Ideology in the works of George Orwell

a socio-cultural approach in the wake of Raymond Williams’ cultural materialism
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Acknowledgements .................................................................................. 4
0 Introduction .......................................................................................... 6
1 Raymond Williams ................................................................................ 7
2 George Orwell ...................................................................................... 10
3 Ideology ............................................................................................... 13
4 Manifold views on ideology: Down and Out in Paris and London .......... 14
   4.1 Paris ............................................................................................. 14
   4.2 London ......................................................................................... 16
5 A shocking experience: Homage to Catalonia ..................................... 20
   5.1 Orwell’s original ideology .............................................................. 21
   5.2 Impact of the Catalanian ideology .................................................. 23
   5.3 Results .......................................................................................... 27
6 How things can turn out wrong: Animal Farm ...................................... 32
   6.1 The Russian Revolution ............................................................... 32
   6.2 When humans become animals ...................................................... 34
   6.3 Installing Animalism ................................................................... 37
   6.4 Amendments to the ideology ....................................................... 41
   6.4.1 When animals lose their zeal for Animalism ............................... 41
   6.4.2 Division into two camps ............................................................ 43
   6.5 Abusing the ideology ................................................................... 44
   6.6 The Defeat of Animalism ............................................................... 47
   6.6.1 Towards a new ideology ............................................................. 47
   6.6.2 When animals become humans ................................................ 50
   6.7 Snowball ....................................................................................... 52
   6.8 Ideological reception of the novel .................................................. 56
7 The horror of ideology: Nineteen Eighty-Four ..................................... 57
   7.1 The ideology of Ingsoc ................................................................. 58
   7.1.1 The principles of Ingsoc ............................................................ 58
   7.1.2 The means of Ingsoc ............................................................... 60
   7.1.2.1 Terror ................................................................................ 60
   7.1.2.2 Access to truth and knowledge .............................................. 62
   7.1.2.3 Annihilation ....................................................................... 63
   7.2 Manipulating several generations ................................................. 64
   7.3 Newspeak ..................................................................................... 67
   7.4 Contesting Big Brother ................................................................. 70
   7.4.1 Fighting the ideology ............................................................... 70
   7.4.2 Surrendering ............................................................................ 74
8 Conclusion ........................................................................................... 78
Works Cited ........................................................................................... 80
0 Introduction

In my thesis I will examine four of Orwell’s novels in the light of Raymond Williams’ cultural studies. The idea for this concept arose out of my previous research on both of these authors. Williams himself has often written about Orwell, especially in *George Orwell* (1971), but this is a rather short analysis containing a great deal of biographical material. I want to analyse Orwell’s work in the light of Williams’ socio-cultural theories in depth. Both authors have been briefly linked before but a study in which Williams’ work functions as a starting-point and focus is not yet available.

Williams is most famously known as a standard bearer of British Cultural Studies and as founder of “cultural materialism” (see further down). I have included a short chapter on Williams (see 1) which explains his position in the literary field, based on analyses by John Higgins (*The Raymond Williams Reader; Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and cultural materialism*) and Terry Eagleton (*Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*). Because Williams’ work is too copious to apply wholly to Orwell’s novels, I will restrict my field of research to his ideas on ideology, more specifically on the influence of ideological systems on the characters in the novels. Ideology is an important aspect of Williams’ own work (*Culture, Keywords, The Long Revolution*) and the common description of George Orwell as an ideological writer, not in the least by Orwell himself:

> In a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer. … It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects. Everyone writes of them in one guise or another. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows. And the more one is conscious of one’s political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one’s aesthetic and intellectual integrity (*Collected Essays* I: 26).

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1 The only analysis of Williams’ approach to Orwell I found is Christopher Hitchens’ *George Orwell and Raymond Williams*, in which some interesting remarks on Williams are given, like his lack of background knowledge about the Catalan situation. The article is however not multifaceted enough. It shows Williams’ lapses in interpretation, but forgets that Williams was often also spot-on. A second article by Paul Thomas, *Mixed Feelings: Raymond Williams and George Orwell*, gives an analysis of the similarities and discrepancies of both characters, but is not concerned with an actual analysis of Orwell’s novels, and therefore runs parallel with my analysis instead of interfering with it.
Raymond Williams’ notes did sometimes not suffice to give a structured interpretation. Where necessary, his ideas have been compared to other notable writers on Orwell like Jeffrey Meyers (Orwell) and Valerie Meyers (George Orwell).

George Orwell is known as one of England’s most famous authors and I am well aware that this thesis will not change the world’s thinking about him. However, the fame and reverence that is still given to today, makes it worth while to pore over his works again. Not even taking account of all the letters and essays Orwell has written during his lifetime, the number of novels still cannot be covered in this study. My thesis will therefore only be concerned with two of his earlier works – Down and Out in Paris and London and Homage to Catalonia – and Orwell’s two most famous novels: Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four. All of these are in some way concerned with ideology, but with interesting differences.

I will first provide a concise summary of Williams’ work and his importance for cultural studies. Subsequently there is a chapter on the character of Orwell, since his personal ideas are closely intertwined with the ideologies in his novels. Afterwards a small introduction to ideology follows. On the basis of this chapter I then start my research on the ideological policies of the fictional worlds depicted by Orwell. Every novel to be discussed is covered in a separate chapter.

1 Raymond Williams

Raymond Williams (31/08/1921 – 26/01/1988) was a Welsh literary critic and academic. When he got offered a scholarship to Cambridge University, Williams commenced his studies in English. He arrived at the university in the autumn of 1939. However, in 1941 Williams got called up for military service. After the war had ended, Williams came back to Cambridge to complete his studies. At his graduation, he turned down a proposal to come and work for Cambridge University and started tutoring in adult education (Higgins The Raymond Williams Reader ix-x). After more than a decade of adult teaching Williams was given another opportunity to lecture at Cambridge. “Discouraged by the shift of emphasis in adult education away from working-class education and towards middle-class provision, Williams accepted the post and was to spend the rest of his working life at Cambridge …” (Higgins Raymond Williams 1). He started off as a lecturer in 1961 and by 1974 he was appointed Professor of Drama. Williams remained at Cambridge until his retirement in the summer of 1983.
Being at a centre of literary studies and criticism and living in the typical snobbish atmosphere of the University deeply influenced Williams’ writings. It allowed him to ponder on the current academic disciplines: “This move [working in adult education], and the consequent departure from the usual university syllabus of English studies, provided some of the ground for the writing of two seminal works which challenged the existing paradigm of literary studies, and did much to help the emergence of the new disciplines of cultural studies” (Higgins Raymond Williams 1). During his academic career, Williams published a range of books on a new type of literary criticism (see further down). All of these were written from a leftist and socialist point of view. His most important work is considered to be his trilogy of studies published in the late 1950s and 1960s. Culture and Society 1780 – 1950 (1958), The Long Revolution (1961) and Communications (1962a) turned Raymond Williams into one of the leading figures of the left-wing critics of the 1960s. Higgins further notes:

We can distinguish three main phases of his work while in Cambridge, .... First, there was the period of active opposition to Cambridge English which began with his arrival in 1961, and culminated in the publication of his chef-d’oeuvre, The Country and the City, in 1973; second, the decade of work on theory, and particularly on questions of Marxist and literary theory in the 1970s; and finally, the interrupted work of the 1980s, which focused mainly on what Williams saw as a ‘new conformism’, one which found concrete political expression in Thatcherism, but also came through in the broader currents of social and cultural analysis (The Raymond Williams Reader xi).

These “broader currents of social and cultural analysis” sum up very accurately Williams’ own approach to literature. For Williams, a more historical methodology was needed. He could not recognize himself in the approach of the Formalists and Structuralists with their focus on the textuality of the text. Williams himself started looking for a completer scrutiny of literary material: “The sociology of cultural forms … [has] its emphasis on the social as well as the notational basis of sign-systems, … [adding] to what would otherwise be internal kinds of analysis, a deliberately extended social dimension” (Culture 31). This view would eventually lead him to the establishment of “cultural materialism”.

“Cultural materialism”, a term that Williams himself coined, has its focus on history and culture, but the last one is seen from a very broad perspective. This approach to literature is “a blending of leftist culturalism and Marxist analysis” (Wikipedia [n. pag.]). By introducing this methodology, Williams aimed to create a counterpart to two other branches of literature. On the one hand, there was the New Historicism in America with pioneers as
Alan Sinfield, Catherine Belsey and most of all Stephen Greenblatt and, on the other, Williams reacted against the “old ‘ideal’ approaches like positivism and Geistesgeschichte” (Sinfield 4).

As mentioned parenthetically a few lines before, one of the new elements in this cultural materialism included that all forms of signification are examined within the conditions of their existence and their place within their formal and socio-political context (Higgins Raymond Williams 143). Or as Dollimore put it: culture becomes a “system of significations by which a society or a section of it understands itself and its relations with the world” (Dollimore et al. vii). Therefore culture could almost be equated with ideology, although Williams himself still distinguished between both concepts.

In Terry Eagleton’s notes we find the following analysis of Williams’ final realignment: “And then, just when everyone else had caught up with him and was busy pressing this case to an idealist extreme, he turned on his heel (sic) and began to speak of material modes of cultural production, of the social institutions of writing, of – in a word – cultural materialism” (Raymond Williams 9).

Williams died suddenly in 1988, leaving behind over twenty books – critical studies as well as novels – behind. At this time he was still working on several studies, which got published post-mortem. His influence on the literary studies in the last decades can hardly be overestimated. As founder of a new branch of literary and cultural studies his name still remains prominent in both sociology and the study of literature. Williams was able to incorporate both text and context in the scrutiny of his material, giving us a wider and fuller view on both textual and contextual analysis. Several methodologies of the 80s are indebted to the insights Williams formulated during his academic career. Fairly recent branches of literary criticism, like post-colonial studies and gender studies (feministic studies or gay and lesbian studies) are founded on the questions Williams raised and the subsequent answers he supplied.

All this illustrates how important Williams’ achievements are for both cultural and literary studies nowadays. Many contemporary literary critics have commented on the importance of Williams’ insights. Scott Wilson says Williams “perhaps the only British academic ever to have fulfilled the role of the intellectual” (252), whereas to West he is “the last of the great European male revolutionary socialist intellectuals” (Prendergast xi). His influence on subsequent generations of critics is also marked upon by Juliet Mitchell (Williams is to her “a moral and intellectual touchstone” (qtd. in Higgins The Raymond Williams Reader xii)) and by Parrinder who thinks of him as “a father-figure to thousands”
(qtd. in Higgins The Raymond Williams Reader xii). The most impressive characterization, however, comes from his Cambridge colleague Terry Eagleton who depicts Raymond Williams as “the single most important critic of postwar Britain” (The Function of Criticism 108).

2 George Orwell

George Orwell, born Eric Blair, was the son of Richard Walmesly Blair, a British agent working in India for the British government. He was born in India in 1903. A couple of years later, his parents returned to Great-Britain. The young Blair turned out to be a model student, which got him an invitation to join Eton. After his secondary education Blair decided to go and serve the Imperial Police and he ends up in the colony of Burma. The following years would turn out to be crucial in the development of Blair’s thinking, as Williams points out: “This [his stay in Burma] needs to be remembered and emphasized as we look at the next nine years of his life. For what these amounted to was the making of a new set of social relationships and the creation, in an important sense, of a new social identity. This is the crucial evolution of Blair into Orwell” (George Orwell 2-3).

The evolution Williams refers to occurred when Blair was confronted with the daily life in India. During his stay he witnessed how imperialism worked or, more accurately, how it did not work. Blair commented on these situations by saying that “Imperialism was an evil thing, and the sooner I chucked my job and got out of it the better” (Collected Essays I: 266). This situation would even lead him to say that he wanted to escape “not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants” (qtd. in Rodden 148). In 1927, during a short stay in England and sick and tired of everything he decided to resign and to start his career as a writer, something he had always been dreaming of.

Blair’s first steps as a writer were taken during several trips to London’s East End and later also to Paris. The notes that Blair takes on his journeys got written down in his novel Down and Out in Paris and London (1933). Given the fact that Blair was making a living as a private teacher at this point in time, he asked his agent, Leonard Moore, to let the novel appear under a pseudonym:
As to a pseudonym, a name I always use when tramping etc is P.S. Burton, but if you don’t think this sounds a probable kind of name, what about

Kenneth Miles

George Orwell

H. Lewis Allways

I rather favour George Orwell (Orwell Collected Essays I: 131).

And so the first novel got published in 1933 under the name of George Orwell. The name itself is a reference to the Orwell, a river in Suffolk, south of his parents’ home (Williams George Orwell 6).

Sometime later Orwell earned a living as a teacher at several schools but by January 1934 he got discharged and returned to his parents’ home. This would be the end of George Orwell’s teaching career. Later, he would move in with his aunt in London and find there a job in a book-seller’s shop, where he had mornings off to spend on his own writings. By this time, Orwell’s career as a writer and a journalist is gradually established, especially due to his articles on poverty and depression (Williams George Orwell 6). These themes also occurred in his next novel, The Road to Wigan Pier (1936), that turned out to be one of the first manifestations of Orwell’s political ideas:

For while the first part of the book is the kind of reporting that he had been asked for [by Victor Gollancz, his publisher] and that he could do so well, the second part is an essay on class and socialism that is effectively the first statement of Orwell’s basic political position. Repeating his opposition to imperialism and the class system, he now adds a commitment to socialist definitions of freedom and equality while at the same time attacking most forms of the organized socialist movement and especially various kinds of English middle-class socialists (Williams George Orwell 7).

Nineteen thirty-six would turn out to be a landmark in Orwell’s life, not because of the publication of Down and Out or of his marriage to Eileen O’Shaugnessy the same year but because of the international political tensions and their results. It is in July 1936 the Spanish Civil War broke out. Orwell made hasty arrangements to get to Spain as a reporter and by the end of the year he could be found in Barcelona. The influence of the war on Orwell, both as a person and as a writer was of paramount importance. Orwell got to Spain via a recommendation of the ILP (Independent Labour Party). At his arrival, he became a member of the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxist), a communist political party that he
fought for during several months until he was hit by a bullet in the throat. Orwell survived, but the incident would mean the end of his involvement in the Spanish conflict. While Orwell was recovering from his injury he noticed how the public support for the war was breaking down and the socialists were losing ground. Eventually the fascists triumphed over the communists. As in every war, the Spanish Civil War needed a scapegoat. Franco and his men declared the POUM illegal by June, just when Orwell was being dismissed from combat. Orwell and his wife slipped out of Spain as fast as they can to escape retaliations. The treachery of the Spanish government would leave a scar on Orwell which will never heal.

This experience of war and revolutionary politics hardened his position in several ways. It did not make him an anticommunist, since he had rejected Soviet-style communism as a possible commitment many years before. Yet is was mainly his direct experience of communist-POUM rivalry that sharpened his anticommunism to a positive position. At the same time he became, and remained for the next two or three years, a revolutionary socialist. *The Road to Wigan Pier* had been published in March 1937 while he was at the front. As soon as he returned from Spain, he began writing *Homage to Catalonia*, which completed his break with the orthodox Left (Williams George Orwell 8).

Orwell’s own political ideas may best be described as a form of “human socialism” or “democratic socialism”, which has its focus on the common man and how to improve life standards for everyone. In *The Lion and the Unicorn* Orwell’s main political points are given. It shows that Orwell is mainly concerned with the elimination of class-divisions and with freedom and equality for every human being. The pillars of Orwell’s socialism are: a nationalization of major industries, limitation of incomes, reform of the educational system, Dominion status for India, the Formation of an Imperial General Council with representation of coloured peoples and a declaration of formal alliance with all victims of Fascist Powers (J. Meyers 207-208; Hollis 134-135).

It difficult to really grasp what kind of socialist Orwell really is. His socialism is an “undoctrinal socialism” (Williams George Orwell 55). The way in which Orwell saw his own socialist label confirms that he has almost nothing to do with the Socialist Party of those days:

As he argued in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, the urgent duty of socialists – to make more people act like socialists – was being hindered by what seemed to him an alienated atmosphere and style. He thought of himself as an anti-imperialist and an antifascist, as a believer in equality, and only through these positions as a socialist (Williams George Orwell 54).
Orwell had indeed the most affinity with socialism, but his relationship with the Socialist Party will always be problematic. Both his experiences in Burma and Spain were crucial in the shaping of his political thoughts and would shine through in all his later works. The best way to summarize Orwell’s ideas is by one of his own quotes: “Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism, as I understand it” (qtd. in Rodden 70). By the time of his death in 1948, Orwell had established himself as one of the great political writers of his own days, giving a voice to socialist ideas without being hindered by party policies or doctrines.

3 Ideology

As mentioned in my introduction, the focus of this paper will be on the several ideologies in Orwell’s novels. I will especially investigate how the ideology in the novels influence their characters and I will be less concerned with Orwell’s own ideology, although it is impossible and often necessary to incorporate this in my study. Ideology in itself is a very fluid and heterogeneous concept. In using Williams’ definition I will try to get a grip on it somehow.

In his Keywords Williams describes ideology as “the set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests or, more broadly, from a definite class or group …” (156), and “… in each case … [it] is the system of ideas appropriate to that class. One ideology can be claimed as correct and progressive as against another ideology” (157). Some years before this, Williams had already written down a passage in which he makes two distinctions within the concept of ideology:

[T]he first level of difficulty is whether it is used to describe: (a) the formal and conscious beliefs of a class or other social group – as in the common usage of ‘ideological’ to indicate general principles or theoretical positions … or (b) the characteristic world-view or general perspective of a class or other social group, which will include formal and conscious beliefs, but also less conscious, less formulated attitudes, habits and feelings, or even unconscious assumptions, bearings and commitments (Culture 26).

In my research I am mostly concerned with ideology as the way in which groups try to pass on their ideals to the rest of the community. However, Orwell himself was eager to
investigate precisely all the different possibilities of ideological thinking, and so the more unconscious working of ideology will also be used, be it in a less exhaustive manner.

4 Manifold views on ideology: Down and Out in Paris and London

Down and Out in Paris and London (1933) recounts Orwell’s own experiences in both Paris and London where he has no money or real job but still has to survive. During these months Orwell is at the end of the social scale. This situation gives way to a novel in which ideology does not seem to matter. The one thing that becomes clear to Orwell is that when you need to worry about surviving, you do not bother to get your priorities right.

4.1 Paris

The book starts in Paris where Orwell is running short of money. Orwell’s main concerns involve getting through the day without starving and figuring out how to find money which brings him another couple of days without worries. It turns out that when he is nearly starving, he is willing to proclaim any ideology as long as it provides him with food or gets him a job. Orwell is therefore not at all reluctant when his friend Boris offers him the next proposal:

‘Tell me, mon ami, have you any political opinions?’
‘No, I said.’
‘Neither have I. Of course, one is always a patriot; but still – Did not Moses say something about spoiling the Egyptians? …’
What I mean is, would you object to earning money from Communists?’
‘No, of course not.’
‘Well, it appears that there is a Russian secret society in Paris who might do something for us. They are Communists …. They act as a friendly society…’
‘…they want some articles on English politics.’
‘Me? But I don’t know anything about politics.’
‘Merde! Neither do they. Who does know anything about politics? It’s easy. All you have to do is to copy it out of the English papers. Isn’t there a Paris Daily Mail? Copy it from that.
‘Well, say the opposite of what the Daily Mail says, then you can’t be wrong. We mustn’t throw this chance away, mon ami. It might mean hundreds of francs’ (Down and Out in Paris and London 44).

The communist organisation is depicted here as a group that is not as devoted to their ideological premises as one would take for granted. Boris says that it “acts as a friendly society” (emphasis mine). Although there is no obvious reason to assume that this is not the truth, we can easily read this as: “they pretend to be a friendly society”. That would make the communist society equal to Boris and Orwell. Both men have just agreed that they will behave as communists if that grants them money, no matter what they believe themselves. If the communist organisation only acts as communist, it would be just as fake as Boris and Orwell’s communist facade. This would then create two people feigning to live up to the communist principles in a formation that in itself is not a true communist institution.

‘They are Communists; in fact they are agents for the Bolsheviks. They act as a friendly society, get in touch with exiled Russians, and try to get them to turn Bolshevik. My friend has joined their society, and he thinks they would help us if we went to them.’ (Down and Out 44)

Boris states that the communist organisation tries to turn the Russians that they approach into Bolsheviks. Those people are urged to lay down their own views and beliefs, even when they were not even looking for such an opportunity in the first place and therefore are not seeking to adapt, let alone to overthrow their ways of thinking. So whereas Orwell and Boris seem to have no problems at all in choosing which ideology they support, these Russian exiles are strongly demanded to adapt themselves to the ideology as it is proposed by the communist association. Williams has also noted this enforcement of ideology: “Any governing body will seek to implant the ‘right ideas’ in the minds of those whom it governs …” (Culture and Society 301). He is even convinced that these “governing bodies” succeed most of the time: “It is now becoming clear, from all kinds of evidence, that a society can, if it chooses, train its members in almost any direction, with only an occasional failure” (Culture and Society 300). The communist organisation at any rate believes, like Williams, that they will be able to shape their members into the people they want them to be.

Another facet of ideology is conveyed through Orwell’s own remark that the police are looking for communists, and expatriating them whenever they get the chance:

I did not like the idea, for the Paris police are very hard on the Communists, especially if they are foreigners, and I was already under suspicion. Some months before, a detective had seen me come out of the office of a Communist weekly paper, and I had had a great deal of trouble
with the police. If they caught me going to this secret society, it might mean deportation.

However, the chance seemed too good to be missed (Down and Out 44-45).

Apparently there is no freedom of thought in the France of the 1930s. Whoever does not subject himself to the approved ways of thinking gets hunted down and expelled, which severely restricts and prohibits people to make their own decisions. Orwell even recounts how a detective had caught him leaving a communist office. In Paris it turns out that people would do best not to behave any different from the current ideology. If they do, they can actually be pursued and put into jail. In entering the building of the organisation Orwell and Boris even need a password as a safety measure: “Mot d’ordre!” he said sharply when I did not answer. I stopped, startled. I had not expected passwords. ‘Mot d’ordre!’ repeated the Russian” (Down and Out 45). The threat of jail and the extreme security matters that are taken prove that having the wrong political views can be a really dangerous business.

In Paris we seem to get diverse views towards ideology. First Orwell suggests that ideology is not even a point for people living under the circumstances he does. They adapt their political views whenever it is necessary. However, after a while it turns out that Orwell can get imprisoned or deported for having the wrong political views, which indicates that ideology is nevertheless important in France. Paris in the 1930s is a place of intense extremes, where one is not allowed to express one’s political thoughts if they run counter to the general political beliefs.

4.2 London

After eighteen months of adventures in the streets of Paris, Orwell desperately feels the need to return to England to get a more decent occupation than being the “plongeur” in a French restaurant and working for seventeen hours a day. He writes to his friend B. enquiring if he cannot find him a job: “anything, so long as it allowed me more than five hours sleep” (Down and Out 113). A short time later, we find Orwell in a third-class cabin of the train to London. He is hired “to look after a congenital imbecile” (Down and Out 116), which seems like a dream to Orwell compared to the hard labour he has been engaged in during the previous months in Paris.

Arriving in London, Orwell discovers that his job is not yet vacant and that he will have to survive for another month in the streets of London. In trying to get away from the coarse life in Paris, he ends up in exactly the same situation, only in another capital. Not only
the similarities of both the situations are palpable, his opinions on ideology have also not changed. After a couple of days we find Orwell in a conversation with an Irishman he has met on the streets:

At about five the Irishman said, ‘Could you do wid a cup o’ tay? De spike don’t open till six.’

‘Well, dere’s a place here where dey gives you a free cup a’ tay and a bun. Good tay it is. Dey makes you say a lot o’ bloody prayers after; but hell! It all passes de time away. You come wid me.’ …

The lady handed out the tea, and while we ate and drank she moved to and fro, talking benignly. She talked upon religious subjects – about Jesus Christ always having a soft spot for poor rough men like us, and about how quickly the time passed when you were in church, and what a difference it made to a man on the road if he said his prayers regularly. We hated it. We sat against the wall fingering our caps (a tramp feels indecently exposed with his cap off), and turning pink and trying to mumble something when the lady addressed us. There was no doubt that she meant it all kindly. As she came up to one of the north country lads with the plate of buns, she said to him:

‘And you, my boy, how long is it since you knelt down and spoke with your Father in Heaven?’ (Down and Out 141-142)

Roughly, two opposing ideological standpoints are presented here. But when we get a closer look things are not as simple as we would assume. First of all, the Christian lady makes a comment on how Jesus Christ always had a soft spot for rough men like them (Down and Out 142), which is a very demanding mindset, since we are talking here about people who barely know how to survive, and who have to go to church just in order to get some beverage. But the woman’s profound trust in the Bible leaves no room for other opinions. Her only goal is to convey her beliefs. The woman is described as being very benign, but also as a person who threatens the tramps that regular praying does mean a great difference in your life. She presupposes that the people attending the service are not behaving according to the Christian faith. The lady’s service is considered to be a form of charity, which Williams describes as follows:

But the predominant use of charity was in the context of the Bible. … Charity was then Christian love, between man and God, between men and their neighbours. The sense of benevolence to neighbours, and specifically of gifts to the needy, is equally early. … Nevertheless, charity in the predominant sense of help to the needy came through steadily; …
A charity as an institution was established by 1C17\(^2\). These senses have of course persisted (Keywords 54).

The lady’s work is definitely in the wake of the Christian faith, but her stress on praying instead of just helping out the less fortunate is disputed. She focuses so much on the conversion of her people that she loses herself in the Christian ideology instead of acting in a more down-to-earth way and taking care of those who need it.

While the charity lady is really making an effort to get to her audience, the tramps are not exactly interested in what she has to proclaim. They spend their time fingerling their caps, and attempting to keep on mumbling during the prayers. Overall, the vagrants feel terribly out of place in the pavilion, for two distinct reasons. For tramps, going to a charity organisation is not an easily made decision. It forces them to admit that they need help. “It is true that this [taking charity] includes an independent feeling against being helped by others, but the odium which has gathered around charity in this context comes from feelings of wounded self-respect and dignity which belong, historically, to the interaction of charity and class-feelings, on both sides of the act” (Williams Keywords 55).

The tramps do not only feel uncomfortable because of the charity they have to apply for. They also feel totally out-of-place within this Christian atmosphere. The ideology of the charity organization runs completely counter to their own ideals. In trying to deal with this somehow, the tramps figure out several ways to ridicule the whole ceremony:

The red-nosed man was very helpful, pulling the harmonium into place and handing out the prayer-books. His back was to the lady as he did this, and it was his idea of a joke to deal the books like a pack of cards, whispering to each man as he did so, ‘There y’are, mate, ther’s a f— nap ’and for yer! Four aces and a king!’ etc.

Bareheaded, we knelt down among the dirty teacups and began to mumble that we had left undone those things that we ought to have done, and done those things that we ought not to have done, and there was no health in us. … When she [the lady] was not looking we grinned and winked at one another, and whispered bawdy jokes, just to show that we did not care; but it stuck in our throats a little …

The prayers lasted half an hour, and then, after a handshake at the door, we made off. ‘Well,’ said somebody as soon as we were out of hearing, ‘the trouble’s over. I thought them f — prayers were never goin’ to end.’ (Down and Out 142-143)

\(^2\) 1C17: late seventeenth century
The zeal of the charity lady stands in opposition to the tramps who are participating in the celebration without feeling any connection to the themes or ideology put forward. “We hated it.”, is the first of Orwell’s remarks, leaving no room for any interpretation. The only reason they are all sitting there is because they want the tea so badly, and if they have to say a few prayers to get it, then so be it. The “bloody prayers” are an irritation, but there is no way out of it. During the prayers all sorts of pastimes are fabricated: they wink and grime, they tell jokes, the guy handing out the prayer-books even presents the whole event as a card game. The tramps all seem like a group of children playing games in order to pass away the tiresome hours. Several vagabonds even try to find a way out of the building before the prayers start because they feel utterly trapped by the ideological purposes of the gathering:

Tea ended, and I saw the tramps looking furtively at one another. An unspoken thought was running from man to man – could we possibly make off before the prayers started? Someone stirred in his chair – not getting up actually, but with just a glance at the door, as though half suggesting the idea of departure. The lady quelled him with one look. She said in a more benign tone than ever:

‘I don’t think you need go quite yet.’ (Down and Out 141-142)

The problem is not so much the prayers, it is what the prayers symbolize: a compliance to a way of thinking that does not correspond to their own. In order to survive, the tramps are almost forced to believe in certain things. As if only Christians would have the right to be fed. And by leaving the vagabonds no choice but to believe, the charity organization turns them all against itself. “[J]ust to show that we did not care”, is the comment that says it all. The tramps deliberately put down the ideology presented to them, not because they are thoroughly opposed to it, but because they are forced to believe in it. Tramps maybe need food or a sleeping place, but this does not mean that you can impose your ideology on them just like that. Since they are also free men, they will ultimately insist on their own freedom of thought.

Then again, the whole situation gnaws at them. They are pulled back and forth between the respect and gratefulness for their tea on the one hand and their aversion to the ideological part of the gathering on the other, leading to an ambiguous feeling towards the situation. The lady leading the prayers is described several times as kindly and benign. At the end of the ceremony, Orwell is stuck with the uncomfortable feeling that he is not showing enough respect for all the work the people have done for them: “When she was not
looking we grinned and winked at one another …, but it stuck in our throats a little” (Down and Out 143).

Once more we can recognize that a complex attitude towards ideology is the one that prevails. When Orwell and his fellow tramps need to survive, an ideology is the least of their worries, but one way or another they always get to a point when they are forced into the open.

In Down and Out in Paris and London Orwell gives us a rather heterogeneous pallet of approaches to ideology. On the one hand we come to think that ideology is the least of your worries when you have no food or money. The idea is that you just change your ideology according to the circumstances you happen to be in at that moment. But on the other hand, especially in his account of Paris, you really have to keep your eyes open in order not to land in prison for engaging in illegal practices only by visiting a certain political office. Ideology is thus a life-saving or life-threatening business according to the side you are on.

Down and Out in Paris and London already foreshadows Orwell’s pessimistic view on both religious organizations and the government’s power who want to control not only your behaviour, but your thoughts as well. The theme of government control will predominate in a lot of Orwell’s later works, but at this point his veritable disillusionment with the government still has to take place.

5  A shocking experience: Homage to Catalonia

Five years after the release of Down and Out, Orwell publishes another famous novel. Homage to Catalonia (1938) is a clearer attack on the political system than Down and Out in Paris and London and it leaves the audience almost dazed upon reading Orwell’s personal experiences during the Civil War in Spain. Ideology is a major topic in this novel. First of all, Orwell goes to Spain, after the war has already started. He deliberately wants to be part of this political tumult because it fascinates him. But although he fights for ideals that he thought were very close to his own ones, he also gives us the impression that he barely knew what was actually going on there beforehand, which is rather paradoxical. Hollis notes that “Orwell first went to Spain knowing nothing of Spanish affairs in particular but anxious to play a part in what appeared to him to be the first active resistance to the challenge of bestial tyranny which was imposing itself on the world” (104). Secondly, being in a civil war and reporting on it evidently results in a novel about politics and ideologies in which Orwell
seems eager to show the most objective and truthful account possible. However, Orwell is of course part of the whole system himself, which makes a neutral account of the war next to impossible.

5.1 Orwell’s original ideology

Following the chronology of the events, rather than the one of the book, we find first of all an attempt by Orwell to describe why he actually does come to Spain:

When I came to Spain, and for some time afterwards, I was not only uninterested in the political situation but unaware of it. I knew there was a war on, but I had no notion what kind of war. If you had asked me why I had joined the militia I should have answered: ‘To fight against Fascism,’ and if you had asked me what I was fighting for, I should have answered: ‘Common decency.’ I had accepted the News Chronicle–New Statesman version of the war as the defence of civilization against a maniacal outbreak by an army of Colonel Blimps in the pay of Hitler. The revolutionary atmosphere of Barcelona had attracted me deeply, but I had made no attempt to understand it. (Homage to Catalonia 197)

Orwell gives the impression that it is the last thing on his mind to actually take part in this civil war. Orwell is “not only uninterested in the political situation, but unaware of it”. His indifference to the politics turns out to be a real deficit during the first weeks of his stay there, given the extremely complex situation Spain happens out to be in. Moreover, Orwell went to Spain as a reporter (V. Meyers 15; Williams George Orwell 53), of which one might expect that he does some research on his topic instead of just seeing how things will work out the moment he gets there. Jeffrey Meyers even doubts whether Orwell had real plans to work as a journalist: “Orwell tried to reassure his wife, family and friends by telling them that he was going to Spain as an observer and journalist, but he always intended to fight” (140). And Orwell does fight, until the war is over. This all leads to an odd situation in which someone decides to fight, but does not care what is actually going on there.

On the whole, Orwell’s notion of the war was beyond doubt insufficient to engage in such an adventure, notwithstanding that it might actually cost him his life. Orwell seems to fight on the premise that it is for the sake of “common decency”, in itself a very noble thought, but hardly satisfactory as an ideology. His answer to the question “What are you fighting against?”, is more acceptable. Fighting fascism can in itself be reason enough to
participate in the war. In fact, although Orwell’s essays had by then shown that he was in favour of a socialist policy, a major amendment in his ideological views is yet about to occur. If there is one thing Catalonia convinces him of, it is which ideologies he approves of and which ones are unacceptable to him. Burma, Paris and London were all influential in their own way, but no experience will bring about such a clear alteration in Orwell’s ideology as those six months he spends in Catalonia (Williams George Orwell 56).

Because of this insufficient awareness of the Spanish political spectrum, the situation bewilders Orwell at first. He only notices how he gets completely lost in the initials of all those several parties:

As for the kaleidoscope of political parties and trade unions, with their tiresome names – P S U C, P O U M, F A I, C N T, U G T, J C I, J S U, A I T – they merely exasperated me. It looked at first sight as though Spain was suffering from a plague of initials. I knew that I was serving in something called the P O U M (I had only joined the P O U M militia rather than any other because I happened to arrive in Barcelona with I L P papers), but I did not realize that there were serious differences between the political parties. At Monte Pocero, when they pointed to the position on our left and said: ‘Those are the Socialists’ (meaning the P S U C), I was puzzled and said: ‘Aren’t we all Socialists?’ I thought it idiotic that people fighting for their lives should have separate parties; my attitude always was, ‘Why can’t we drop all this political nonsense and get on with the war?’ This of course was the correct ‘anti-Fascist’ attitude … (H to C 197-98).

Again Orwell gives the impression that the range of political parties is not really significant to him. He was serving in the POUM, O.K., but that specific faction does not represent anything for him. He literally says that it was just a coincidence. If he had found another way of getting into Spain, then he probably would not have served in the POUM militia and that would have been the end of it. It is striking that he responds to the party labels with “Aren’t we all socialists?”, which corresponds to Williams’ comments of Orwell’s political views:

For still, as he said, fighting where he could be most useful was his primary concern; the shades of political doctrine were at best secondary. Indeed, “as far as my purely personal preferences went I would have liked to join the Anarchists,” but serving on the most critical front came first.

These details are important, both for the record (which has become very confused) and for the clear impression they give of Orwell’s undoctrinal socialism (George Orwell 54-55, emphasis mine).

In any case, whatever Orwell’s own ideological premises may be, he fails to grasp, more than anything else, that to the Spaniards these factions do mean something. He cannot see beyond his own ideology, mainly that at that point in battle, the real appropriate response
to the war is to unite in a one-for-all battle against fascism, and to overlook the “small” ideological discrepancies. Some months later, when the POUM gets declared illegal, he will understand the importance of all these factions. As a sort of afterthought, Orwell writes:

Everyone, however unwillingly, took sides sooner or later. For even if one cared nothing for the political parties and their conflicting ‘lines’, it was too obvious that one’s own destiny was involved. As a militiaman one was a soldier against Franco, but one was also a pawn in an enormous struggle that was being fought out between two political theories. When I scrounged firewood on the mountain-side and wondered whether this was really a war or whether the News Chronicle had made it up, when I dodged the Communist machineguns in the Barcelona riots, when I finally fled from Spain with the police one jump behind me – all these things happened to me in that particular way because I was serving in the P O U M militia and not in the P S U C. So great is the difference between two sets of initials (H to C 198).

Orwell leaves for Spain with a vague socialist ideal, his only goal being to defeat fascism. On his arrival he is mostly unaware of the precise situation in Spain itself, which leads to some astonishing findings in the first few weeks of his stay. Although he never fully understands the Spanish politics, he is very determined to fight fascism. Everything else is unimportant. But Spain will not turn out to be as simple as that, not only because the extraordinary number of factions that Orwell comes across but also because of the political twists and transformations within the governmental policies, which Orwell is about to witness.

5.2 Impact of the Catalanian ideology

As an Englishman arriving in Spain, the first thing Orwell notices is the innocence and simplicity of the Spanish citizens:

To anyone from the hard-boiled, sneering civilization of the English-speaking races there was something rather pathetic in the literalness with which these idealistic Spaniards took the hackneyed phrases of revolution. At that time revolutionary ballads of the naifest kind, all about proletarian brotherhood and the wickedness of Mussolini, were being sold on the streets for a few centimes each. I have often seen an illiterate militiaman buy one of these ballads, laboriously spell out the words, and then, when he had got the hang of it, begin singing it to an appropriate tune (H to C 4-5).

These sorts of proletarians, simple human beings not aware of what is actually going on and not worrying about the situation, also reoccurs in Orwell’s later description of the proles in Nineteen Eighty-Four:
Down in the yard the red-armed woman was still marching to and fro between the washtub and the line. She took two more pegs out of her mouth and sang with deep feeling:

They sye that time 'eals all things,
They sye you can always forget;
But the smiles an’ the tears across the years
They twist my 'eart-strings yet!

… One had the feeling that she would have been perfectly content, if the June evening had been endless and the supply of clothes inexhaustible, to remain there for a thousand years, pegging out diapers and singing rubbish (Nineteen Eighty-Four 148).

Upon his arrival in Spain, Orwell has a vague opinion on the Spanish War, based on the opinions he found in the English newspapers. At first, the ideological spirit of the Spanish amazes him: “In theory at any rate each militia was a democracy and not a hierarchy. It was understood that orders had to be obeyed, but it was also understood that when you gave an order you gave it as comrade to comrade and not as superior to inferior” (H to C 28). There is even a sort of disdain about paying too much respect to your officers:

The lieutenant who instructed us was a stout, fresh-faced, pleasant young man who had previously been a Regular Army officer, and still looked like one, with his smart carriage and spick-and-span uniform. Curiously enough he was a sincere and ardent Socialist. Even more than the men themselves he insisted upon complete social equality between all ranks. I remember his pained surprise when an ignorant recruit addressed him as ‘Señor’. ‘What! Señor! Who is calling me Señor? Are we not all comrades?’ (H to C 8)

The Spanish Civil War is first and foremost a political and ideological war. The ideology prevails over tactics and strategy. Orwell finds it very noble to wage a war in this way, but he has some clear doubts about the feasibility of the whole situation. To him the most important thing is that Franco is defeated in the end. According to Orwell, the main concern now is to wage a war and to be triumphant and so he is afraid that the extreme emphasis on the socialist ideology will eventually cost them the victory instead of gaining it.

Orwell’s overall first impressions of the warfare are not very optimistic. Although he immediately sympathizes with the ideological spirit of the Spanish, he thinks it impossible to actually overthrow a dictator in this fashion. In his later novels Orwell will scrutinize the various functions of an ideological revolution. As for now, Orwell can conclude after some months in the trenches that the war is still not lost, that the socialist army is still standing, and more importantly, that an army based purely on ideological premises can bring about a substantial change:

Up here in Aragón one was among tens of thousands of people, mainly though not entirely of working-class origin, all living at the same level and mingling on terms of equality. In theory it was perfect equality, and even in practice it was not far from it. There is a sense in which it
would be true to say that one was experiencing a foretaste of Socialism, by which I mean the prevailing mental atmosphere was that of Socialism. Many of the normal motives of civilized life – snobbishness, money-grubbing, fear of the boss, etc. – had simply ceased to exist. The ordinary class-division of society had disappeared to an extent that is almost unthinkable in the money-tainted air of England; there was no one there except the peasants and ourselves, and no one owned anyone else as his master. Of course such a state of affairs could not last. It was simply a temporary and local phase in an enormous game that is being played over the whole surface of the earth. But it lasted long enough to have its effect upon anyone who experienced it. However much one cursed at the time, one realized afterwards that one had been in contact with something strange and valuable. One had been in a community where hope was more normal than apathy or cynicism, where the word ‘comrade’ stood for comradeship and not, as in most countries, for humbug. One had breathed the air of equality (H to C 87-88).

Equality is of course the keyword in Orwell’s discourse. But what is fascinating is that the equality in the trenches is not just a concept, it is a fact. It almost seems as if Orwell himself cannot believe that such a situation can come into existence, let alone that it can last for several months (“one realized that one had been in contact with something strange and valuable”). But in reality the equality in Catalonia is indeed as good as flawless. As a result, the democratic militias function extremely well. Privileges and boot-licking do not even seem to exist, which is a peculiar thing given the harsh circumstances that everyone has to live in, and your comrades are seen as real comrades, equal to you, whom you respect and obey and whom you never put down. The Spanish trenches become an example of a classless society, and thus prove that somehow a classless social order can actually work. The moment of this comprehension was crucial in the development of Orwell’s thinking. He wrote in a letter afterwards: “I have seen wonderful things and at last really believe in Socialism, which I never did before” (Collected Essays I: 301).

And Orwell apparently is not the only one who has felt this great bond between the soldiers. He explicitly says that the whole situation affected everyone. It seems to be an action-reaction chain. The militia is made up by people who fight for an ideology, therefore the ideology is more apparent with them than it would be when there is forced enlistment (H to C 29). Due to this the few people who still have their doubts are pulled on board by the enthusiasm of all the others and so in the end everybody is convinced of the usefulness of their fighting. This makes the militia prepared to fight until all is lost, purely on an ideological basis. Ideology here proves to work as a unifying force which lays the foundations of hope in the outcome of the war. Or as Orwell himself wrote: “One had been in a community where hope was more normal than apathy or cynicism” (H to C 88) which leads to an atmosphere “in which it would be true to say that one was experiencing a foretaste of
Socialism, by which I mean the prevailing mental atmosphere was that of Socialism” (H to C 87).

But even this adoration of the socialist comrade has a downside. Orwell presents the situation as if socialism was the accidental result of people who happened to have similar views on the world: “However much one cursed at the time, one realized afterwards that one had been in contact with something strange and valuable” (87-88, emphasis mine). In a similar way, he also concludes that the Spanish would have made “even the opening stages of Socialism tolerable” (H to C 88), which does not exactly expose a very enthusiastic defence of socialism and always remains a bit of a meagre conclusion to lyrical passage that precedes it.

Orwell always holds a big stick by pointing out not only that everything happened in a sort of subconscious way, but that everything was doomed to go on the blink. “Of course such a state of affairs could not last”, he writes. Why not? If everybody was convinced that they were fighting for the right reasons, then why should it not be able to succeed? All the time there is the praise of equality, of the working together and of the classless atmosphere and not once is it suggested that some crucial factor is still missing. Maybe the only reason why Orwell included this, is because in the end it did collapse. However, from the lines itself no clear explanation can be derived.

I am well aware that it is now the fashion to deny that Socialism has anything to do with equality. In every country in the world a huge tribe of party-hacks and sleek little professors are busy ‘proving’ that Socialism means no more than a planned state-capitalism with the grab-motive left intact. But fortunately there also exists a vision of Socialism quite different from this. The thing that attracts ordinary men to Socialism and makes them willing to risk their skins for it, the ‘mystique’ of Socialism, is the idea of equality; to the vast majority of people Socialism means a classless society, or it means nothing at all. And it was here that those few months in the militia were valuable to me. For the Spanish militias, while they lasted, were a sort of microcosm of a classless society. In that community where no one was on the make, where there was a shortage of everything but no privilege and no boot-licking, one got, perhaps, a crude forecast of what the opening stages of Socialism might be like. And, after all, instead of disillusioning me it deeply attracted me. The effect was to make my desire to see Socialism established much more actual than it had been before. Partly perhaps, this was due to the good luck of being among Spaniards, who, with their innate decency and their ever-present Anarchist tinge, would make even the opening stages of Socialism tolerable if they had the chance (H to C 88).

In Orwell’s opinion, there are at least two kinds of socialism. On the one hand, there is the socialism that is common in most countries, a sort of covered up capitalism that is in no
way better than any other political doctrine. But apart from that, a form of “real” idealistic socialism exists, and it is this one that Orwell is confronted with in Spain. This second form of socialism has as its basis the revolutionary spirit of a people who comprehend “the mystique of Socialism” and who are willing to risk their lives for their ideals. And exactly this form of socialism is what Orwell will proclaim for the rest of his life, trying to make people see the differences between different political systems and even between parties who operate under the same wide-ranging flag of a vast ideology.

Obviously, the state of affairs will have been more complicated than the picture we get here. In every situation there are pros and contras and Orwell always tries to foresee all of them. But even he is determined by his own views and his own position. Orwell gives the impression that the trenches were a foretaste of socialism, and we have no doubt that it was. Next to Orwell’s own hesitations about the successful outcome of the war, we must also keep in mind that Orwell’s situation is unique. All the people surrounding him are men or women who share the same beliefs as he does, which means that it is not very difficult to create a socialist society in the trenches. But if a real socialist community would come into existence, a considerable group of people would disagree with the doctrine and resist it. Up to a certain point Orwell’s own situation is of course real, but to expand this form of living to a whole society would certainly bring about opposition.

There is one thing that the trenches will make clear to Orwell, mainly that it is technically possible for a socialist society to exist and to function. After putting aside his prejudices and doubts about the “revolutionary” discipline which guides the Spanish socialists, Orwell becomes completely convinced of the value of socialism. He sometimes gives the impression of forgetting how idealistic his situation is, but Orwell also frequently sees through several idealistic daydreams. Being in the trenches with other socialists makes Orwell into a convinced “revolutionary socialist” (Williams George Orwell 56). But just as Orwell has found his firm belief in socialism, the government splinters his ideals.

5.3 Results

After three and a half months Orwell is sent on leave. On his return to Barcelona he senses that things have changed: “The revolutionary forms of speech were dropping out of use. Strangers seldom addressed you as tú and camarada nowadays; it was usually señor and Usted ” (H to C 99). Although the fighting still continues, the revolution seems to have
ceased in the spirits of the people. In this weird situation Orwell is aware that the revolution
might not turn out the way they planned it. Instead of fighting fascism, the socialist factions
start attacking each other’s buildings. “I had heard it said so often that all the rival parties,
*P S U C, P O U M and C N T – F A I alike*, were hoarding arms in Barcelona, that I could not
believe that two of the principal POUM buildings contained only the fifty or sixty rifles that I
had seen” (H to C 111, emphasis mine). But that is not even the worst thing going on:

That evening we heard that on the Plaza de España four hundred Assault Guards had
surrendered and handed their arms to the Anarchists; also the news was vaguely filtering
through that in the suburbs (mainly the working-class quarters) the C N T were in control. It
looked as though we were winning. But the same evening Kopp sent for me and, with a grave
face, told me that according to information he had just received the Government was about to
declare a state of war upon it (H to C 124).

Orwell immediately understands how dangerous this situation is, and what it can mean
to himself and his faction. If the government declares the POUM to be illicit, great troubles
are ahead:

The news gave me a shock. It was the first glimpse I had had of the interpretation that was
likely to be put on this affair later on. I dimly foresaw that when the fighting ended the entire
blame would be laid upon the P O U M, which was the weakest party and therefore the most
suitable scapegoat. And meanwhile our local neutrality was at an end. If the Government
declared war upon us we had no choice but to defend ourselves, and here at the Executive
building we could be certain that the Assault Guards next door would get orders to attack us.
Our only chance was to attack them first. Kopp was waiting for orders on the telephone; if we
heard definitely that the P O U M was outlawed we must make preparations at once to seize the
Café Moka (H to C 124).

To keep the situation in hand, the government has to take action and most probably
they will put the blame on one of these groups. Although Orwell realizes what is happening,
the whole situation goes above his head: the government will declare the POUM the enemy,
whereas they have been fighting side by side for months. They are the price the government
will have to pay in order to keep piece and quietness under the people. Moreover the POUM
will have to give up its neutrality, which puts them in a perilous situation.

First of all the POUM will have to betray their own lines, by which they will no longer
be on solid ground. If they are forced to defend themselves, the other governmental parties
will have to attack them – for they will have broken the alliance – which will place them in a
problematic position from which no turning back is possible. And second of all, if they want
to save their own lives, they will have to attack the governmental forces first, which in turn
gives the government all the more reason to open fire on the POUM.
Throughout, Orwell speaks in guarded language. The notion that Orwell only “dimly foresaw” what would happen, makes it clear that the whole situation was a very turbulent one, and that no-one at that time could predict what the situation would be like a few days later. Furthermore, Orwell says he could foresee the interpretation. Since an interpretation is always a subjective act, it also makes us doubt whether or not the decision of the government can be justified, let alone if it is in line with the party ideology. The point is of course that it is not. If the government carries out what Orwell predicts, it will postpone its ideological premises in order to save its skin. And by the indication that it was Orwell’s “first glimpse” of the government’s change, we can safely conclude that abandoning their original allies and not recognizing the correspondences in their ideologies is exactly what will happen.

After the uproar in Barcelona it is hard for Orwell to “think about this war in quite the same naively idealistic manner as before” (H to C 138). The fiery enthusiasm which had filled him only a couple of months before, has been completely extinguished. But somehow things seem to have settled down more or less and we find Orwell back at the front fighting fascists instead of socialists. Unfortunately, Orwell gets shot in the neck and has to leave the lines head-over-heels. Unsuitable to fight any longer Orwell travels around the country in order to get his papers so he can leave. Upon his arrival back home things have changed drastically: “When I got to the hotel my wife was sitting in the lounge. She got up and came towards me in what struck me as a very unconcerned manner; then she put an arm around my neck and, with a sweet smile for the benefit of the other people in the lounge, hissed in my ear: ‘Get out!’” (H to C 165).

During Orwell’s absence, the POUM has been declared illegal3. From this moment on the Spanish government, for whom Orwell has risked his life, even caught a bullet and lost his voice, has declared him a traitor. At first, Orwell is so stunned that he cannot get a grip on the whole situation. When Kopp told Orwell about the possibility of being declared illegal, Orwell was capable of analysing the whole situation. Now his attempts to see everything through come to nothing: “It was all profoundly dismaying. What the devil was it all about?” (H to C 167)

That the current situation is now “dismaying”, is even an understatement. By and large, Orwell is really trying to understand what is going on. But Williams points out that he can never know: “All Orwell knew, and could know, was that the ragged men back from the

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3 The whole situation eventually did not turn out to be so accidental as it appeared to Orwell back then. Stalin had ordered the communist leaders in Catalonia, long before Orwell decided to go and fight there, to destroy the POUM (J. Meyers 161).
front, in this again class-divided city, were being rounded up by guards and police in the name of the struggle against fascism” (Williams George Orwell 59). Orwell was not at all interested in politics when he first put foot on Spanish soil, but now he is desperate to get to the bottom of the ideological twist that has occurred within the communist party:

I could understand their suppressing the P O U M, but what were they arresting people for? For nothing, as far as one could discover. Apparently the suppression of the P O U M had a retrospective effect; the P O U M was now illegal, therefore one was breaking the law by having previously belonged to it (H to C 167).

Orwell will never come to understand why exactly it was that the POUM had to be declared illegal overnight. The experience would leave a scar that was never likely to heal (Williams George Orwell 59).

The treachery that Orwell comes across in Catalonia is the real disillusion of his Spanish experience. But as long as he is on Spanish soil, Orwell is not given an actual chance to ponder on the consequences it bears for him and his wife. After the POUM has been declared illegal, both Orwell and his wife are wanted by the police and the only thing that counts is to get out of Spain as soon as possible. After crossing the border with France, Orwell is left somewhat bewildered. “The things we had seen in Spain did not recede and fall into proportion now that we were away from them; instead they rushed back upon us and were far more vivid than before” (H to C 194). And even when writing everything down several months later, Orwell has to acknowledge: “I have recorded some of the outward events, but I cannot record the feeling they have left me with. It is all mixed up with sights, smells, and sounds that cannot be conveyed through writing …” (H to C 194).

If there is one event that determines Orwell’s ideology, it is definitely these months he spends in Spain. They have a double effect on him. For one, he experiences what he describes as “a foretaste of Socialism” (H to C 87), which will strengthen him in his socialist beliefs: “Curiously enough the whole experience has left me with not less but more belief in the decency of human beings” (H to C 195). But next to that Catalonia is undeniably the biggest shock and disillusion Orwell ever experienced. “I think the other condition of Orwell’s later works was they had to be written by an ex-socialist. It also had to be someone who shared the general discouragement of the generation: an ex-socialist who had become an enthusiast for capitalism could not have had the same effect” (Williams Politics and Letters, 390, emphasis mine). Due to these experiences Homage to Catalonia forms a break in Orwell’s novels. Up till then his socialist feelings were always apparent, but Spain will both
hone and destroy them. In his last two important novels, Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four, this will be depicted clearly.

The influence of Catalonia on Orwell is analysed in contradictory ways by different critics. To Williams it is wrong to bluntly assume that Orwell’s experiences in Spain made him the bitter and cynical person his later novels convey:

These direct anticipations of Nineteen Eighty-Four are primarily responses to fascism, and the “re-institution of slavery,” which he also sees happening, is based on the Nazi labor camps. Nothing could be more false than the quite general idea that Orwell returned from Spain a disillusioned socialist, who then gave his energy to warnings against a totalitarian socialist future (George Orwell 61).

Jeffrey Meyers in turn shows us an opposite view when he sums up what the Spanish Civil War meant for Orwell’s political developments:

Orwell’s half-year in Spain was the most important experience of his life. It deepened his understanding of politics and sharpened his hostility to Catholics and Communists. The bitter experience intensified his commitment to Socialism, inspired his finest book, Homage to Catalonia, and pointed the way toward his last and most influential political works…. Spain left a spiritual wound much greater than the sniper’s bullet. When he returned to England he was, for all his courage, depressed about the future, gloomier than ever and profoundly sceptical about the nature of political activity (J. Meyers 170).

Camus draws a similar conclusion: “It was in Spain that men learned that one can be right and yet be beaten, that force can vanquish spirit, that there are times when courage can be right and yet be beaten, that force can vanquish spirit, that there are times when courage is not its own recompense” (Benson 302).

“Yet tracing the real development is difficult” (George Orwell 61), is Williams’ conclusion to his own analysis. The truth is undoubtedly somewhere in-between Williams’ and Meyers’ views. Orwell himself states in The Communist International:

If the problems of western capitalism are to be solved, it will have to be through a third alternative, a movement which is genuinely revolutionary, i.e. willing to make drastic changes and to use violence if necessary, but which does not lose touch, as Communism and Fascism have done, with the essential values of democracy (Collected Essays I: 388).

Orwell here expresses his support of a revolutionary socialism, as well as his disappointment in the organized political parties. Fascism and communism are looked upon negatively, only the true people’s revolution can bring hope. In all, I think it is fair to state that Homage to Catalonia depicts how Orwell’s belief in socialism as a revolutionary form which arises out of the action of the common man, is firmly instituted thanks to those months in the trenches. But the betrayal and suppression of the POUM by the Spanish government
makes Orwell hostile towards all organized totalitarian policy. His further novels will show how pure revolutions by idealistic common people get crushed down under totalitarian regimes led by a small fraudulent group of people.

6 How things can turn out wrong: Animal Farm

Although Spain both encouraged and disenchanted Orwell, we must note that in his last novels, any belief in, and enthusiasm for ideological causes takes a knock. The hope for ideological change is now abandoned. Animal Farm (1945) and Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) differ from the previous novels not only in their different view on ideology, but also in their purely fictional character and because they are not written from a first person viewpoint. This makes it possible for Orwell to take his ideological writing one step further and explore the effects and risks of totalitarian regimes. It feels like Orwell is trying to figure out how much worse than Catalonia the situation can actually get. Animal Farm will become Orwell’s most important analysis of political systems: “Animal Farm is unique in Orwell’s writing by the absence of an Orwell figure. It is in this sense a more complete projection of his way of seeing the world than anything else he wrote” (Williams George Orwell 70). Because Orwell writes this novel as a comment on the Russian situation of that time, I will first give a brief overview of the Russian Revolution.

6.1 The Russian Revolution

By the end of the 19th century, Russia was being ruled by the tsarist regime. Tsar Nicolas II had brought famine and war to Russia and the people were no longer supporting him. This led to the Russian Revolution, which consisted of two phases. The first stage started with the mutiny of the army, on 11 March 1917, followed by a mass revolt by the people. On 12 March the workers went onto the streets and strikes paralysed the economy. Some days later tsar Nicolas II resigned and Alexander Kerenski, head of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP) became the new leader. This revolt is now known as the February-revolution.

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4 The Russians still used the Julian calendar at that time. For the Russians it was still February, whereas according to the West-European calculation the revolution happened in March.
A new regime got installed under the name “The Regime of Dual Power”, in which the power was shared by the Temporary Committee of the Duma and the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. “The Soviet accepted the Provisional Government, on the condition that it acted in ways consistent with the democratic transformation of the country, and created its own commission to monitor its actions” (Kowalski 47). Soon tensions arose between the two committees and Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Party, saw that the people needed a firm government to rely on.

Lenin knew the Provisional Government was weak and he set up a plan to overthrow them. At that time Trotsky, Lenin’s right-hand, was chairman of the Soviet of Petrograd, which gave them a vast advantage to execute their plan. Lenin organised a coup on the Second Congress of the Soviets, which at the same time bestowed military and parliamentary power onto Lenin. The October-Revolution on 25 October 1917 put Lenin in charge of the whole country. From that moment on he was the undisputed leader of Russia.

Lenin’s political doctrine was based on socialism and communism. For Lenin these were two subsequent stages in his major political plan:

In contrast to Marx, Lenin concluded from this that under socialism the state could not yet completely die out. It would have to remain in force in order to check up on the just distribution of goods according to performance. In the second stage of “complete” communism, another principle would be in force: “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs,” i.e. goods would be distributed freely (Van Ree 80-81).

Lenin’s outlook quickly changed. He became an authoritarian politician and saw himself as the great political leader. Under his command there came a militarisation of Soviet politics and problems or opposition were resolved by force. Every organisation was brought under state control and fear and terror came into being. On the whole, “the Left was as wedded to the idea of partiinost’ (party spirit, implying belief in its leading role) as Lenin” (Kowalski 247).

This switch in politics caused a break between Lenin and his former companion Trotsky. Furthermore, Trotsky was by then in command of the Red Army, which meant that he was often on a mission and thus not present at Party affairs:

At the Sixth Party Congress in August 1917 Lenin’s idea that Russia was ripe for a revolution establishing transitional measures toward socialism was one of the themes dominating the proceedings. Lenin, Zinov’ev and Trotsky were absent. And Stalin and Bukharin were the
main leaders defending the socialist character of the coming revolution. They agreed with Lenin’s analysis that the industrial sector was ripe for socialist reconstruction (Van Ree 98).

The changes in Lenin’s perspectives gave Stalin – who until then had been a nobody in the party – the chance to work his way up and come closer to Lenin. By that time Lenin and Trotsky had needed to change their political course because of the rising protest by the people. This had led to the abolishment of factions within the political organization, which meant the end of democracy in the Communist Party (Shukman 112). Due to this, Stalin, who was a bureaucrat, had been given the opportunity to become more powerful. Moreover, “It seems that at this point Stalin was the only major party leader who completely supported and understood Lenin’s line of a socialist revolution supported by a majority of the peasants” (Van Ree 98). By the end of Lenin’s life, Stalin had become the pillar on which Lenin relied.

This situation turned Stalin and Trotsky into opponents. The state of affairs became such that Trotsky stood alone with his ideas. Because he had not undergone the same ideological evolution as Lenin, he was alienated from everyone else in the party. Stalin knew Trotsky’s position was weak and he used statements and speeches of Trotsky to discredit him, which led to Trotsky’s expulsion from the party and from Russia. In this way, Stalin got a free hand to influence Lenin and make sure that Lenin would put him in charge after his death. When Stalin finally ruled over Russia, he erased the image of his former enemy Trotsky and installed a dictatorial regime: Stalinism.

6.2 When humans become animals

In the first few pages of Animal Farm Orwell presents us with a situation identical to Homage to Catalonia in that there is a firm belief in a certain ideology. Everyone sides with the same ideas and is willing to make it happen. We start Animal Farm earlier in the struggle than in Homage to Catalonia. Whereas Orwell never explains how exactly the Spanish Revolution starts – at least partly because he was not interested enough in it himself – Animal Farm gives us the whole evolution of the rebellion right from the beginning. After Mister Jones has gone to sleep, Old Major awakens all the animals ideologically with his speech:

‘Comrades, you have heard already about the strange dream that I had last night. But I will come to the dream later. I have something else to say first. … I have had a long life, I have had much time for thought as I lay alone in my stall, and I think I may say that I understand the
nature of life on this earth as well as any animal now living. It is about this that I wish to speak to you.

‘Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it, our lives are miserable, laborious and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth.

‘But is this simply part of the order of Nature? Is it because this land of ours is so poor that it cannot afford a decent life to those who dwell upon it? No, comrades, a thousand times no!

(Animal Farm 3-4)

Upon hearing Old Major’s big speech, all the animals are totally surprised. This immediately gives the old boar a head start in conveying his point: convincing people who do not have their opinions formed yet, is easier than to persuade those who have already made up their minds. In this speech we can see how exactly Old Major wins over his audience. First, he presents himself as a wise animal, that “understands the nature of life” and “passes on his wisdom”. This depiction of himself as the wise person who sees things through and uses his intellect for the benefit of the audience is a typical feature of people who are proclaiming an ideology:

He [the person who voices an ideology] is deeply impressed with the mischief done to the uneducated and uncultivated by weaning them of all habits of reverence, appealing to them as a competent tribunal to decide the most intricate questions, and making them think themselves capable not only of being a light to themselves, but of giving the law to their superiors in culture. He sees, further, that cultivation, to be carried beyond a certain point, requires leisure.

(Mill 106-107)

Old Major probably has his heart in the right place, and Orwell has certainly made him one of the most pleasant characters in the story, but somehow his portrayal as the “great benefactor” of the animals’ cause can be interpreted as a sign that even the purest hearts might deceive you. There are some signals in the rest of his speech that invite us to be cautious about Old Major’s views:
'Is it not crystal clear, then, comrades, that all the evils of this life of ours spring from the tyranny of human beings? Only get rid of Man, and the produce of our labour would be our own. Almost overnight we could become rich and free. What then must we do? Why, work night and day, body and soul, for the overthrow of the human race! That is my message to you, comrades: Rebellion! I do not know when that Rebellion will come, it might be in a week or in a hundred years, but I know, as surely as I see this straw beneath my feet, that sooner or later justice will be done (AF 5).

Firstly, there is a very black-and-white portrayal of the situation. Old Major cleverly juxtaposes animals and humans. “All the evils of this life of ours spring from the tyranny of human beings”, is his most remarkable phrase. Until that evening, there has been no sign of any grave dissatisfaction, but Old Major gives the impression that the animals had already considered suicide in order to escape the farm. In his Culture, Williams argues that ideology is about the “wider area of feelings and attitudes and assumptions which usually mark, very distinctively, the culture of a particular class or group” (27). In order to react against Mr. Jones, Old Major needs to convince the animals that they all belong to one particular group, with one common enemy. To achieve his goal Old Major then accuses the humans of not contributing to the actual production of goods, as opposed to the animals which provide the farm with eggs or meat or plough the land. Very soon, however, it turns out that man has his own part in the farming cycle: “But at this moment the three cows, who had seemed uneasy for some time past, set up a loud lowing. They had not been milked for twenty-four hours, and their udders were almost bursting” (AF 16).

Orwell presents Old Major as a charismatic and purely idealistic character. But that does not alter the fact that we can at least partly doubt Old Major’s position. All the way through his speech we get a black-and-white portrayal of the situation mixed with flagrant overgeneralisations (“No animal in England is free.” “The life of an animal is misery and slavery.”). Nevertheless, his speech has an important influence on the animals on Manor Farm. They are swept up by the boar’s speech, just like Orwell himself started to believe in socialism when he was in the trenches in Spain. The appeal for unity will stick into the minds of the animals when they decide to start their rebellion against Mr. Jones in an atmosphere of all-for-one and one-for-all.

For the first time in the history of Manor Farm, ideology becomes an issue. The animals are aware of a wronged situation, which is a crucial element in establishing a revolution: “Ideology’ then reverts to a specific and practical dimension: the complicated
process within which men ‘become’ (are) conscious of their interests and their conflicts” (Marxism and Literature 68). But although we are inclined to find this growing awareness of ideological principles a very promising evolution, we once again find it difficult to become deeply ecstatic about the situation.

Major’s speech had given to the more intelligent animals on the farm a completely new outlook on life. They did not know when the Rebellion predicted by Major would take place, they had no reason for thinking that it would be within their own lifetime, but they saw clearly that it was their duty to prepare for it (AF 9).

It may have become clear after Old Major’s speech which ideology needs to be pursued, but it only did so to the more intelligent animals. The majority is still unaware of it, making it hard to create a broad basis for a rebellion. Next to that the animals are preparing certain things, but clearly no plan has been mapped out. By this, Orwell immediately hints that the chances of a successful overthrow of the old ideology will be small. Old Major’s dream about the overall rebellion will be hard to achieve.

6.3 Installing Animalism

“An unpremeditated accident eventually brings on the revolt … Though there had been no plan of resistance, the animals turn on Jones and the men, attack them and before they know where they are, have driven them helter-skelter from the farm” (Hollis 140-41). Orwell stresses the naturalness with which the whole rebellion takes place. He once said that he got the idea for the bestial fable when seeing “a little boy, perhaps ten years old, driving a huge cart-horse along a narrow path, whipping it whenever it tried to turn. It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them …” (Orwell Collected Essays III: 458-59). After the revolt, the animals do become conscious and from that point on a new atmosphere can be perceived on Manor Farm. The pigs do their utmost to alter the conditions in which they used to live and try to create a completely new system. After three months of hard work by those pigs, the new ideology is officially installed:

‘Comrades,’ said Snowball, ‘it is half-past six and we have a long day before us. Today we begin the hay harvest. But there is another matter that must be attended to first.’

The pigs now revealed that during the past three months they had taught themselves to read and write from an old spelling book which had belonged to Mr Jones’s children and which had
been thrown to the rubbish heap. Napoleon sent for pots of black and white paint and led the way down to the five-barred gate that gave on the main road. Then Snowball … painted out MANOR FARM from the top bar of the gate and in its place painted ANIMAL FARM. This was to be the name from now onwards. … They [the pigs] explained that by their studies of the past three months the pigs had succeeded in reducing the principles of Animalism to Seven Commandments. These Seven Commandments would now be inscribed on the wall; they would form an unalterable law by which all the animals on Animal Farm must live for ever after. With some difficulty (for it is not easy for a pig to balance himself on a ladder) Snowball climbed up and set to work, with Squealer a few rungs below him holding the paint-pot. The commandments were written on the tarred wall in great white letters that could be read thirty yards away. They ran thus:

THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal. (AF 15)

The first changes brought to the farm are all emotionally laden. Manor Farm is replaced by a new name: Animal Farm. All bonds with the old slavery-system are cut. Simultaneously, the pillars of the new ideology are communicated to all the animals. If we compare it to Old Major’s speech, we must conclude that the Seven Commandments are an elaborate system. In the speech Old Major talked about nothing more than to free the animals from mankind. Only commandments 1, 2 and 7 are directly related to what Old Major proclaimed in his speech (AF 3-5). All the directives remain in line with what the old boar
stood for, but strictly speaking the other commandments are derivations which the other pigs made by themselves.

On hearing Snowball and Napoleon’s arguments, the animals are eager to make the new system work. All unite to make the best out of the situation, and every single being is convinced that they are doing this for the right reasons. The ideological spirit that prevails at this point had been unseen during Jones’ days: “All that year the animals worked like slaves. But they were happy in their work; they grudged no effort or sacrifice, well aware that everything that they did was for the benefit of themselves and those of their kind who would come after them, and not for a pack of idle thieving human beings” (AF,40). This working like slaves “is part of the paradox of Orwell that from this despairing base he is able to generate an immediate and practical humanity: the comradeship of suffering” (Williams, George Orwell 73-74). And with this comradeship of toil and suffering the system is not only reduced to an ideological figment, it actually yields fruit. The animals are managing the household better than Mr Jones did: “How they toiled and sweated to get the hay in! But their efforts were rewarded, for the harvest was an even bigger success than they had hoped” (AF17).

The prospects of Animalism then seem very promising, but the Seven Commandments are not as pure an embodiment of Old Major’s ideals as we are inclined to believe. Only the seventh and last commandment states that all animals are equal, although this should be the core point of their programme. One could possibly argue that the seventh commandment ought to be the culmination of the pamphlet in which case it would make sense. Another problem with the Seven Commandments is that most of them are only concerned with the distinction between man and animal, which stays close to Old Major’s statement, but which can in itself easily be reduced to “no-one shall behave like a human”. By rephrasing the same idea several times the impression is given that all animals other than pigs are too dumb to understand the difference between animals and humans. This is then no longer in line with what Old Major proclaimed.

The pigs announce very proudly that they have been able to sum up Animalism in Seven Commandments. However, in reducing a whole ideology to only seven basic points, it is clear that the specific elements of the programme have faded. Old Major indeed did not give much detail about his ideas, which now leaves the other pigs with as much liberty of interpretation as is possible. This leads to a situation in which the pigs are safely in charge and do not have to be on their guard against any rebellion from the other animals.
During the last three months the pigs have learned themselves to read and write. Why they have done that is never explained in the novel. It goes against all the ideals that Old Major and Animalism embody. Being literate is the core distinction between mankind and beasts. Animals converse with each other, but they do it by speech and no need for a written communication is ever articulated. So in learning to read and write, the pigs betray their own ideology even before they have actually installed it. However, not everything is trouble and strife. The pigs do not intend to remain the only literate beings and they immediately start their quest to make every animal literate: “The reading and writing classes, however, were a great success. By the autumn almost every animal on the farm was literate in some degree” (AF 20). Due to this an awkward situation is created: in order to establish an ideology that is opposed to everything related to mankind, they turn to the most characteristic feature of human beings. I already pointed out that the Seven Commandments are overwhelmingly concerned with the distinctions between man and animal. They constantly refer to the clothes, alcohol and beds of the people, but these often do have some kind of counterpart with the animals (men have clothes but animals have their fur, men sleep in beds but animals lie on straw, …). And in the one point in which they are totally different from humans they do not see any problem. This feature is immediately taken up and incorporated by the pigs and then passed on to the other animals.

Another point to be made is that the Seven Commandments are “an unalterable law by which all the animals on Animal Farm must live for ever after”. The fact that the law is unalterable is a very dubious statement. For if all animals are equal, there could be no commandments unless all the animals had approved of them in an open meeting. Once again the pigs are portrayed by Orwell as not being completely reliable. They have laid down the law to the animals, “for the benefit of all”, and it is already clear that this cannot be discussed. The animals are even forced by the pigs to live by these laws “for ever after”.

Old Major’s speech, in the end, can be summed up as “all animals against human kind”. Right from the start however, this ideology is unsettled. The pigs immediately seize power and try to impose their will onto the other animals. All the other animals however, are still swept up by the speeches of Old Major, Napoleon and Snowball. Their ideological beliefs have never been firmer: “The animals were happy as they had never conceived it possible to be. Every mouthful of food was an acute positive pleasure, now that it was truly their own food, produced by themselves and for themselves, not doled out to them by a grudging master” (AF 18). But the reader has already figured out that this original ideological spirit is about to fade out.
6.4 Amendments to the ideology

6.4.1 When animals lose their zeal for Animalism

Happy as the animals are after Mr Jones has been driven away from Manor Farm, the group starts falling apart after a couple of months. In the first fuddle of victory everything seems like heaven: there is more joy, plenty of food and a better harvest. But with the hard times of winter ahead, some animals start neglecting the ideology of Animalism.

As winter drew on Mollie became more and more troublesome. She was late for work every morning and excused herself by saying that she had overslept, and she complained of mysterious pains, although her appetite was excellent. … But there were also rumours of something more serious. …

‘Mollie,’ she [Clover] said, ‘I have something very serious to say to you. This morning I saw you looking over the hedge that divides Animal Farm from Foxwood. One of Mr Pilkington’s men was standing on the other side of the hedge. And – I was a long way away, but I am almost certain I saw this – he was talking to you and you were allowing him to stroke you nose. What does that mean Mollie?’ (AF 30)

After a while, Mollie has a hard time endorsing the principles of Animalism. This shows that Animalism must have some downsides to it. Orwell never mentions them literally, but from Mollie’s reaction we cannot interpret it otherwise. That these troubles are nowhere mentioned proves that there is no space for discussing the ideology on the farm, let alone to change it. Williams points out how vital it is to communicate emotions: “All the basic purposes of communication – the sharing of human experiences – are being subordinated …” (Communications 25, emphasis mine). Mollie never feels capable of discussing what her problem is, because she can feel that no-one will pay heed to her remarks. She is probably strengthened in her resolve when Clover does not hesitate to mention that the situation is “very serious”. And by her “What does that mean Mollie?” Clover overtly accuses Mollie of betraying the ideology. Sensing this threat Mollie gets distressed: “He didn’t! I wasn’t! It isn’t true!’, cried Mollie, beginning to prance about and paw the ground” (AF 30). Such an extreme denial of the facts is enough for convincing Clover to interpret this as a betrayal of the ideological spirit, but the reaction is also interesting when interpreting Mollie’s character. Partly such a flat denial springs from the shock of being accused so suddenly, but there is
more to it. Mollie is torn apart between her love for the animals and her need for human attention. From the start Mollie made it clear that she needed the humans and had no real problems with them, and during the months after the revolution this has proven to be true. She herself feels ashamed of her acts, she cannot even look Clover in the eyes, but in her heart she does not truly believe in Animalism.

Three days later Mollie disappeared. For some weeks nothing was known of her whereabouts, then the pigeons reported that they had seen her on the other side of Willingdon. She was between the shafts of a smart dogcart painted red and black, which was standing outside a public-house. A fat red-faced man in check breeches and gaiters, who looked like a publican, was stroking her nose and feeding her with sugar. Her coat was newly clipped and she wore a scarlet ribbon round her forelock. She appeared to be enjoying herself, so the pigeons said.

None of the animals ever mentioned Mollie again (AF 31).

Mollie cannot live with the situation any longer and one day she is missing. It is again striking that no-one knows what has happened to her. She either was too ashamed to admit that she did not support the ideological premises of Animalism any longer, or she was afraid of the animals’ reactions, which would indeed not be abnormal given Clover’s denunciation. One way or the other, it remains remarkable that Mollie sees no other way out but to disappear, leaving all the other animals worrying about her situation. After she has left, Mollie actually ends up being happier than before. The ribbons and sugar she has had to miss for several months are now again provided and her coat is newly clipped. This clipping of her coat is only mentioned in passing, but actually it is an important note. It shows that the animals on Animal Farm have not been able to clip the coats of the sheep, and it thus suggests that other tasks, like looking after the iron shoes of the horses, probably have not been attended to either. The value of the humans again shines through.

The other animals seem somewhat stunned when they find out about Mollie. Never in their worst nightmares had they foreseen that an animal could turn its back on Animalism and leave. That Mollie enjoys herself is impossible to understand for the others. They have been fighting and risking their lives to drive mankind away, and Mollie just walks towards them. It comes as an acute shock to them that some animals do not prefer the ideology of Animalism to the dominion of humans. By never mentioning her again they try to conceal both the shame that an animal forsook the farm and their proper disappointment in the ideals of Animalism, which somehow did not live up to everyone’s expectations.
6.4.2 Division into two camps

Mollie’s desertion leaves a mark on all the other animals, but one member who does not support the ideology could never harm the principles of a whole ideology. On the contrary, if the animals had been open to discussion, as they originally claimed to be, it would certainly have been possible for the ideological foundations of Animal Farm to have become stronger. A society can only work if it incorporates the means of communication in its system: “These approaches [politics and economy] remain important, but they are now joined by a new emphasis: that society is a form of communication, through which experience is described, shared, modified, and preserved” (Williams Communications 10, emphasis mine). This lack of communication on Animal Farm is one of the reasons why Mollie feels the need to leave. But on the other hand, there is communication in the meetings and voting systems and these are really taken to heart. However, these meetings do not always intensify the bonds between the dwellers on Animal Farm which becomes clear when the discussion about the windmill arises.

The whole farm was deeply divided on the subject of the windmill. Snowball did not deny that to build it would be a difficult business. … But he maintained that it could all be done in a year. And thereafter, he declared, so much labour would be saved that the animals would only need to work three days a week. Napoleon, on the other hand, argued that the great need of the moment was to increase food production, and if they wasted time on the windmill they would all starve to death. The animals formed themselves into two factions under the slogans, ‘Vote for Snowball and the three-day week’ and ‘Vote for Napoleon and the full manger.’ Benjamin was the only animal who did not side wit either faction. He refused to believe either that food would become more plentiful or that the windmill would save work. Windmill or no windmill, he said, life would go on as it had always gone on – that is, badly” (AF 34).

At this moment, the animals have to deal with overt opposition for the first time. They are all “deeply divided” and split up into two groups which try to convince one another to change sides. Old Major had concluded his speech only some months earlier with the words: “And among us animals let there be perfect unity, perfect comradeship in the struggle. All men are enemies. All animals are comrades” (AF 6). Not much of that original idea is still alive by now. Once again we are confronted with the breaking down of the original all-for-one and one-for-all ideal of Animalism.
Slogans are made in order to support either cause and to outshine the other faction. These mottos are in line with the equality of all animals and their right to speak up and criticize each other which is “a form of social development of personal impressions and responses” (Williams Keywords 85). This positive element of criticism and discussion is however rapidly transformed into a less healthy form of communication: Snowball fails to provide certain crucial information (“How these were produced Snowball did not say.” AF 33) and Napoleon even takes it further: he explicitly threatens the other animals. Although he never actually links these threats to punishments, Napoleon deliberately tries to scare the animals instead of arguing with them.

When everyone gets lost in the factions, no-one ever seems to think back to what Old Major declared or to read the Seven Commandments over again. Only Benjamin refuses to pick sides. All across the farm he is the only one who ponders on the utility of this quarrel and who remains critical about the whole situation. In this manner he resembles Orwell himself, being an “isolated observer going around and seeing for himself” (George Orwell 49). As is typical of this novel, no-one seems to notice Benjamin, the realistic voice, who is trying so hard to make everyone see the futility of these quarrels. And so the animals start to lose themselves, leaving room for a drastic switch in their daily routine.

6.5 Abusing the ideology

The struggle over the windmill seems to have reached a total deadlock. Meetings continue and Snowball’s talent for delivering speeches convinces several anti-windmill supporters to change sides. When Napoleon feels that he is losing support he makes a drastic decision:

By the time he had finished speaking there was no doubt as to which way the vote would go. But just at this moment Napoleon stood up and, casting a peculiar sidelong look at Snowball, uttered a high-pitched whimper of a kind no one had ever heard him utter before.

At this there was a terrible baying sound outside, and nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from his place just in time to escape their snapping jaws. In a moment he was out of the door and they were after him. Too amazed and frightened to speak, all the animals crowded through the door to watch the chase (AF 35).
The moment Napoleon utters his whistle the betrayal of Animalism is already a fact. It will take some time before it is completed, but from this moment on all hope is gone. By expelling Snowball, the equality between the animals is damaged, leaving everybody behind in an immense tremor. Orwell’s pessimistic view on politics starts showing through: “But in his deepest vision of what was to come, he had at once actualized a general nightmare …” (Williams George Orwell 68). Why Napoleon waits until this moment to deal with Snowball is not entirely clear: right from the start they were always on opposite sides. If Napoleon has wanted to get rid of Snowball all along, why does he linger until every other animal is about to choose Snowball’s side? The only possible explanation is that Napoleon had to wait until his army of dogs was strong enough to take on Snowball.

The dogs are in themselves a problematic issue. At birth they were taken away from their mothers by Napoleon and secretly trained. Taking the puppies away went against all the principles of Animalism. Old Major himself had asked Clover: “And you, Clover, where are those four foals you bore, who should have been the support and pleasure of your old age? Each of them was sold at a year old – you will never see one of them again” (AF 4). However, Napoleon uses the excitement and the ignorance of the first weeks to separate the pups from their mothers, ensuring that no-one makes a remark about his decision. The cleverness with which Napoleon adapts the situation to his own needs denotes that it was his plan all along to expel Snowball or any other animal on the farm that stood in his way. Once more our hope that the revolution at any point had a chance of succeeding, falls into pieces. And this is only the beginning.

Napoleon, with the dogs following him, now mounted onto the raised portion of the floor where Major had previously stood to deliver his speech. He announced that from now on the Sunday-morning Meetings would come to an end. They were unnecessary, he said, and wasted time. In future all questions relating to the working of the farm would be settled by a special committee of pigs, presided over by himself. These would meet in private and afterwards communicate their decisions to the others. The animals would still assemble on Sunday mornings to salute the flag, sing ‘Beasts of England’ and receive their orders for the week; but there would be no more debates (AF 36).

Right after Snowball’s exclusion matters change drastically. The primary commandment “All animals are equal” is brushed aside and a new regime is introduced. According to the pigs, they are superior to the other animals and therefore they will decide what will happen. Moreover they will do that behind closed bars, no longer leaving room for
any suggestions or criticism. From this day onwards the only thing the animals have to do is to obey the pigs and await their orders. The communist regime has turned into a bureaucracy: “not merely the class of officials but certain types of centralized order, of a modern organized kind, as distinct not only from older aristocratic societies but from popular DEMOCRACY,” (Keywords 49) which results in the pigs taking up leadership while the others have to follow them.

Not only do the pigs write off democracy, they even rewrite history. After all the tumult the animals are trying to get a grip on the situation and most of them are incapable of understanding what Snowball did wrong. Napoleon puts in Squealer in order to convince the animals that the right decision has been made. According to Williams: “For the transmission of an ideology, there were specific traditional institutions” (Television 14). Animal Farm has no such traditional institutions, since it originates in the total abolishment of the previous system. And because there is no tradition to turn to, Napoleon gets the opportunity to create his own communication system, in this case Squealer, to shape the ideology any way he wants it. In a clever speech Squealer then stretches the facts until they are right up Napoleon’s street:

On the third Sunday after Snowball’s expulsion, the animals were somewhat surprised to hear Napoleon announce that the windmill was to be built after all. He did not give any reason for having changed his mind. …

That evening Squealer explained privately to the other animals that Napoleon had never in reality been opposed to the windmill. On the contrary, it was he who had advocated it in the beginning, and the plan which Snowball had drawn on the floor of the incubator shed had actually been stolen from among Napoleon’s papers. The windmill was, in fact, Napoleon’s own creation. Why, then, asked somebody, had he spoken so strongly against it? Here Squealer looked very sly. That, he said, was Comrade Napoleon’s cunning. He had seemed to oppose the windmill, simply as a manoeuvre to get rid of Snowball, who was a dangerous character and a bad influence. Now that Snowball was out of the way the plan could go forward without his interference. This, said Squealer, was something called tactics. … The animals were not certain what the word meant, but Squealer spoke so persuasively, and the three dogs who happened to be with him growled so threateningly, that they accepted his explanation without further questions (AF 38-39).
Squealer’s rhetoric and “clever tactics” leave no room for the animals to doubt, let alone contradict him. When someone tries to get a grip on Squealer’s explanation, he smoothly disguises everything under the concept of “tactics”, while he knows no-one understands that term. Squealer sees the other animals as “the masses [who] are stupid and indifferent” (Williams Communications 105), in the same way most of the people see the masses as an uneducated mob. The difference lies in the fact that, in Williams’ view “most people look upon these masses in the traditional idea of people wanting light, of democracy as a way of spreading the light, [which] is perhaps merely sentimental” (Communications 105). This view of the mob arises from a sort of naïve underestimation of the masses. But in Squealer’s case things are different. It is his aim to make the animals believe that they are dumber than the pigs, so that any possibility of rebellion is subdued. And whereas “The reality shows it otherwise” (Williams Communications 105), the masses in Orwell’s last novels are indeed the stupid mob they are taken for by the majority of people (Williams George Orwell 72).

The stupidity of the animal mob entangled with the cleverness of the pigs creates an atmosphere in which the pigs have no trouble overthrowing the original features of Animalism. Effortlessly the pigs transform the principles into a new ideology. This in turn lets the pigs behave as they please while letting the others toil and sweat. Orwell’s negativity only becomes more and more manifest, and the worst is yet to come. We know that after the expulsion of Snowball the last counterbalance to Napoleon has disappeared, giving him an open field to bring about an absolute power.

6.6 The Defeat of Animalism

6.6.1 Towards a new ideology

Things deteriorate at Animal Farm. More and more the original principles of Animalism are being adapted and Napoleon develops into a harsh leader. For example, he decides to starve the hens when they refuse to lay their eggs in their nesting boxes any longer, which results in nine dead chickens. Neither does Napoleon have mercy on four pigs whom he accuses of treachery:

Napoleon now called upon them to confess their crimes. They were the same four pigs as had protested when Napoleon abolished the Sunday Meetings. Without any further prompting they
confessed that they had been secretly in touch with Snowball ever since his expulsion. …

When they had finished their confession the dogs promptly tore their throats out, and in a
terrible voice Napoleon demanded whether any other animal had anything to confess (AF 56).

Without any trial or even any evidence the four pigs get slaughtered. Interestingly
they had risen against Napoleon only a couple of days earlier. These two incidents prove that
Napoleon has turned into a tyrant. Until now the changes in the ideology had been minor or
at least thoroughly covered up with clever speeches, but those days are over. Apparently
Napoleon is now convinced that his power is sufficient to leave behind the original
communist society. A class-structure is now again firmly established: “The essential history
of the introduction of class, as a word which would supersede older names for social
divisions, relates to the increasing consciousness that social position is made rather than
merely inherited” (Williams Keywords 61). Napoleon thinks he is a separate class, lifted
above not only the “common animals” who had been seen as inferior from the very start of
Animalism, but also standing above his fellow pigs. By assuming he has the right to kill any
animal Napoleon shows that he finds himself superior to anyone else.

Upon witnessing this vicious action, the other animals are horrified. Dazzled they
ponder on the events, and subsequent to the first rebellion, the first profound disappointments
in Animalism come to the surface. The dream of equality among all animals has been
ruthlessly shattered: “As Clover looked down the hillside her eyes filled with tears. If she
could have spoken her thoughts, it would have been to say that this was not what they had
aimed at …. These scenes of terror and slaughter were not what they had looked forward to
…” (AF 58). Moreover, the animals “were shaken and miserable” (AF 57) after the events,
bringing them not only into an ideological system contrary to what they wanted to achieve,
but even fearing their leaders, which was an unseen situation during Mr Jones’ days.

Not only does Napoleon behave like a dictator, all the pigs have also started to behave
more and more like human beings. It comes to the animal’s attention that the pigs are
sleeping in the beds of the farmhouse. Clover, one of the smartest animals on the farm,
remembers that there is a rule against beds, and goes to check the Seven Commandments:
“‘Muriel,’ she said, ‘read me the Fourth Commandment. Does it not say something about not
sleeping in a bed?’ With some difficulty Muriel spelt it out. It says, “No animal shall sleep in
a bed with sheets”’ she announced finally” (AF 45). Curiously enough, Clover, who
demonstrates how smart she actually is does not doubt this. She is more inclined to believe
the statements on the wall than her own memory.
This belief in the written word is remarkable. “The written word used to be taken as the real source of authority” (Williams Keywords 19). That the written word is extremely important in a human society is easy to believe, but Animal Farm has a peculiar system. It is ruled by animals and their natural communication is a verbal one. The animals should have been opposed to reading and writing from the beginning because it is typically human and it should have been even more so after Napoleon drove away Snowball. For it was Snowball who had always been the great defender of educating the animals. The last doubts hovering over Clover’s head are taken away by Squealer, who appears to be passing her at that moment:

‘You have heard then Comrades,’ he said, ‘that we pigs now sleep in the beds of the farmhouse? And why not? You did not suppose, surely, that there was ever a ruling against beds? A bed merely means a place to sleep in. A pile of straw in a stall is a bed, properly regarded. The rule was against sheets, which are human inventions (AF 45-6).

With another splendid speech and a following threat that Jones might come back, Squealer reassures Clover that the ideological premises of Animalism have never been broken. Throughout the story Squealer functions as the spokesman of “Animalism”, reminding us of the bards in medieval times. “It has been said, on the one hand, that in this situation the bard is accountable to society, and is its spokesman; on the other hand, that it is his duty to serve the past and present glory of the ruling class” (Culture 37). The double function of the bard is however not present in Squealer. His target is not so much to criticize the society on Animal Farm as to serve indeed this ruling class of pigs. His function goes further than that of a bard, since Squealer not only protects the glory of the ruling class, but also incorporates their deeds into the just ideological spirit.

By preferring the written to the spoken word Clover is no exception. The pigs have foreseen the power of the written documents long before the animals started to doubt their speeches. At night they have been amending the Seven Commandments so that none of their actions could ever said to be contrary to the pamphlet of Animalism. However, the wittiness of the animals is almost abominable. Even when Squealer is found in the middle of the night covered in paint and lying underneath the Seven Commandments the animals cannot imagine what that is supposed to mean. There is only Benjamin, “who nodded his muzzle with a knowing air, and seemed to understand, but would say nothing” (AF 73). The pigs have thus succeeded in turning the animals from illiterate beings into creatures who trust unconditionally what is written.
That Benjamin never finds it necessary to pass on what he has come to understand is striking. All through the narrative he tries to remain as apathetic and objective as possible. On the day Boxer, the old horse that has literally worked himself to death, is taken to the knackers, he eventually breaks his silence and hollers the atrocities of Animal Farm:

‘Fools! Fools’ shouted Benjamin, prancing round them and stamping the earth with his small hoofs. ‘Fools! Do you not see what is written on that van?’

That gave the animals pause, and there was a hush. Muriel began to spell out the words. But Benjamin pushed her aside and in the midst of a deadly silence he read:

‘Alfred Simmonds, Horse slaughterer and Glue Boiler, Willingdon. Dealer in Hides and Bone-Meal. Kennels Supplied.’ Do you not understand what that means? They are taking Boxer to the knacker’s!’ (AF 81-82)

After Benjamin’s intervention turmoil arouses, but the animals are again easily satisfied when Squealer assures them that the veterinarian’s van had previously belonged to a horse-slaughterer and that the publicity on the side of the car had just not been removed yet. The animals are very relieved to hear this and “their last doubts disappeared” (AF 84). Once more, Orwell portrays the animals as stupid beasts, not understanding how their true ideology is being abused right in front of their eyes. The rest of the novel will show how Orwell’s “sympathies are with the exploited sheep and the other stupid animals, but the issue of government lies between drunkards and pigs, and that is as far as things can go” (Williams Culture and Society 283).

6.6.2 When animals become humans

By and by Napoleon and the other pigs start realizing how much power they have over the other animals. Several Commandments have by then been altered and the pigs are still going strong. They have come to realize that no-one ever questions their decisions as long as they can prove that what they proclaim is not in breach of the Commandments. That gives them confidence to flout the principles of Animalism more overtly. Doubts have however risen among the other animals, and although in the end they go along with the pigs, they no longer fully trust them. Then, all of a sudden, the time comes when the animals realize that Old Major’s ideals have been obliterated:
It was Clover’s voice. She neighed again, and all the animals broke into gallop and rushed into the yard. Then they saw what Clover had seen.

It was a pig walking on his hind legs.

Yes, it was Squealer. … [A]nd out came Napoleon himself, majestically upright, casting haughty glances from side to side, and with his dogs gambolling around him.

He carried a whip in his trotter.

There was a deadly silence. Amazed, terrified, huddling together, the animals watched the long line of pigs march slowly upside-down. Then there came a moment when the first shock had worn off and when … no matter what happened – they might have uttered some word of protest. But just at that time the sheep burst out into a tremendous bleating of –

‘Four legs good, two legs better! (AF 89)

Outraged by what they are seeing the animals start to protest. They are so taken aback and infuriated that they no longer care about the consequences. However, Squealer has obviously foreseen this and uses the sheep to calm down the others. By ensuring that he had the complete control over one entity among the animals he is now capable of steering all the others. Squealer deliberately picks the dumbest animals and makes sure that they will proclaim the new ideology with so much zeal that the others will stand no chance against them. All Squealer has to do in order to silence the whole group is to give the sheep the sign.

That the pigs are walking on their hind legs is unbelievable. They are no longer manifesting themselves as animals, but as their great enemies, the humans. Therefore they do not only break each cardinal rule of Animalism, they also distinguish themselves from the other animals in an intolerable way. Needless to say that the pigs had been preparing this behind closed doors for some time. Napoleon has even taught the new generation of pigs in school, professing this superiority to them, which is a common use of education:

It is characteristic of educational systems to claim that they are transmitting ‘knowledge’ or ‘culture’ in an absolute, universally derived sense, though it is obvious that different systems, at different times and in different countries, transmit radically different selective versions of both (Williams Culture 186).

All along this is what Napoleon has been doing to the pigs as well as the other animals. He professed one thing to the pigs, and then claimed the opposite to the animals during the meetings. So not only do knowledge and truth differ from one society to another, it is also possible to proclaim several ideologies to different groups in the same community.
The superiority of the pigs is now also stressed by the wearing of a whip. The true goals of the pigs are no longer concealed. From now on Animal Farm is overtly a hierarchical system in which the animals will be distinguished from the pigs, although they should have been in the same category.

Hereafter things start deteriorating. When the animals look on the barn and the Seven Commandments, they find out that the sign has been replaced. “There was nothing there now except a single Commandment. It ran: ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL / BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS” (AF 90). This moment means the end of all the hope on Animal Farm: “After that it did not seem weird when the next day the pigs who were supervising the work of the farm all carried whips in their trotters” (AF 90). Some time later the pigs also start inviting humans over to Animal Farm and they engage in friendly conversations with them. On one of those gatherings the animals look inside from a window. “The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again: but already it was impossible to say which was which” (AF 95).

Animal Farm leaves us with no hope for the future. The idealistic characters are either not capable of realizing their ideas (Old Major), or they are driven away by the corrupt members of the party (Snowball). What remains is a small group which tries to establish a regime that is considerably harder than the ideology that was originally overthrown. Orwell no longer gives us any hope. “Both the consciousness of the workers and the possibility of authentic revolution are denied” (Williams George Orwell 73). But although we feel right from the start that Animalism is doomed to fail, we can also distinguish Orwell’s belief in socialism and comradeship. “[I]t is part of the paradox of Orwell that from this despairing base he is able to create an immediate and practical humanity: the comradeship of suffering …” (Williams George Orwell 74-5).

6.7 Snowball

Snowball is often portrayed as the true believer in the ideology. Right from the start Snowball and Napoleon, then still presented as true comrades, will interpret The Seven Commandments in different ways, leading to internal struggles. Although we are inclined to root for Snowball, he himself is definitely not the true embodiment of the Animalistic ideology either.
During the first gatherings on Animal Farm it becomes clear that two pigs, Napoleon and Snowball, are taking up the leading roles. Whereas Napoleon seems a more natural born leader who is convinced that what he thinks is best is actually best, Snowball gives a very passionate impression: “Snowball busied himself with organising the other animals into what he called Animal Committees. He was indefatigable at this” (AF 20). Creating committees immediately brings into our minds Orwell’s own ideological beliefs, supporting the idea of equality. “He [Orwell] remained a democratic socialist. He gave most of his political energies to the defence of civil liberties over a wide front” (Williams George Orwell 68). Snowball represents these ideals in Animal Farm, he advocates the real comradeship and equality that can also be found with Old Major and Orwell himself in his Homage to Catalonia. And as a true believer in Animalism, Snowball is of course “indefatigable” in spirit.

Snowball is the oratorical animal on the farm. A lot of dwellers on Animal Farm indisputably believe in Snowball because of “his brilliant speeches” (AF 31). These he does not use to delude his audience, but rather to inform them as best as he can. Unfortunately good speeches alone cannot turn even the most brilliant ideology into a functioning society. “On the whole, these projects were a failure. The attempt to tame the wild creatures, for instance, broke down almost immediately” (AF 20). As good as Snowball’s intentions may be, he lacks the capacities of a leader. All his projects turn out to be a failure. Orwell’s characterisation of Snowball makes us believe in his intentions and in his ideals, yet it can be foreseen that he will not be capable of executing these ideals via a real political system. However, Orwell does not write him off completely: “The reading and writing classes, however, were a great success. By the autumn almost every animal on the farm was literate in some degree” (AF 20).

Nonetheless some difficulties do arise with regard to Snowball. In fact, it is rather hard to get a complete insight in Snowball. First of all, Snowball is the single most literate character on the farm, which is a typical human feature. Therefore he is not in line with the true spirit of Animalism. It is at Snowball’s instigation for example, that the reading and writing classes get installed, while Napoleon, as usual, “took no interest in Snowball’s committees” (AF 22). It is as if Snowball is so caught up with making the other animals understand and believe in the ideology of Animalism, that somehow the ends justify the means. Williams claims that “the struggle to learn, to describe, to understand, to educate, is a central and necessary part of our humanity” (Communications 11), which could explain these choices.
Secondly, Snowball succeeds in reducing the entire ideology of Animalism to one single maxim, namely: “Four legs good, two legs bad” (AF 21). It is impossible not to frown on this umpteenth simplification. No-one will attack the principle for not being in line with what was proclaimed in the original delineation of Animalism, but in cutting down a whole ideological programme to only six words, Snowball can never convey to the animals what Animalism is truly about. He now presents the ideology as a battle against mankind, but which ideological beliefs support the need for a battle against the human race becomes unclear. And not surprisingly, the animals themselves protest against such a plain oversimplification: “The birds at first objected since it seemed to them that they also had two legs…” (AF 21). As dumb as the animals may be, even they do not put up with this. However, Snowball’s rhetorical art lets him get away with it.

At the beginning of the novel, the pigs are mostly described as a homogenous group. This is not exactly in line with the several discussions taking place between Napoleon and Snowball. On every single occasion Napoleon and Snowball contradict each other on principle and are trying their best to discredit one another. Snowball’s position in this group is often not clear:

‘Comrades!’ He [Squealer] cried. ‘You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself. … We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organisation of this farm depend on us (AF 23).

In his speech, Squealer constantly refers to “we”, “us” and “we pigs”. Technically speaking, this also includes Snowball, which would make him a rather dubious character in the plot. If indeed he supports this declaration it would make him betray the ideology he has been proclaiming all along. And in that case there would be no excuses. Up to a certain point we can understand that Snowball lost track of his ideals, because he is so fanatical about this revolution. But if he were utterly convinced that the pigs need better food because they are more intellectual, it would put his ideological beliefs immediately at risk.

It seems hard to believe that Snowball could be the ideological character described in the previous paragraph. Due to all the struggles between him and Napoleon, it could easily be that Snowball in fact denounces the special treatment of the pigs. This speech is given by Squealer, who is an accomplice of Napoleon. Therefore we can be sure that this is what Napoleon wants to realize, but it does not give us any certainty about Snowball’s position. In fact, it is easier to assume that Snowball does not agree with this statement, because Napoleon
and Snowball are always depicted as opposite forces in the Animalism line. Given the democratic pillar on which Animalism is founded, it would even be logical if there had been a tough discussion between the pigs before the official party line was publicly proclaimed.

In that case two possibilities arise. On the one hand, it is likely that there was a gathering in which all the pigs openly discussed the matter. In this case a majority for “the Napoleon approach” had to be the result of the gathering. Snowball would have had no problems laying down his own beliefs if the other pigs supported the other strategy. In the establishment of his Animal Committees, he has already shown that he is in favour of a democratic system where everyone had the same input in every discussion.

Secondly, there is also the possibility that Snowball has just been silenced by Napoleon. Napoleon is always really eager to get what he wants and it would come as no surprise if he had used “special ways” in order to get his ideas accepted by the other pigs. Moreover Snowball is known for his fabulous speeches which convince almost every animal, whereas Napoleon “was better at canvassing support for himself in between times” (AF 31). How exactly Napoleon succeeds in this is never explained. Since Napoleon has secretly trained his own army of dogs to get rid of any adversaries, it is easy to presume that Napoleon also uses all sorts of unethical practices during meetings.

When the decisions about the food rations are conveyed to the rest of the farm, Snowball seems completely in favour of them. The other animals are all somewhat surprised to find that “All the pigs were in full agreement on this point, even Snowball and Napoleon” (AF 23). The reader can never come to understand what Snowball in truth stands for and how idealistic he really is. It is beyond doubt that Snowball believes in his ideology, as can be seen in his founding of the Animal Committees and his zeal to make every animal understand the true principles of Animalism. But we cannot help but feel uneasy about this character. Why did he simplify things so drastically if his sincere goal was to educate all the animals? Why did he agree with the other pigs to give them a preferential treatment? We never get the chance to fathom Snowball, because he is driven away by Napoleon halfway in the story, but this in itself gives us a clue. Orwell at this point in time no longer believes in the success of a revolution himself: “… it was always possible, even likely, that not only the myth of Soviet socialism, but also the myth of the revolution, would in fact be “destroyed” (Williams George Orwell 71). Thus in expelling Snowball from Animal Farm, we cannot but see him as the only possible saviour of Animalism, leaving us with no hope for Animal Farm itself.
 Ideological reception of the novel

Orwell started writing Animal Farm towards the end of 1943. In a couple of months he finished his beast fable and by the beginning of 1944 he was looking for someone to publish the novel. Because of the ideological implications in the book, no-one was keen to publish it. Its clear allusions to the Russian communist regime – Napoleon refers to Stalin and Snowball represents Trotsky – made it nearly impossible to launch Animal Farm on the market at that time. The Cold War was emerging and any writings that were unmistakably politically laden were treated with great caution. Orwell was somewhat surprised that it was such a problem to release his novel. “I am having hell and all to find a publisher for it here though normally I have no difficulty in publishing my stuff” (qtd. in Williams George Orwell 69).

The allusions to Russia were of course no coincidence, Orwell had deliberately incorporated links to the situation and was well aware of a reading of his novel as a comment on the Stalin regime. He even encouraged it. It was his goal to make people see the horror of the Russian ideology:

> Nothing has contributed so much to the corruption of the original idea of Socialism as the belief that Russia is a Socialist country and that every act of its rulers must be excused, if not imitated.

> And so for the past ten years I have been convinced that the destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the Socialism movement.

> On my return from Spain I thought of exposing the Soviet myth in a story that could be easily understood by almost anyone and which could be easily translated into other languages (Collected Essays III: 458).

In order to grant his story the publicity and political concern he wanted it to be given, Orwell was eager to get his novel published on the eve of the Cold War. In Orwell’s logic it was best to show the corruption of the Soviet Union when they were at their height of power and popularity (J. Meyers 245). By getting his novel published at this time, Orwell ensured that the ideological implications of Animal Farm would not be put aside and he hoped that somehow his novel would get people to think about the Soviet regime, and make them eager to build a true socialist society.

Finally a publisher house was found to produce the novel. The novel became a great success and the company was able to profit from Orwell’s previous efforts. Critics showed
however, that it was indeed impossible in the 1940s to read the beast fable of Animal Farm without thinking of Stalin. Most of the comments on the novel were therefore bluntly negative. Kingsley Martin, for example, “called Orwell a Trotskyist (the derogatory name for anyone who opposed Stalin), claimed that he’d ‘lost faith in mankind’ and concluded that his satire ‘is historically false and neglectful of the complex truth about Russia’” (J. Meyers 251). However, Animal Farm was not as blunt a Trotskyite view on Russia as Martin assumed. Both Napoleon and Snowball are portrayed negatively and the other animals are depicted as stupid beasts which cannot see through the actions of the pigs. So, “though Trotsky was Stalin’s victim, Orwell thought he was potentially as great a villain as Stalin and both men had betrayed the Revolution” (J. Meyers 249).

The ideological tone of the novel secured its worldwide and immediate success. In a couple of months all the copies were sold out and even the Queen wanted to read it. In order to get hold of a copy anyway, a Royal Messenger was sent to the Anarchist bookshop, and it greatly pleased Orwell to hear that the Queen was forced to go and buy the book at the Anarchists’ (J. Meyers 251). The Queen’s zeal to get the book showed that Animal Farm got tackled for its ideological standpoints, but that it also presented the matter in such a brilliant way that it succeeded in breaching the gap between all ranks and classes.

7 The horror of ideology: Nineteen Eighty-Four

During the last years of his life, Orwell produces grimmer stories. Animal Farm has already left us with no hope for the future, but his last novel, Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949), goes even further. Whereas the animals in Animal Farm are still united in their “comradeship of suffering” (Williams George Orwell 73-74), Winston will be all alone in his struggle against the Party, and he will be all alone when he has to suffer. By this time Orwell has become “‘a socialist, who popularized a severe and damaging criticism of the idea of socialism and of its adherents. He was a believer in equality, and a critic of class, who founded his later work on a deep assumption of inherent inequality, inescapable class difference” (Williams Culture and Society 277). Inescapability is indeed the keyword in the totalitarian world of Ingsoc.
7.1 The ideology of Ingsoc

Ingsoc is the political party which controls the whole state of Oceania, where Winston lives. Whereas Animalism shows us how good intentions can go bad, Ingsoc is portrayed as a thought-out authoritarian regime which has no respect for its civilians. The inhabitants of Oceania live from day to day, always in fear and always aware that today might be their last day. Ingsoc is a reign of terror: people fear not only the Party but also the people on the street and even their own family and friends. The most amazing thing about the regime, however, is that it is extremely well organized. For Winston to beat the Party will be a hopeless situation.

7.1.1 The principles of Ingsoc

Every political party is of course in need of a party programme. Therefore it is remarkable that the novel gives so little information about the actual principles of Ingsoc. Naturally, this lack of clarity is a feature of the totalitarian regime itself, which wants the people to know as little as possible so that its power can augment each year. But nevertheless it remains astonishing that “The Party” as it is referred to, only has three basic maxims (Nineteen Eighty-Four 6):

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

These maxims are never enlightened to the people. Everywhere across the streets posters with such slogans are visible, but nowhere can we find how the maxims need to be interpreted. The slogans seem in itself contradictory, being three equations of opposite concepts. As readers we immediately understand that if freedom is absent and ignorance is presented as the highest goal for the inhabitants, this will lead to an administration which gets

5 For Jeffrey Meyers “One problem is that the totalitarian state has no ideology: “The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. … Power is not a means, it is an end. … The object of power is power” (287). However, if we stick to Williams’ definitions of ideology as “(a) the formal and conscious beliefs of a class or other social group – as in the common usage of ‘ideological’ to indicate general principles or theoretical positions … or (b) the characteristic world-view or general perspective of a class or other social group” (Culture 26), I think we can easily say that the Inner Party has a general perspective on the world of a class-layered society in which they dominate the other inhabitants. Their beliefs lie exactly in this establishment of power. One can of course argue that Ingsoc creates a false ideology to keep the Oceanians down, but even then there is no problem. First of all this idea is then in itself still backed-up by the Party’s conscious beliefs in a hierarchical society of which they are in charge, which makes it an ideology, and second of all this forged system undoubtedly functions as an ideology for the people under the yoke of Ingsoc. The narrowed-down and forged information that is transmitted to them is cleverly shaped into a general system with slogans and general principles, both typical features of ideologies.
carte blanche for its activities. And we are not the only ones who do not really get the grip of these slogans. Winston himself is also at loss about their exact meaning. The Inner Party, the highest rank in the system consisting of the people who make all the decisions, are the only ones who are fully aware of its connotations. Only in the last chapters, at the moment where Winston is sure to be defeated, he gets initiated in the true meaning of the maxims:

You know the party slogan: “Freedom is Slavery.” Has it ever occurred to you that it is reversible? Slavery is freedom. Alone – free – the human being is always defeated. It must be so, because every human being is doomed to die, which is the greatest of all failures. But if he can make complete, utter submission, if he can escape from his identity, if he can merge himself in the Party so that he is the Party, then he is all-powerful and immortal (NEF 277).

The Party deliberately leaves the people hanging as to the meaning of their political principles. Via this move they increase their domination over the inhabitants. Moreover, when you only use three maxims you always have the freedom to twist them so that they exactly proclaim what you want. Williams points out that culture is better understood as “the signifying system through which necessarily a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored” (Culture 13). By remaining vague in their communication, the culture and ideology of Ingsoc can be adapted for every purpose.

However, Winston and Julia’s rebellion against the regime indicates that the Party is not overall successful in its mute acceptance of the ideology. Both of them are pretending to be in line with the party policy, while at the same time trying to overthrow the system. The Party is sequentially well aware that adversaries will always be present. So in order to make its totalitarian regime succeed, they realize they need to convert people instead of making them obey:

We are not contend with negative obedience, nor even with the most abject submission. When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your own free will. We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us: so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul (NEF 267).

The strength of Ingsoc lies exactly in this way of taking action. Orwell leaves no hope for revolution because there are never any opponents alive to revolt. The rivals are not suppressed, they are converted, which undermines every base for a revolution. The Party realizes that the crucial factor in an ideology is the mind. In Down and Out in Paris and London Orwell shows how the French government can deport him for having communist
sympathies. Although the French policy will be safe as long as there are no opponents on their ground, their decision leads not to a situation which is as secure as in Oceania. In theory, France always runs the risk of an attack by all the expelled people. Their expulsion may even increase the danger of a plot against France, because all the heretics are free to gather and discuss their actions in another country. In Oceania there is no such risk, because there are no people who can revolt. Of course, Winston and Julia prove that some individuals always try, but they are never numerous enough to succeed. The Inner Party thus has cleverly foreseen that “power is [only] collective” (NE-F 276).

7.1.2 The means of Ingsoc

To facilitate control over the minds of Oceania, the Inner Party has thought of some clever inventions. Their advantage is that they are in charge of all the means. By installing an airtight class regime the Inner Party has also secured itself against mutiny. Before the revolution scrutinizing studies were made by them about some previous totalitarian regimes to figure out how and why they failed. All this makes the Party into a powerful body with an elaborate system of mechanics to sustain control.

7.1.2.1 Terror

The most obvious way to make the inhabitants of Oceania obey is to make them afraid of their leaders and the regime. When they fear the reprisals for betrayal, there is of course less chance that they will indulge in any conspiracy. The most notorious of all these ways to scare people are of course the big posters with “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” written on it. Those posters can be found on every corner of the street, giving the people continuously the idea that they are being watched, which is no mere threat but proper reality.

However, the posters are not the only means by which the inhabitants of Oceania are terrified. The feeling of terror is also achieved in several other ways. All over the place microphones and cameras are hidden and members of the Thought Police are always on the look-out for traitors. So on the entire Oceanian soil there is absolutely no place where you can feel safe or alone. On the other hand, it must be noted that Orwell is rather naïve about this situation. When Winston is sneaking out to meet Julia, he knows that everything is safe because “he had made sure by cautious backward glances that he was not being followed”
(N E-F 124), as if the Thought Police would not be trained enough to follow Winston unnoticed. Moreover, if there are so many microphones and telescreens, he can easily be followed on monitors in some headquarter of the Thought Police. In the same way Julia proclaims that they are entirely safe in the bushes: “‘Yes. Look at the trees.’ They were small ashes, which at the same time had been cut down and had sprouted up again into a forest of poles, none of them thicker than one’s wrist. ‘There’s nothing big enough to hide a mike in’” (N E-F 125). It is remarkable to read how Orwell does not foresee that a microphone could be hidden under moss or in a trunk but the cautiousness with which Winston and Julia operate nevertheless demonstrates how terrified they are to get caught.

Terror is actually the main principle of Ingsoc. To reform the dissident inhabitants of Oceania their biggest fears are used against them. Winston, for example, is brought to conversion by the threat of rats devouring him alive, which is the worst thing in the world for Winston: “Of all the horrors in the world – a rat!” (N E-F 151). To escape from these fears, the prisoners are willing to betray whatever and whoever the Party asks. After fear has broken them down, the Party can shape them any way they want. In addition to that, rumours of forced-labour camps are spread (there is however, a distinct possibility that these camps do not exist. If the Party only wants to convert people by exposing them to their worst fears, why would there be any need for forced labour? In such camps the stress would be on submission, and not on conversion which is exactly what the party wants to achieve.) and public hangings of opponents are used to keep the mass incessantly frightened. When O’Brien is converting Winston, he openly admits that the whole regime is based on terror:

> Do you begin to see, then, what world we are creating? … A world of fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but more merciless as it refines itself. Progress in our world will be progress towards more pain.

The old civilisations claimed that they were founded on love or justice. Ours is founded upon hatred (N E-F 279).

By founding a whole ideology on fear, the Party diminishes the will of its members to revolt and overthrow it. Its success does therefore not lie with what they proclaim, but in the way they proclaim it. This terror is the most open way in which the Party forces the inhabitants to succumb to their ideology, but it also employs more subtle ways to impose its ideals upon the citizens of Oceania, which are at least as effective as their use of terror.
7.1.2.2  Access to truth and knowledge

Via the telescreens the Party already controls the lives of its inhabitants, but there is more. The Party is well aware that as long as there is no evidence for their actions or utterances, they are protected against any revolution. So as to rule out the knowledge of the Oceanians, they install a whole system in which they constantly rewrite past and present. A complete department, the Records Department, is in charge of constantly reshaping the past. Two purposes can be linked to these activities.

Firstly, when there is never any compromising material available, the people will never be capable of proving that this or that was a bad decision: “Everything faded into mist. The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth. Just once in his life he [Winston] had possessed – after the event: that was what counted – concrete, unmistakable evidence of an act of falsification” (N E-F 78).

Secondly, people will easily accept what the Party is proclaiming, because they can never find any counterevidence. When every record you can come across states exactly what is true for that moment in time, you have no reason to mistrust what you see or hear. On top of that, people start doubting their own minds. If there is no evidence that what you are thinking is correct, you start to believe that you are the one who has it wrong:

If he could have been certain that O’Brien was lying, it would not have seemed to matter. But it was perfectly possible that O’Brien had really forgotten the photograph. And if so, then already he would have forgotten his denial of remembering it, and forgotten the act of forgetting. How could one be sure that it was simply trickery? Perhaps that lunatic dislocation in the mind could really happen: that was the thought that defeated him (N E-F 259-260).

When O’Brien is “curing” Winston, he openly talks about the true goals of the regime, and how they only want to dominate the human race. Interestingly, O’Brien shows that the Inner Party members, of whom one would assume that they are the most eager followers of the original doctrinaire, use other ideologies as long as it suits them. These ideologies often run completely counter to their own beliefs, but they honestly see no harm in that. Nevertheless, they keep denying the faithfulness of that ideology somehow, leading to a schizophrenic situation:

‘… The earth is the centre of the universe. The sun and the stars go round it.’ … ‘For certain purposes, of course, that is not true. When we navigate the ocean, or when we predict an eclipse, we often find it convenient that the stars are millions upon millions kilometres away.
But what of it? Do you suppose it is beyond us to produce a dual system of astronomy? …’

(N.E-F 278).

The cleverest of all these forgeries is undoubtedly the Party’s creation of Goldstein. The Party needs to be endlessly at war to keep the people interested in their affairs. However, even that would cease to interest the Oceanians after a while. Therefore one national enemy is created, who constantly threatens to overthrow the Ingsoc ideology: “The heretic, the enemy of society will always be there to be stamped upon” (N.E-F 280). The image of this traitor is further used to create a whole fictitious opposition to the Party. “The Brotherhood”, as it is called, is used by the government as a tool to break down every dissident soul. Before suspicious people can change anything about the system, they are incorporated into “the Brotherhood”, where the Party can consciously keep an eye on them. Moreover, this new ideology, Goldstein’s ideology, is created by the Party and written down in “the book”. Therefore the Party proves to be fully aware of their own soft spots and exactly by this it is capable of foreseeing revolution and keeping it down.

7.1.2.3 Annihilation

Somewhat contradictory to the principles of Ingsoc – although this is of course a dubious point giving the changing ideas – the Party always destroys its enemies in the end. It is thus concerned with converting its enemies, making them think and believe as a good party member, but then it kills them nonetheless. Some reasons for this approach lie in the status of dead rebels. The Inner Party realizes what power martyrdom can bring to the opposition: “And above all we do not allow the dead to rise up against us. You must stop imagining that posterity will vindicate you, Winston” (N.E-F 266). Often destroying your enemy only makes the rest of the dissidents stronger in mind, making a revolution more plausible than before. This is another reason why conversion is preferred to submission. But then it remains unclear why the Party decides to kill the heretics at long last:

When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your own free will. We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us: so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul. We make him one of ourselves before we kill him (N.E-F 267, emphasis mine).
Ironically, O’Brien first appeals to the notion of free will. In the totalitarian regime of Ingsoc all free will has been abolished, but O’Brien is still calling on Winston’s common sense to choose to convert. Since supporting the ideology of Ingsoc is the real purpose of the Party, it is not hard to understand why O’Brien wants Winston to believe in its ideology. But therefore it becomes even more remarkable that in the end the enemies are killed all the same. The Party must somehow not be confident enough to let them live. Winston does not understand this way of thinking either: “Then why bother to torture me? thought Winston, with a momentarily bitterness” (N-E-F 267).

It seems that the Party is just trying to better be safe than sorry. To be completely sure, the enemies of the Party are not only killed, they are annihilated. The threat of martyrdom lets the Party erase the people who oppose them:

You will be lifted clean out from the stream of history. We shall turn you into gas and pour you into the stratosphere. Nothing will remain of you; not a name in a register, not a memory in a living brain. You will be annihilated in the past as well as in the future. You will never have existed (N-E-F 266-267).

From day to day the Oceanians live with the notion that there best friends or family members could have been vaporized overnight. They can easily wake up in the morning to find that someone is missing, and never figure out what has happened to that person. It is another, very effective use of terror to make every inhabitants toe the line. Furthermore, literally no trace ever gets found of the heretics. The alteration of the past therefore does not only count for party policy, but it is even applied to the smallest human being. Not a single risk is taken. Everything that might possibly leave a scar on the Party’s ideology is cleverly wiped out.

7.2 Manipulating several generations

The revolution of Ingsoc happens presumably in the fifties, which means that it has been into existence twenty till twenty-five years. Winston himself has difficulties remembering what the world looked like before the revolution, and everyone younger than thirty has no recollection whatsoever of the previous capitalist ideology. The longer the revolution will stand, the less people will revolt to get back to the way it was, because no-one will any longer remember. The children of Oceania are also forced to attend an organisation
called “The Spies”, where they are indoctrinated with the principles of Ingsoc to make them into perfect party members.

‘Why can’t we see the hanging?’ roared the boy in his huge voice.

‘Want to see the hanging! Want to see the hanging!’ chanted the little girl, still capering round.

Some Eurasian prisoners, guilty of war crimes, were to be hanged in the Park that evening, Winston remembered. … Children always wanted to see it. He took his leave of Mrs Parsons and made for the door. But he had not gone six steps down the passage when something hit the back of his neck an agonisingly painful blow. It was as though a red-hot wire had been jabbed into him. He spun round just in time to see Mrs Parsons dragging her son back into the doorway while the boy pocketed a catapult.

‘Goldstein!’ bellowed the boy as the door closed on him. But what most struck Winston was the look of helpless fright on the woman’s greyish face (N E-F 25-26).

Mrs Parsons’ children are all exited about the hanging of some traitors. The cruelty of the event slips their minds. In the weekly meetings of the Spies, the children are constantly dragged into the heroic stories of the Party because the Ingsoc policy has foreseen that children can be a means of power. If they can only turn them into ideal inhabitants the problem of protest will eventually solve itself within a couple of decades. Meanwhile the children are already an incredibly valuable tool for the Party. Every moment they are on the lookout for traitors and thought criminals. While their parents or relatives are feeling safe in their own home, the children eavesdrop at the doors and denounce their family members to the Thought Police.

Fear of your own children has by now become another everyday horror in Oceania. Parents are no longer in control of the education of their children, and even in the scarce moments when they are, parents are still continuously controlled by the telescreens. There is no way for dissidents to pass on their revolutionary ideas to their children. Although Winston knows the cruelty of the regime, it is only in seeing scene at the Parsons’ house that he realizes how harsh it can be. He is “struck by the look of helpless fright on the woman’s greyish face” (N E-F 26).

Both Mrs Parsons and Winston realize how dangerous this situation is for adults. And the fact that they are still capable of realizing this, proves that the ideology of Ingsoc cannot convince everyone. Their critical thoughts have not yet disappeared, and this is exactly why
they have to fear Mrs Parsons’ children: “With those children, he [Winston] thought, that woman must lead a life of terror. Another year, two years, and they would be watching her night and day for symptoms of unorthodoxy” (NE-F 26).

Mr Parsons however, fully supports his children in their veneration for and support of the Party. Parsons is a rather dumb character who swallows everything the Party proclaims. Upon hearing how his children attacked Winston, he apologizes to him, but expresses his admiration for the good party members his children turn out to be. Arguably a certain amount of adults gets actually converted via their children. Whether this is also the case for Mr Parsons is hard to figure out. Winston consciously describes him as dumb and naïve, which makes him into the perfect party member, but he never tells us that Parsons used to be different before he had children. In this case, the man is probably just easily deceived by the Party strategies.

To Winston, Parsons is the only one who is sure to evade an arrest by the Thought Police. When Winston is in the Ministry of Love some months later, he therefore cannot believe what he sees in front of his eyes: “‘You here!’ he said. Parsons gave Winston a glance in which there was neither interest nor surprise, but only misery” (NE-F 244). Misery might well be the word which summons up how Parsons feels. As a true believer in Ingsoc he has been arrested nevertheless. Orwell has said about Dickens that “In every page of his work one can see a consciousness that society is wrong somewhere at the root” (qtd. in J. Meyers 287), and this same principle can now be applied to Nineteen Eighty-Four. The utter defeat of the ideology is predominantly present in Parsons’ arrest. However, the most terrible thing of all is how Parsons, like the animals in Animal Farm, is too dumb to realize that the Party is not the saviour of humanity it proclaims to be. Upon Parsons’ arrival Winston asks him whether he has done something wrong: “‘Of course I’m guilty!’ cried Parsons with a servile glance at the telescreen. ‘You don’t think the Party would arrest an innocent man, do you?’” (NE-F 245). In Parsons we find the embodiment of the principles of Ingsoc: never doubt what the Party proclaims, never trust your own memory. He demonstrates how successful Ingsoc’s manipulation can be. When the true believer in Ingsoc gets vaporized (because eventually that is what will happen to him), the ideology, even the rotten ideology of the Party, has utterly failed.
7.3 Newspeak

In the world of Oceania a new communication system has emerged. This holds substantial benefits for the Party: “A fascist regime might quickly see the use of broadcasting for direct political and social control” (Williams Television 18). Before the revolution, modern English was the official language. The idea behind the linguistic switch is that you can make upheaval and opposition impossible when people are no longer capable of thinking the wrong ideas. In this way the Party turns the language into an ideological instrument. “The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the worldview and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible” (N E-F 312).

How much the Party might be trying to control the thoughts of their members, the Newspeak vocabulary is not as big a success as the Party had hoped it to be. In Nineteen Eighty-Four there is no-one who uses Newspeak as its only means of communication (N E-F 312). Most of the people are still thinking in Oldspeak (what was then English) and are using Newspeak words only if necessary. Winston, being so much opposed to Ingsoc, of course still uses Oldspeak, except when forging the newspaper articles, which need to be in Newspeak. Syme, a friend of Winston’s, remarks on his use of Newspeak:

“You don’t have a real appreciation of Newspeak, Winston,” he said almost sadly. ‘Even when you write it you’re still thinking in Oldspeak. I’ve read some of those pieces that you write in the Times occasionally. They’re good enough, but they’re translations. In your heart you’d prefer to stick to Oldspeak … (N E-F 54-55).

It is of course not weird that Winston thinks in Oldspeak, if it has not yet become the everyday language of the population, but it is another indication of how Winston does not fit into the Ingsoc-system. Syme notes that Winston is still “thinking” in Oldspeak, which brings him in a risky position. If they wanted to, the Party could easily arrest him for Oldspeak-thoughts. However, in this case the chances are rather small, since the Party itself only assumes that Newspeak will become the sole language by 2050. Nevertheless, Winston becomes uneasy upon Syme’s remark, and for good reasons. Syme is depicted as a naïve character, but he has seen Winston through. So if Syme can derive the truth, the Thought Police can – and probably will – be aware of his feelings towards the Party.

Winston still has to work on his appreciation for Newspeak, but Syme on the other hand, is fond of it. He is employed in the Research Department, which has to compile the
next edition of the Newspeak dictionary. Upon meeting Winston he delivers a speech, showing his love for the concept behind Newspeak. In this talk his naivety about Ingsoc and its policies shows through. “Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it” (N E-F 55). This is exactly what the Party is aiming at and which is a very perilous use of communication, because “there is the danger, as we get used to the particular way of looking at the world which our favourite paper or programme embodies, that we shall forget that it is, after all, only one of many possible ways” (Williams Communications 28). Syme and a lot of other people in Oceania have become prey to these wiles already and the longer this situation lasts, the harder it will become to escape them.

Williams’ “Own view is that we have been wrong in taking communication as secondary. Many people seem to assume as a matter of course that there is, first, reality, and then, second, communication about it” (Communications 11). The Inner Party indeed understands that communication is the key to domination. It has already proven this by making access to documents nearly impossible and by even falsifying earlier newspapers so that they do not contain anything that is not in line with the current practices. On top of that the Research Department is constantly involved in reducing the language as drastically as possible. In Winston’s time everybody is still using the ninth edition of the Newspeak dictionary, but there are already some drafts of the tenth edition circulating – O’Brien has one in his possession – and Syme is already working on the eleventh edition in the Research Department. The meeting between Winston and O’Brien is of course never about the dictionary, but it shows that the rate at which the dictionaries are composed is extremely high.

Syme is already working on the eleventh edition, while the tenth is not due to appear for several months.

‘Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a singly human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now?’

‘Except ——’ began Winston doubtfully, and then stopped.

It had been on the tip of his tongue to say ‘Except the proles,’ but he checked himself, not feeling fully certain that his remark was not in some way unorthodox. Syme, however, had divined what he was about to say.

‘The proles are not human beings,’ he said carelessly’ (N E-F 55-56).

The proles are not obliged to speak Newspeak according to the Inner Party. This class is constantly reminded that they are dumb and inferior and so the Party feels no need to force
them to use Newspeak vocabulary. “As the Party slogan put it: ‘Proles and animals are free’” (N.E-F 75). It is hard to assess how often the proles are confronted with Newspeak and how much of it they have appropriated. No telescreens have to be placed in the proles’ houses, but they are not prohibited to own one. These telescreens of course only report in Newspeak so the chances are real that a reasonable amount of proles understands Newspeak. According to the conversation Winston has with a prole, they do not speak it themselves, which is logical if we keep in mind that even the Outer Party still mostly uses Oldspeak. That the Party does not interfere can be linked to the general attitude of the Inner Party towards the proles. The proles resemble to the Inner Party the masses, “the modern … many-headed multitude or mob: low, ignorant, unstable” (Williams Keywords 195). The Party does not consider it possible that the proles will ever doubt the official ideology let alone that they will revolt:

The programme it [Goldstein’s book] sets forth is nonsense. The secret accumulation of knowledge – a gradual spread of enlightenment – ultimately a proletarian rebellion – the overthrow of the Party. You foresaw yourself that that was what it would say. It is all nonsense. The proletarians will never revolt, not in a thousand years or a million. They cannot (N.E-F 274).

This idea of the proles as ignorant is also reflected in the way the proles are manipulated. One would be inclined to think that the Party would not bother about the proles if it states that these are free. However, since Ingsoc is a totalitarian regime, it wants to leave nothing to chance. Whereas the Inner Party is hard to manipulate and convert, the proles on the contrary, cause no difficulties whatsoever:

To keep them in control was not difficult. A few agents of the Thought Police moved always among them, spreading false rumours and marking down and eliminating the few individuals who were judged capable of becoming dangerous; but no attempt was made to indoctrinate them with the ideology of the Party. It was not desirable that the proles should have strong political feelings. All that was required of them was a primitive patriotism which could be appealed to whenever it was necessary … (N.E-F 74-75).

Proles thus turn out not to be as free as the Party presents it. This is the ingenuity of Ingsoc’s ideology. The proles are made to believe that they are free by not being forced to get telescreens or to speak Newspeak. But every suspicious or intelligent person in cleverly wiped out. We can only guess what the Party does to these proles. Since the Party is not
concerned with the proles at all they will not try to convert them (and even if they would, heretics still get killed in the end), so most likely he or she will get shot instantaneously.

Surprisingly, the Party does not even try to turn the whole group of proles into zealous party members. This must mean that they somehow do fear the proles – for if they really did not, why bother to eliminate the dangerous ones – which runs counter to the idea that the proles are low and unstable. Moreover, if those proles are so easy to manipulate, they should be the ideal group to convert. Given their number it would give the Party an incredible advantage to have the proles wholly on their side. One can argue that by keeping them dumb they are already in control, which I do not deny, but in incorporating the proles in the system they could be used as an actual tool to put pressure on the members of the Outer Party, which would render the Inner Party even more power than they already have.

Overall, communication turns out to be a core concept in the ideology of Ingsoc. The dumbest group does not even have to be initiated into the ideology of Ingsoc as long as the communication system is used thoughtfully. By spreading simple rumours, the Party can shape the proles whichever way they want. The only thing needed is the clever use of their means of communication. For the Outer Party Ingsoc furnishes a harsher but even more effective application of the language. Via Newspeak the Party cleverly disposes of any possibility to even think in a dissident way. Language is shaped into the perfect ideological tool. “In the end we will make thoughtcrime literally impossible” (N E-F 55), is indeed the utter goal of the Party.

In order to control the mind, as they want to, the Inner Party is fully aware that it must control the language first and foremost. “‘The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak,’ he [Syme] added with a sort of mystical satisfaction” (N E-F 55). No-one is indeed capable of thinking without composing phrases and when there are no words left to invent ideas that run counter to Ingsoc’s ideology, opposition will simply cease to exist. That is why Winston writes in his diary: “Thoughtcrime does not entail death: thoughtcrime IS death” (N E-F 30).

7.4 Contesting Big Brother

7.4.1 Fighting the ideology

No matter how hard Ingsoc is trying to indoctrinate everybody, some people still find ways to escape their doctrine. The individuals most capable of opposing the ideology are the
Outer Party members. They are not as zealous as the Inner Party, which lives for the ideology of Ingsoc, and not as dumb as the proles who are not capable of revolting. In Nineteen Eighty-Four the struggle between the individual and the system is covered. The core question is how an individual can escape a totalitarian regime like that of Ingsoc and remain ideologically independent. The novel thus evolves around two opposite meanings of ideology. Oceania is prey to a system of ideas appropriate to a particular group (Williams Keywords 157), the Inner Party, which is in charge of the whole community. Apart from that, “ideologist was often … generally equivalent to revolutionary” (Williams Keywords 154), which gets embodied in both Winston and Julia. They will become the critics of the authoritarian regime.

Of them two, Winston is definitely the most ideological person. Right from the start he is presented as a “thoughtcriminal”, one not in line with the party ideology. The problem with Winston is that he still thinks. The Party can only succeed in its plans if everybody in Oceania becomes “unconscious” and swallows whatever it proclaims. One of the first acts in the novel in which Winston engages, is writing down his thoughts, the ultimate prove that he both disagrees with the Party policy and that he is still aware of the world outside and the way things used to be:

The thing he was about to do was to open a diary. This was not illegal (nothing as illegal, since there were no longer any laws); but if detected it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least by twenty-five years in a forced-labour camp. ...

For some time he sat gazing stupidly at the paper. … It was curious that he seemed not merely to have lost the power of expressing himself, but even to have forgotten what it was that he had originally intended to say. For weeks past he had been making ready for this moment, and it had never crossed his mind that anything would be needed except courage. The actual writing would be easy. All he had to do was to transfer to paper the interminable restless monologue that had been running inside his head, literally for years. At this moment, however, even the monologue had dried up (N E-F 8-10).

Winston is portrayed as a very convinced character. He decides to break the rules, which will inevitably lead to his death, but that is a risk he is willing to take. This choice is noteworthy since the diary will never mean anything to anyone. “Revolution and revolutionary and revolutionize have of course also come to be used … to indicate fundamental changes, or fundamentally new developments, in a very wide range of activities” (Williams Keywords 273). Winston is perfectly aware that this diary will never put any
fundamental changes into motion: “He wondered again for whom he was writing the diary. … And in front of him there lay not death but annihilation. The diary would be reduced to ashes and himself to vapour. Only the Thought Police would read what he had written, before they wiped it out of existence and out of memory” (N. E-F 29). By risking his life for nothing, Winston proves to be a really ideological character, fighting for his ideals even if it does not change the least.

Given that Winston has planned the whole act weeks beforehand, we get the idea that he is continuously trying to overthrow the Party, being a real adversary to Ingsoc. All through the novel Winston ponders on the ideological premises of the Party, on what he himself believes and on how these two views continuously clash with each other. His thinking is his actual revolution against the Party since it shows his resistance to the Party’s mind-altering strategies. However, although in the course of the novel Winston turns out to be a real ideological opponent to the Party, the problem with Winston is that he never actually does anything: “But one can imagine little knots of resistance springing up here and there – small groups of people banding themselves together, … so that the next generation can carry on where we leave off” (N. E-F 163, emphasis mine). Winston is the dreamer who wants to change matters, but cannot. In feeling unable to express what he has been thinking for many years, it becomes clear that the Party is somehow influencing Winston. It is then not hard to foresee that Ingsoc will also get to him in the end, he will not be strong enough to resist. “Winston Smith is not like a man at all – in consciousness, in relationships, in the capacity for love and protection and endurance and loyalty” (Williams George Orwell 82).

‘Shall I say it, or will you?’ he said.

‘I will say it,’ said Winston promptly. ‘That thing is really turned off?’

‘Yes, everything is turned off. We are alone.’

‘We have come here because ———’

He paused, realising for the first time the vagueness of his own motives. …

‘We are enemies of the Party. We disbelieve in the principles of Ingsoc. We are thought-criminals. We are also adulterers. I tell you this because we want to put ourselves at your mercy. If you want us to incriminate in any other way, we are ready’ (N. E-F 177).

Because of his lack of initiative, Winston goes almost wild when he is approached by O’Brien and initiated in the Brotherhood. The moment he finds his sounding board in O’Brien, Winston finally speaks out. Once more, there is a depiction of Winston as a zealous ideological opponent of Ingsoc, but without the capacities to achieve anything. However, for
the first time, Winston doubts why he is there with O’Brien. All this time he has dreamt about a chance to do something, and now that he finally gets this chance he is somehow not sure about his intentions. In his beliefs in his own ideology and his subsequent aversion to the Ingsoc-ideology, Winston largely differs from his love Julia:

In the ramifications of Party doctrine she had not the faintest interest. Whenever he began to talk of the principles of Ingsoc, doublethink, the mutability of the past and the denial of objective reality, and to use Newspeak words, she became bored and confused and said that she never paid any attention to that kind of thing. One knew that it was all rubbish, so why let oneself be worried by it? She knew when to cheer and when to boo, and that was all one needed. If he persisted in talking of such subjects, she had a disconcerting habit of falling asleep (N E-F 163).

Julia is actually a very simple character, who always thinks in black-and-white and is not at all interested in what Ingsoc is actually about. She only breaks the laws when they impede her own life, and she never thinks how her cleverness (she is really good at betraying the Party in all sorts of ways) may actually help her to create a government that would bring freedom and pleasure into her life. Whereas Julia should have been the stronghold to which Winston could hold onto, giving him the confidence to bring his own ideological premises to life, she actually makes him see that the revolution which he so desperately wants is further away than he has even thought. Winston, with all his ideas on politics, is stunned that Julia is not interested in the political affairs of Ingsoc. Seeing the usefulness of her capacities, he desperately tries to explain his thoughts to her: “He tried to make her understand. This was an exceptional case. … Do you realise that the past, starting from yesterday, has been actually abolished?” (N E-F 162). But it is no use. “And what good was that?” (N E-F 162), is Julia’s only reply after Winston’s ardent speech. From that moment on, Winston thinks of Julia as rather dumb: “Talking to her, he realised how easy it was to present an appearance of orthodoxy while having no grasp whatever of what orthodoxy meant” (N E-F 163).

This disappointment in Julia is pushed aside by the fire O’Brien starts in their first encounter, and it is stirred up by the “actual proof” of an underground organisation. After his meeting with O’Brien, Winston cannot wait to get hold of “the book”. He sees it as the means which will make the ultimate revolution possible: “We must read it,” he said. “You too. All members of the Brotherhood have to read it” (N E-F 209). This book is of course another forgery of the Party. Not surprisingly then, the book appears to be a disappointment to Winston in the end, because “he had still, he reflected, not learned the ultimate secret. He
understood how; he did not understand why” (N E-F 226). The importance, however, lies in the hope the book gives him, which will be one of the reasons why he is so easily deceived. Winston now believes that he is no longer alone in his struggle against the Party, but that he is part of a group which is strong enough to overthrow Ingsoc and that they will be able to make the difference.

Roughly then, there are three influences that reshape Winston’s own ideology. Firstly, the disillusion of Julia, who turns out not to be interested in ideology whatsoever. Secondly, O’Brien who easily deceives Winston because he ingeniously draws on Winston’s desires and because he cleverly uses all sorts of tactics which delude Winston. And thirdly, the book of Goldstein which convinces Winston that organised opposition is a fact. All this mingled together will make that Winston becomes less attentive, leaving him an easy prey for the Party.

7.4.2 Surrendering

Winston and Julia’s rebellion is too good to last, and they both know it. It comes as no surprise then that their hide-out gets surrounded by the Thought Police and that they are both taken away to the Ministry of Love. There, they will get trained to believe in the principles of Ingsoc and to abandon their own ideology. Little by little Winston and Julia (whose conversion is not illustrated in the book) will be taught to become the zealous party members Big Brother wants them to be.

When Winston arrives, however, he still has a long way to go: “‘If I could save Julia by doubling my own pain, would I do it? Yes, I would.’ But that was merely an intellectual decision, taken because he knew that he ought to take it. He did not feel it” (N E-F 250). The rebel in Winston is still omnipresent and the reasoning that characterizes him so well has remained. At this point Winston is still the ideological figure we know him to be, only concerned with what is ideologically right, but already it is visible that he is becoming numb. The decision to save Julia is based on pure ideological spirit, but his heart is no longer in it. This immediately raises questions about his love for Julia: “It is strange that Orwell could oppose the controls and the perversions with nothing better than the casual affair between Winston and Julia” (Williams George Orwell 81). Orwell indeed fails to present their adventure as one founded on love, but depicts it rather as a relation based on the hatred towards the Party. This creates an odd situation in which Winston claims to love Julia enough
to suffer as long as it saves her, but simultaneously is not capable of feeling anything for her. It is only his ideological spirit which makes him side with this option.

"There are three stages in your re-integration," said O’Brien. There is learning, there is understanding, and there is acceptance" (N E-F 273). The first stage consists of a torture chamber in which Winston gets punished for all the insubordination he engaged in. The Party forces dissidents into confessing cruel deeds, which afterwards gives them the right to punish and condemn the traitors “with reason”. At this point Winston still holds onto his own ideals: “The confession was a formality” (N E-F 252), but due to the cruelties he will give up his struggle. The strategy of the Party at this point is to torment people until they let go of their own ideals and are ready for the next step: to agree to what the Party imposes on them.

In the next stage the dissidents have to understand the party ideology. The beatings subside and there is more room for talking and convincing. The Party of course hangs on to its own ideological principles of converting and appealing to the rebel’s notion of comradeship and love for the Party to achieve their goals. Interestingly, it is at this stage that O’Brien unfolds the Party’s entire plan to Winston. By this, O’Brien already shows that Winston will never leave the Ministry of Love “uncured”. The government will never allow for someone with so much knowledge to be out on the streets again. The reasoning alone, however, does not suffice. Winston gets drugged in order to accept the ideology. When he is deluded he is no longer capable of thinking for himself. Winston’s biggest weapon against the Party thus gets wiped out, but it is a gradual process. Under influence of the drug Winston “for a fleeting instant” (N E-F 270) sees things the way O’Brien sees them and this causes him to question his own rationality. From the moment Winston doubts his own mind, he can no longer resist the Party.

The third and last phase of the re-integration is used to completely break down the remaining rebellious stains. The Party achieves this point easily, they only have to confront Winston with the truth. In the interrogation room, O’Brien places a mirror and forces Winston to look at himself. Upon seeing his skeleton-like body, Winston realizes that his mental potency does not at all resemble his physical state. At this instant O’Brien gets complete control over Winston: “Before he [Winston] knew what he was doing he had collapsed onto a small stool that stood beside the bed and burst into tears. He was aware of his ugliness, his gracelessness, a bundle of bones in filthy underclothes sitting weeping in the harsh white light: but he could not stop himself” (N E-F 285).

O’Brien establishes himself as a very clever man who knows how to manipulate the people he has to re-integrate. Meyers claims that “O’Brien’s absolute physical power enables
him to force Winston to accept his essentially mad belief in a society based on the principle of power” (V. Meyers 137). However, this is a wrong observation. Although O’Brien uses a perceptible amount of physical pain, a pattern can be distinguished which illustrates that the amount of physical pain is inversely proportional to the friendliness and conversational tone O’Brien uses⁶. The less resistance Winston offers, the less O’Brien uses physical torture, just like the Party ideology proclaims.

After Winston’s breakdown the last stage is still not completely finished. When O’Brien accuses Winston of having completely collapsed, Winston proves him wrong by claiming that he has not betrayed Julia (N E-F 286). O’Brien has no other choice than to admit that. However, the therapy is at least partly successful because Winston tells us that he can no longer fight the Party. “Besides, the Party was in the right. It must be so …” (N E-F 290, emphasis mine). Somehow Winston still does not seem to understand the ideology of Ingsoc. The Party must be right, because he can no longer think of a better alternative, but he still does not get the gist of the ideology. Winston has surrendered like the dumb proles, by now he even wants to believe in Ingsoc, but his reason keeps showing up from time to time. His conversion is still not complete yet:

In the old days he had hidden a heretical mind beneath an appearance of conformity. Now he had retreated a step further: in the mind he had surrendered, but he had hoped to keep the inner heart inviolate. He knew he was in the wrong. They would understand that – O’Brien would understand it. It was all confessed in that single foolish cry (N E-F 293).

Winston’s position at this point is not so straightforward. He has fully accepted the ideology, he is no longer wearing a mask, but somehow deep inside he is still hoping to find a way out of the system. Orwell makes us see that ideology is then not only a matter of intellectual decisions, but that it is part of your emotions and feelings and that these end up determining your unconsciousness. Winston “knows he is in the wrong”, but still he ends up having unorthodox thoughts. When O’Brien confronts him, Winston has to admit that he still hates Big Brother.

The stage of acceptance can be split up into two subdivisions: on the one hand the acceptance of and obedience to the Party, and on the other the complete surrender, the actual love for the ideology of Ingsoc. This last fraction is the shortest and easiest part of the re-integration. Falling back on their means of fear and terror, Winston is lead into a chamber

⁶ For a good analysis of O’Brien’s language use, see: Isabel Ermida, Linguistic Mechanisms of Power in Nineteen Eighty-Four: Applying Politeness theory to Orwell’s world
where “the worst thing in the world” – in his case rats – is waiting for him. Winston has seen the Party through and knows about their methods, but on seeing the rats he totally goes haywire: “‘You can’t do that!’ he cried out in a high cracked voice. ‘You couldn’t, you couldn’t! It’s impossible’” (N E-F 297). And once more, Ingsoc’s politics of terror prove to be extremely efficient. Winston’s fear is so unbearable to him that he abandons all his ideological beliefs unconditionally:

The mask was closing on his face. The wire brushed his cheek. And then – no, it was not relief, only hope, a tiny fragment of hope. Too late, perhaps too late. But he had suddenly understood that in the whole world there was just one person to whom he could transfer his punishment – one body that he could thrust between himself and the rats. And he was shouting frantically, over and over:

‘Do it to Julia, Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don’t care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!’ (N E-F 299-300).

Eventually, Winston gives up his rebellion, his beliefs and even his love. He forsakes everything he has been living for and becomes the dumb, obedient party member he should have been the whole time. Winston does no longer think about subjects, he merely sits in his local, drinks his gin and admits he is defeated: “‘At the time when it happens’, she [Julia] had said, ‘you do mean it.’ He had meant it” (N E-F 306). And so, in the end, Winston is nothing more than a numb person. The battle of ideologies has been harsh, but he has lost it. From now on, he is the zealous party member, his re-integration is now wholly complete:

He was walking down the white-tiled corridor, with the feeling of walking in sunlight, and an armed guard at his back. The long-hoped-for bullet was entering his brain.

He gazed at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose.

But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother (N E-F 311).

From all the novels Orwell has written, Nineteen Eighty-Four is definitely the most pessimistic one. In Oceania there is no way out of the totalitarian regime, you can only collapse. In his comment on Animal Farm, Williams says that “The very deep identification between the laboring and exploited animals and the laboring and exploited poor is retained …”, (George Orwell 73). The Outer Party members can easily be put on a par with these.
The prospects of the Oceanians are indeed not more roseate than those of the animals on Animal Farm, and in some aspects they are even worse. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* gives an almost grimmer view on totalitarian regimes than Orwell’s previous novel does. In the end, there only remains disillusion: “Winston, neither rescued nor rewarded, is reduced to infantilism, cowardice and self-pitying alcoholism. His enlightenment about the meaning of his life – that he is merely subject to a monstrous lust for power – coincides with the extinction of all hope” (Meyers, J. 287).

8 Conclusion

Ideology is one of the main pillars in Orwell’s works. In this thesis I have tried to show how ideology influences the lives of the characters in Orwell’s novels. Raymond Williams has been very useful as a framework to do so. During his lifetime, Orwell wrote more novels than those discussed here of course. His novels can be subdivided into two groups: the factional novels and the fictional ones. “Orwell’s writing in the 1930s can be conventionally divided between the ‘documentary’ and ‘factual’ work on one hand, and the ‘fictional’ and ‘imaginative’ work on the other” (Williams George Orwell 39). *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *Homage to Catalonia* clearly represent his documentary work. The last two novels, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, are fully fictional, and have a very strong political undertone.

The first novel, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, is the least ideological, in the sense that the protagonists are less linked to or determined by ideology. Orwell and his companions are not concerned with ideological premises. That is to say, they have their own ideological ideas, but these are not prominent. The novel depicts a heterogeneous set of ideologies, of which none is decisive. From an expedient point of view the protagonists adapt their ideology so as to benefit the most from every situation. The main point of the novel is then to show how futile ideology actually is. Surviving overrules all ideological principles.

*Homage to Catalonia* is crucial for the personality of Orwell. His decision to go to Spain is purely ideological but it turns out wholly different than he had expected. In the first months of his stay there, Orwell gets convinced to the core of the social ideals he has been dreaming of all along. However, the sudden betrayal of the Spanish government and his abrupt departure out of Catalonia will utterly disappoint him. Orwell is much more influenced by ideological ideals this time than in *Down and Out*. Ideology is what the Spanish Civil War is
all about. Those months in Catalonia are therefore unique in Orwell’s life. The original ideological spirit with which he comes to Spain is simultaneously invigorated and crushed down by his experiences in the war.

In *Animal Farm* we get a fuller view on ideological systems than was previously the case. The fictional genre allows for Orwell to explore the largest depths of political totalitarian systems. For the first time, ideology becomes a real tool for domination, a means by which people or animals can be enslaved. The hope that is present in his first novels gradually disappears in the course of this story. *Animal Farm* shows a communal experience of ideological abuse and a group of dumb beasts not capable of finding an answer to it. “Even the last sad scene, where the excluded animals look from man to pig and pig to man and cannot tell which is which carries a feeling that is more than disillusion and defeat” (Williams, *George Orwell* 74-75).

Orwell’s last novel is also his most despairing one. Whereas *Animal Farm* starts promisingly, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* immediately assures us that Winston will never have any chance to get away from the system. The situation in Oceania is utterly bleak and Orwell manages to create a waterproof system that cannot be overthrown. The fictional world is permeated with the concept of ideology. Ingsoc is the embodiment of a totalitarian regime that has complete control over its inhabitants due to its ingenious application of thoughts and ideas. This novel gives us the most pessimistic views on ideology and its abuses. In the world of Oceania, there is no hope.

In the four novels discussed an evolution can be traced. Both Orwell’s own life experiences and the types of novel he writes account for this. His writings evolve then from ideology as a minor facet in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, over a cherished conviction in his recount of the Spanish Civil War, to utter despair in the last works he writes. In the course of his writing, Orwell’s interest in social facts becomes an obsession with ideology (Williams *George Orwell* 77). In order to discern Orwell’s literary evolution “We have, rather, to try to understand, in the detail of experience, how the instincts of humanity can break down under pressure into an inhuman paradox; how a great and humane tradition can seem at times, to all of us, to disintegrate into a caustic dust” (Williams *Culture and Society* 284).


Hollis; George; A Study of George Orwell: The Man and his Works; London: Hollis and Carter, 1956.


