlook and somewhat blind to the problematic nature of the ideas of
34
35 common sense and common decency that recur in his work. But in fact his criticisms were a
36
37 reaction to what he saw as the conformism of the intellectuals of his time, particularly but
38
39 not exclusively those on the left, who were drawn towards the Communist Party and support
40
41 for Stalin. On this matter Orwell lost no time in lambasting leftist intellectuals for a number
42
43 of things: being out of touch with reality, out of touch with ordinary people (and their
44
45 common sense and decency) and being elitists who despised the things that ordinary people
46
47 valued, such as their love for their own country (Orwell, 1975). Rather than setting himself
48
49 apart from English culture, Orwell saw himself as being proudly a part of it, right down to his
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51 chosen pseudonym derived from the river that he loved that was close to his family home in
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53 Southwold.
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3 His reflections upon the qualities of such things as English Cooking, picture postcards,
4
5 comics and public houses place Blair/Orwell in a position from which he derived both his
6
7 tory anarchism (the contrarian dissident patriot, half in love with England, half in war against
8
9 it) and his democratic socialism (defender of decent values, common sense and the normal
10
11 everyday life from which they emerge). It is out of the complexities of Britain's class system
12
13 that these qualities have emerged and hostile though he was to class divisions Orwell also
14
15 recognised their cultural significance. On this point he said in an essay on T. S. Eliot's,
16
17 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture', that Eliot's claim that a culture without class
18
19 divisions would most likely be sterile and uncreative has some initial plausibility to it. And at
20
21 the same time he pulls back from this point with because of its elitist and inegalitarian
22
23 pretensions, saying 'is it not worth remembering that Matthew Arnold and Swift and
24
25 Shakespeare ... were all equally certain that they lived in a period of decline?' (Orwell,
26
27 2005d: 457). So if class is something to be overcome in a democratic socialist society for
28
29 Orwell, it is at the same time something to be acknowledged for the qualities that it has
30
31 brought to Britain's culture. As with Orwell, most tory anarchists are from a relatively
32
33 privileged background. Unlike Orwell most are defenders of a hierarchy and inequality that
34
35 they see as being natural. For such tory anarchist's equality was something unnatural that
36
37 could only be brought about by the social engineering of an increasingly overbearing welfare
38
39 state, a theme satirised by Waugh in his novella *Love Among the Ruins: A Romance of the*
40
41 *near Future*. Attempts to disturb the organic evolution of England's class system would result
42
43 only in state-led tyranny. Blair/Orwell at least understood this outlook, hence his sympathy
44
45 for figures like Swift and Waugh, while remaining fiercely supportive of egalitarianism.
46
47 Nonetheless, this fear of the state and its power over the individual connects Orwell firmly to
48
49 other tory anarchists even whilst he rejects their anti-egalitarianism. The dilemma for
50
51 Blair/Orwell remained, then, can there be a collectivism that does not entail state control?
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3 For Orwell, like other tory anarchists, common sense and decency were persistent qualities of
4
5 British culture. But what exactly did he mean by this? It has been a source of controversy
6
7 with some critics on the left viewing Orwell's idea of common sense as being little more than
8
9 a romanticised view of the experience of the working classes and, perhaps worse, an
10
11 atheoretical term that doesn't stand up to serious scrutiny (Eagleton, 2003). As he made clear
12
13 in his essay, 'Politics and the English Language', Orwell was suspicious of abstractions and
14
15 the way in which intellectuals constructed discourses that, in Orwell's view, often served to
16
17 do two things: confuse ordinary people and to obscure the real nature of the claims being
18
19 made. In addition Orwell argued that the use of abstract language often encouraged lazy
20
21 thinking, particularly on the left where Marxists would use abstruse categories to win
22
23 rhetorical arguments whilst at the same time losing the interest of the working class, as
24
25 Orwell put it, by the use of ideological cant (Orwell, 1975: 150; Bowker, 2003: 215; Meyers,
26
27 2010: 161). For intellectuals there can be little worse, no doubt, than an apparently
28
29 atheoretical account of social life and Orwell's empiricism has become a persistent target for
30
31 his critics (Williams, 1991).

32
33
34 And yet this kind of criticism of Orwell's idea of common sense/decency seems wide of the
35
36 mark. Orwell utilised a sophisticated empiricism that sought to defend ideas of objectivity
37
38 from moral relativism (Slater, 1985: 218-230). This did not commit him to a simple-minded
39
40 view of the truth. Orwell discussed this issue extensively in his writings, recognising
41
42 everyone's propensity to believe things that at the same time they knew to be untrue
43
44 (Bracken, 1983; Wolf, 1985). But at the same time truth was not simply a matter of
45
46 perspective; his time in Spain showed him in stark manner where such a position could lead:
47
48 actual events could disappear into the 'memory hole' of the official press while events that
49
50 never happened could become state-sanctioned truth. This was the battleground that Orwell
51
52 found himself in when he was writing and language became a central part of this struggle.
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3 Thus whilst Orwell was critical of intellectual language games he was not saying that he was
4
5 opposed to abstraction, merely that he recognised that it had an easy tendency to become a
6
7 tool for another form of propaganda and obfuscation.
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9

10
11 To reiterate, like other tory anarchists, Orwell was a moral and cultural conservative with
12
13 disdain for many things that were becoming increasingly a part of the world he inhabited,
14
15 often on the grounds of decency: for example, Hollywood, Gangster films, American boys
16
17 comics. Equally he objected to the gratuitous way in which the 'yellow press' gloated over
18
19 the treatment of French women who had collaborated with the occupying German army after
20
21 liberation. Thus his use of the ideas of common decency and common sense are best
22
23 explained in terms of the lived experience that is reflected in his ethnographic writing,
24
25 whether in the documentary *Down and out in Paris and London* or his short essays that make
26
27 up the best of journalism. Common sense is a complicated idea in Orwell's work that conveys
28
29 his belief that historical truths about the social world remain something that *can* be
30
31 understood by people outside of the machinations of powerful institutions such as the state or,
32
33 increasingly, the mass media. Common sense can be a bulwark against the moral relativism
34
35 Orwell opposed but clearly it has definite limits. As Ingle notes, 'for Orwell, reality, the
36
37 external world, could be discerned by the undeceived intelligence of the ordinary individual
38
39 ... ready to do battle with the collective state over the issue of truth' (Ingle, 2006: 124). In
40
41 'common decency' Orwell is describing people's instinctive emotional reaction to things that
42
43 they know to be morally wrong, such as the earlier example of sections of the British press
44
45 gloating over the abuse of French female collaborators after liberation.^x Again, neither
46
47 qualities are infallible, they are simply sources of good human conduct and ultimately they
48
49 are all that we have with which to defend ourselves. They can, and are, as Orwell makes
50
51 clear, subverted and corrupted by powerful institutions (Bracken, 1983). He was well aware
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53 of the dangers of conformism and the ability of the state to manipulate the public, as
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3 evidenced in *Nineteen-Eighty Four* with the idea of 'Two Minutes Hate'. Common sense and
4
5 decency were moral guides, not infallible, but preferable and more enduring than their more
6
7 intellectually refined alternatives. As his most well known biographer wrote,

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11 'Orwell genuinely believed ... in the innate decency ... of ordinary people. True values are not
12
13 to be created nor old values 'transfigured' by the revolution, or in a new revolutionary
14
15 consciousness; they exist already in the decency, fraternity, mutual aid, sociability, tolerance
16
17 and scepticism towards authority of the working class ... Decency is not an empty word, but
18
19 is part of the moral values of socialism that are embedded in working class culture', (Crick,
20
21 1980; Rodden, 1989: 171-243)
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26 (c) Patriot Games

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29 Like other tory anarchist's Orwell became a fierce patriot and in part this was a response to
30
31 the issue that was mentioned earlier: how do we know how to live in an age without God? In
32
33 the inter-war period many of Orwell's contemporaries amongst the upper classes succumbed
34
35 to a hedonism that was savagely satirised by Evelyn Waugh precisely because, echoing
36
37 Nietzsche, it seemed to lead ultimately to nihilism and the dread moral relativism. Alternately
38
39 others found the attractions of Marxism and support for the Soviet Union to be the answer to
40
41 their need for some sort of unequivocal foundation for their lives. Clearly for Orwell neither
42
43 of these would do and instead he developed an idea of patriotism that he sought to distance
44
45 from the kind of nationalism that had proven such a powerful fuel for WW1. Instead Orwell's
46
47 patriotism was more in keeping with that of the C19 tory anarchist William Cobbett, based
48
49 upon a love of countryside, custom and convention and a defence of the good qualities of his
50
51 country, such as decency, respect for the individual and privacy (Ingrams, 2006). Indeed,
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58 Crick links his patriotism to his tory anarchism (Crick, 1980: 21)
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3 In customary fashion Orwell abruptly announced his conversion to patriotism on the eve of
4 the Second World War as something that came to him in a dream and which overturned his
5 still-recent commitment to pacifism. War was the ultimate test of where one's emotional
6 loyalties lie and for Orwell the answer was now clear (Rodden, 1989: 159). Orwell's
7 patriotism no doubt appeared parochial, inward-looking and backwards in an era when a
8 number of left-wing intellectuals and working class organisations had criticised the idea of
9 the love of one's country. In stark contrast patriotism became the unifying force for Orwell
10 that would connect Britain's classes over and above what divided them. Hence his initial
11 enthusiasm for the newly formed Home Guard that he viewed as a possible centre for a
12 revolutionary British patriotism. Again this theme places Orwell closer to figures such as T.
13 E. Hulme than it does more orthodox left-wing revolutionaries of the time (Roberts, 1982).
14
15 Orwell's hope was that patriotism in the war would bring about social change by drawing
16 together classes who had previously lived sharply different and separate lives in defence of
17 the thing that they *had* to share in common: their experience of and love for their country.
18
19 Out of this might come the impetus for Orwell's democratic socialism and the dilemma of
20 living in a secular age (Newsinger, 1999: 62).
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22

23
24 The idea of patriotism that Orwell sets out is very different from the kind of unifying or
25 motivating force that most left-wing ideologies have espoused. Indeed, for many it would
26 appear to be a reactionary step backwards in social change, not forwards (Samuel, 1989a and
27 b; Rossi, 2009). Left-wing ideologies have tended to favour universal themes such as 'the
28 working classes' or 'democracy' and now 'human rights' rather than what were viewed
29 suspiciously as the convenient fictions of national identity. But Orwell saw this differently
30 and in part one suspects that this emerged from his ethnographic experiences which were
31 formative in so much of his evolving world-view. Certainly Orwell's upbringing would have
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3 led him to be indoctrinated into a nationalist ideology about Britain and its Empire, and his
4
5 acceptance of aspects of that story are familiar.^{xi}
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9 More than this, Blair/Orwell, the tory anarchist alongside the democratic socialist, embraced
10
11 Britain in all of its contradictions and the rotten lives it forced upon so many of its working
12
13 class, and saw a way out of this predicament through a social change that would be
14
15 egalitarian, generous, decent and rooted in the natural patriotism that he found in people
16
17 throughout the country. In various places Orwell recalls that he rarely encountered anything
18
19 other than tolerance and kindness towards him from the working classes who must clearly
20
21 have known that he was, in fact, very posh. Indeed, a sketch in an edited collection by tory
22
23 anarchist Richard Ingrams attests to just this point when Stella Judt recollects her childhood
24
25 in London's Limehouse. Travelling under an assumed name Orwell lodged in her mother's
26
27 house for a number of weeks. Orwell was diligent in cleaning the kitchen thoroughly every
28
29 day (in his accounts of his travels he often lamented the dirt and bad smells that he
30
31 encountered amongst the world that the poor inhabited). So thorough was Orwell's cleaning
32
33 that the then young girl's mother used to complain to her that it wasn't right that a posh man
34
35 like that should be doing this; an irony that Orwell the socialist would no doubt have found
36
37 amusing,
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45 'I came home early one afternoon and there he was. The man spoke to me. It was not what he
46
47 said that startled me, it was the way that he said it. His speech was what we at that time called
48
49 Oxford English, cultured, correct, plum-in-the-mouth BBC English. I was too young then to
50
51 hide my surprise at his posh accent. He smiled gently, bowed and then further astonished me
52
53 by kissing my mother's hand and saying "Goodbye, queen of the kitchen". Turning to me he
54
55 added, "Your mother is a fine lady and a splendid cook". My mother was consumed with pity
56
57 for the poor man. She told me that he had scrubbed all the floors, cleaned the twin outside
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3 lavatories and polished the blackhead cooker to a mirror finish. “That well-bred gentleman
4 worked so hard I had to make him stop for a rest””
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9 (Judt, 2008: 68)
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12 But the point for Orwell at the time was that if Britain was to be changed for the better only a
13 genuine emotional force such as patriotism could serve to mobilise people in support of that
14 cause. It would become the soul of his democratic socialism. So Orwell’s support of
15 patriotism was a reversion to its original meaning, a love of the land and people with which
16 one is familiar, rather than what he viewed as the perverted meaning of the term that had
17 become fused with nationalism and chauvinism. Patriotism is a positive emotional and
18 intellectual expression of this love whilst nationalism is a term suffused with Machiavellian
19 intent as he argues in his extended essay, ‘Notes on Nationalism’,
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32 ‘By patriotism I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one
33 believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force upon other people. Patriotism is
34 of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is
35 inseparable from the desire for power,’
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42 (Orwell, 2005c: 362)
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46 In his essay on nationalism Orwell argued that it was a concept that was connected to power-
47 seeking ideologies of all kinds, from anarchists to fascists, and that it appealed to those who
48 wanted power over others rather than a free society. And for Orwell a pervasive fear was that
49 the intellectual left middle-class had shown themselves to be power-worshippers who wanted
50 to govern the working classes for their own good in order to bring them up to their level, a
51 goal that would most likely lead to an authoritarian state. Thus, although the intellectual left
52 had nothing but disdain for nationalism in its conventional populist form, the power-seeking
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3 and manipulative aspect of nationalism as an ideology was appealing but in the form of
4
5 Marxism or some other secular creed. As Taylor noted in a review of the approach of the
6
7 British left to patriotism, the concept has had a radical, populist past as well as a more
8
9 conservative, jingoistic statist one (Taylor, 1994; Slater, 1985: 106; Williams, 2009). Thus
10
11 the concept of patriotism acts as the unifying force that will replace the loss of religious faith.
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15 16 **Reasons to be Pessimistic?**

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19 Tory anarchists have tended to hold pessimistic views of humanity, society and the idea of
20
21 progress, a pessimism that often fuels their satire. Orwell is viewed by many of his
22
23 biographers as a pessimist and there is much truth in that view. Indeed, it is one of
24
25 Blair/Orwell's tory anarchist traits. But he was also someone who chose to act, believing that
26
27 he might make a difference. So we see in him two views struggling against each other, the
28
29 pessimistic tory anarchist who came to fear that in an atomic age the world was doomed; and
30
31 the somewhat more optimistic democratic socialist who had been profoundly changed by his
32
33 experiences in Spain. Which is the real Blair/Orwell? The most persuasive view is that both
34
35 of them are. The tension between his pessimism and his optimism is a recurring part of
36
37 Blair/Orwell's work that fuels much of his writing. Orwell balances his pessimism, then, with
38
39 his hope that socialism can make the world better, as he stresses, not perfect. As Crick notes,
40
41 pessimism is not the same as defeatism (Crick, 1974: 61-64).
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49 In his essay on those he viewed as the neo-reactionary school of pessimists Orwell made
50
51 plain his sympathies for aspects of what they were articulating (Orwell, 2005c: 63). In
52
53 particular, Orwell (or 'Gloomy George' as Herbert Read called him) shared their scepticism
54
55 towards the general idea of progress and the belief that science and technology were likely to
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57 prove to be the means that would eliminate human drudgery and slavery. Instead, for Orwell
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59 they were rapidly being used as the means to enhance devastating warfare, intensify
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3 economic exploitation and render possible the reality of a totalitarian state that could monitor,
4 survey and control all of its citizen's activities. The other side of this uneasiness with
5 progress and modernity that Orwell expressed is conveyed by his friend, the writer Cyril
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economic exploitation and render possible the reality of a totalitarian state that could monitor, survey and control all of its citizen's activities. The other side of this uneasiness with progress and modernity that Orwell expressed is conveyed by his friend, the writer Cyril Connolly, who saw in him an inherent nostalgia for the recent Edwardian past. Connolly described Orwell as someone always, 'looking back to the year 1910', before the first World War had ushered in the terrifying age of total warfare that was the backdrop to most of Orwell's life (Lebedoff, 2008: 8).

Orwell's pessimism, then, is a constant throughout his writings, he never seeks to sweeten the experiences he has and exposes his audience to them in the raw, whether it is during his period working as a dishwasher in Paris, living as a tramp in England or serving as a colonial police officer in Burma. Orwell was a realist in the sense that he wanted his audience to understand the environment he had experienced, its noise, smells, taste, grime, squalor and often violence, alongside the other side of his experiences, most beautifully encapsulated in his time in Barcelona in 1936 when for a brief period he had a glimpse of the better world he sought as the anarchists tried to turn the city into an egalitarian and democratic experiment. Thus it must be stressed that Orwell's pessimism, noted by many writers^{xii}, is specific to particular trends and developments in modernity, not all of them.

Orwell made clear on a number of occasions that he saw no inherent link between the spread of science and social progress. On this point he wrote a scathing criticism of the technological utopianism of H. G. Wells' 'Guide to the New World' in his essay 'Wells, Hitler and the World State' in which he pointed out that Germany was, in fact, the most scientifically advanced society of the time (1940) and now under the Nazi's, also the most barbarous (Orwell, 2005b: 139). Unlike most other socialists Orwell held no simple commitment to the promises of the Enlightenment philosophers that had been so influential on liberal and socialist thought in the C19. By the time that Orwell came to maturity as a writer the more

1
2
3 utopian possibilities inherent in Enlightenment thought had passed to be replaced by
4
5 reflection upon the causes of total world war and the dangers of a new mass society that was
6
7 being brought into existence. In many respects Orwell shares something in common with the
8
9 Spanish writer Ortega Y Gasset who feared that a new scientifically organised and
10
11 technologically managed mass society would be spiritually empty, with people reduced to the
12
13 role of material consuming beings, largely driven by appetite not reason (Gasset, 1957).
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16
17 Gasset's pessimism certainly has something in common with Orwell but Orwell goes much
18
19 further in his depictions of a future without the liberty, equality and decency he thinks
20
21 fundamental to a good society. The manner in which science and technology have come to be
22
23 the means of social control are well known, from the mechanisation and computerisation of
24
25 mass warfare to the intensification of surveillance societies, these are part of the fears that
26
27 Orwell saw in the possible abuses of science and technology. An age of mass production and
28
29 global trade, of instant communication and endless individualised consumer fantasy, can at
30
31 the same time be an age where people surrender their liberty, privacy and independence
32
33 willingly in return for the seduction of materialism (Slater, 1985: 93).
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40 If *Nineteen-Eighty Four* is his most famous depiction of a future where science and
41
42 technology have been used for political ends as a means to destroy freedom and control the
43
44 individual, it is important to note that these were concerns that recurred from his earliest
45
46 writings. It was the rise of totalitarianism in the 1920s and 1930s that deepened this
47
48 pessimism and fear of a modern world where, in the post-WW2 period, he came to fear that
49
50 both the world itself and the values that Orwell the tory anarchist admired would be
51
52 obliterated (Crick, 1980: 309; Bowker, 2003: 369-370). More alarming, perhaps, was that in
53
54 the democratic countries the distortion of the truth was also an increasingly common and easy
55
56 practice for those with power, as he reflected on the portrayal of the Spanish Civil War in the
57
58 British press. It is easy to overlook now that at the time of writing Orwell was not a hugely
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3
4 popular writer in terms of sales (Shelden, 1992: 2). He struggled to find a publisher for
5
6 *Animal Farm* at first largely for political reasons, his message antagonised too many left-
7
8 wing publishers who either supported or were sympathetic to the Soviet Union (Williams,
9
10 1991: 69; Ingle, 2006: 2). As Orwell noted in his (ironically) long-suppressed introduction to
11
12 *Animal Farm*,

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16 ‘The sinister fact about literary censorship in England is that it is largely voluntary.
17
18 Unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any
19
20 official ban. Anyone who has lived long in a foreign country will know of instances of
21
22 sensational items of news - things which on their own merits would get the big headlines -
23
24 being kept right out of the British press, not because the Government intervened but because
25
26 of a general tacit agreement that 'it wouldn't do' to mention that particular fact. So far as the
27
28 daily newspapers go, this is easy to understand. The British press is extremely centralized,
29
30 and most of it is owned by wealthy men who have every motive to be dishonest on certain
31
32 important topics. But the same kind of veiled censorship also operates in books and
33
34 periodicals, as well as in plays, films and radio. At any given moment there is an orthodoxy, a
35
36 body of ideas which it is assumed that all right-thinking people will accept without question.
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38 It is not exactly forbidden to say this, that or the other, but it is 'not done' to say it, just as in
39
40 mid-Victorian times it was 'not done' to mention trousers in the presence of a lady. Anyone
41
42 who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness.
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44 A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing, either in the popular
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46 press or in the highbrow periodicals’,
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54 (Orwell, 2000, appendix).
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58 So Orwell’s pessimism was grounded in his experience of a world that was rapidly moving in
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60 a direction that threatened to undermine the things that he thought vital to Britain’s future.

Conclusions: Orwell as Icon, Orwell as dissident – The Perils of the Tory Anarchist

Blair/Orwell's dissidence was a peculiarly English phenomenon reflecting the tory anarchist part of his character; part derived from his struggle against and challenge to his own class background, but also a self-conscious attempt to situate himself as part of a heritage of English dissidents going back to Milton and Paine. This meant that in practice he was as likely to confront the left as the right in his work, though ultimately his political instincts were always egalitarian. Tory anarchists, Orwell included, are dissidents in the sense that they are in permanent opposition to authority. Orwell takes this to a higher level in that he regularly challenges his own assumptions and beliefs, at times fearing his potential racism and anti-semitism, his possible attraction to fascism and his awareness of the prejudices of his upbringing that shaped his perception of the working classes (they stink!). However, Orwell's subsequent image has been shaped by the industry of commentators and politicians that emerged in the wake of his death and who continue to argue over the meaning and significance of his work. One of the consequences of this has been to turn Orwell, the tory anarchist dissident, into Orwell the prophetic Cold War opponent of all things totalitarian. It is this latter Orwell who has become institutionalised and sanctified as an infallible source of guidance on political issues.^{xiii}

For the tory anarchist part of the Blair/Orwell character this seems a most unwelcome fate. Although in many respects he invited such an interpretation of his work through its many inconsistencies and contradictions it is hard to imagine that he would have been anything other than thoroughly opposed to becoming an iconic figure. But as I have shown in this paper, there is no stable or single Blair/Orwell. There are two dominant figures to be found in his work and it is the tory anarchist that provides the basis for his dissident stance and temper. Blair/Orwell opposed the establishment precisely because, like other tory anarchists, he understood it well and was born into the institutional and relational nexus that reproduces it

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3 in each generation. As an intellectually curious and critical man he was always searching for
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5 better ways to defend the liberty of the individual, the values of decency and the possibility of
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7 common sense. The fact that he embraced many things that were in conflict with each other is
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9 not in itself surprising given the breadth of his ambitions. To reiterate, as Walt Whitman
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11 wrote in *Song of Myself* and which applies equally to Blair/Orwell, the tory anarchist
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13 dissident, half in love with England and half against it,
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18 ‘Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain
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20 multitudes,’
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24 (Whitman, 2004: 717).
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Endnotes

ⁱ It is reasonably common for Orwell to be referred to as a ‘tory anarchist’ by others: Rodden, 1989: 158; Mason, 2008; *The Economist*, 2003; Hampshire, 1992; Richards, 2011; Charpier, Nineteen-Eighty Four; Crick, 1980: 16-21; Crick, Nineteen-Eighty Four: 10; Benewick and Green, 1997: 193; Willetts, 2003; Bowker, 2003: 174, 203, 361; Stansky and Abrahams, 1994: 284; Williams’, 2007: 101-102; Rossi and Rodden, 2009; Williams, 2009. Writers such as Orwell’s friend Jack Common (Shelden, 1992: 240), Rees (1962) and Williams (2007) both record instances of Orwell describing himself as a ‘tory anarchist’.

ⁱⁱ See the debate between Christopher Hitchens and Norman Podhoretz (1983).

ⁱⁱⁱ Almost every writer on Orwell notes his conservative traits, whilst some have seen him as being a conservative only outside of his politics (Taylor, 2003: 13). Neither depiction is correct as Orwell’s conservative moral and cultural values undoubtedly connected with his broader character as reflected in his tory anarchism and his democratic socialism. There is no easy distinction between these two parts of the Blair/Orwell character as this article argues. On Orwell’s cultural conservatism see, for example, John Rodden, (2006: 172-173).

^{iv} For a full discussion of tory anarchism and the relationship between these men, particularly in their satirical practices, see Wilkin (2010).

^v On the relationship between Orwell and Blair, see: Stansky, and Abrahams, (1994); Rodden (1989); Davison (1996: 38-66; Rose, 2009).

^{vi} Scott Lucas (2003) suggests that Orwell had almost nothing coherent to say about what socialism meant for him. This, I think, goes too far. What it is reasonable to say is that Orwell’s ideas about democratic socialism were not doctrinal and in comparison to the Marxists that he spent much of his time arguing against must have seemed rather vague. Given the various ways in which Orwell’s socialism has been described by those sympathetic to it (e.g. tribunitary socialist, democratic socialist, Trotskyite, ethical socialist) this seems an uncontroversial point. Presumably he cannot be all of these things at once, no matter how flexible his ideas.

^{vii} Indeed his friend Stephen Spender says that Orwell was really a radical tory like Cobbett (Bowker, 2003: 123)

^{viii} For a critical view of Hitchens and his appropriation of Orwell see Lucas (2004).

^{ix} A number of writers have suggested that Orwell’s sense of morality and decency was essentially judaio-christian in origin. See Ingle (2006); Rodden (1989)

^x Ingle (2006) sees Orwell’s idea of decency as being rooted in working-class decency but this seems to be too narrow a definition. Whilst Ingle is surely right to note that Orwell tended to valorise working-class communities his account of decency clearly cuts across class lines. Thus in *The Lion and the Unicorn* Orwell could write that the ruling class in England were morally fairly sound.

^{xi} Peter Davison relates his own experiences of indoctrination into empire whilst at public school (1996: 17)

^{xii} On Orwell’s pessimism see: Slater (1985); Williams (1991: 101). Crick sees Orwell as moving between idealism and pessimism (1980: 522)

^{xiii} For a discussion of Orwell’s sanctification see Rodden (1989 and 1991).