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> [I]t is ourselves we are encountering whenever we invent fictions. There may even be a real relation between certain kinds of effectiveness in literature and totalitarianism in politics.
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> **Frank Kermode** (*The Sense of an Ending*)

Harold Bloom called it "the anxiety of influence": the stuff the thing literary is made of, the artist's need to go at a tangent to the main stream[1]. This theory has an obvious relevance to the rise of what is known as "modernism", this decisive shift from the classic realist tradition to the aesthetics of the fragmentary. This need not detain us. The more critical question is one that Bloom's essay in fact carefully leaves aside: what happens once the period of crisis and of parting of the ways is over? What happens once the new bearings have themselves become the main stream? Do some forms of anxiety imply a return to classicism? *Can classicism be a "post-modernism"* (taken hereafter in its chronological sense)? The difficulty is acute as it raises more general questions, such as: does a revolution inevitably entail a reaction; is reaction conservative in essence? The difficulty becomes truly inextricable when one pushes this interrogation to its extreme logical consequences: do we not find forms of conservatism that are in essence progressive? Do we not constantly find instances of conservatism that conceive of themselves as decisive moves, not *backward*, but *forward*?

It has been remarked, and more often than once with spiteful irony, that although his first experiments in writing coincided with the acme of modernism, George Orwell, at heart, belonged to the classic realist tradition[2]. Most of the time, this is followed by a rejection into the limbos of what, at first reading presents itself as easy, "readable" literature. But the dismissal of a writer for his non-compliance with a set of fixed rules — be they those of a truly revolutionary movement — runs the all too patent risk of exhibiting its own partiality, perhaps even its own ignorance of British Literature's essential "anxiety": not a permanent, unflinching questioning of the classic realist stance, but a constant *wavering* between two modes of writing (between what has been described as the two major poles of metaphor and metonymy)[3]. Above all, such a dismissal is bound to remain ignorant of the excruciating paradox within which Orwell's theory of writing painfully shaped itself — an antithesis contemplating the necessity of a *classicism turned towards the future*.

Let us ponder for a while over the following remark: "One effect of the ghastly history of the last twenty years has been to make a great deal of ancient literature seem much more modern"[4]. On reading this, one feels like asking: much more modern *than what*? Surely, much more modern than might have been expected. But at the same time, one cannot feign to ignore that the names of T. S. Eliot and of James Joyce come up to Orwell's mind almost immediately after this remark, and both seem to be accused of having led British Literature

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[1] See The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry (New York: Oxford UP, 1973).

[2] In 1922, the year both The Waste Land and Ulysses came out, Orwell aged nineteen, joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, a move which may be construed both as a deliberate turning away from what he was later to call "the unintelligible intelligentsia", and as a nostalgic desire to follow in Kipling's footsteps.

[3] See David Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature (London: Edward Arnold, 1977).

[4] The Rediscovery of Europe", BBC broadcast talk, 10 March 1942, in The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, eds Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, 4 vols (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), II, p. 206. Subsequently referred to as CEJL.

into a backwater[5]. A few months later, the modernists' alleged fetishism of the past was to be analyzed in strictly political terms, this time, and Fascism was to be deemed the essential point to be tackled as far as Pound and Yeats were concerned[6].
This bears directly on our problem. Orwell's overt "post-modernist" stance should not be analyzed in the terms of an "anxiety of influence"; nor should it be thoughtlessly slighted as one more instance of a long list of conservative backlashes. It was all a matter of historical necessity, of relevance to the times. A good deal of ancient literature actually seemed to Orwell to be both much more modern than its used to be and much more modern than modernism itself, as it raised questions and implicitly provided answers that addressed the future of man, nay, even the future of literature. The past held in store the promise of a future, for which a new-fangled medium remained to be invented[7].
At issue here is nothing less than the risk of foreclosing Orwell's most provocative line of reflection. Indeed, Orwell was not content with shifting back from one mode to another. His was first and foremost an ethical stance, the stance of a self-appointed prophet for a post-modernist artistic revolution, which Orwell not only drew a theoretical sketch of, but which he also translated into an experience of writing. My contention in this paper is that for all the archaisms on which Orwell's writing actually grounded itself, his was a move, not backward, but forward, one that, far from marking its author as the late offspring of an outdated mode of writing, was later to make him the retrospective spokesman for any aesthetic movement intent on preserving things not *thought* but *felt*[8].

This is not meant to be a stark denial of the obvious: most evidently, Orwell's writing presents itself as a late "reactualization" of classic realism. His famous definition of what "good prose" should be like, is sufficient proof of his shameless anachronic conception of artistic representation. If good post-modernist prose is to be "like a window pane"[9], then one cannot see what should stop anyone from placing Orwell next to Arnold Bennett, Anthony Trollope, or George Gissing[10]. Even this definition of the novel at large, as "a story which attempts to describe credible human beings, and… to show them acting on everyday motives"[11], does not seem that of a man writing a quarter of a century after Virginia Woolf's ruthless indictment of Edwardian aesthetics[12]. Orwell's very concept of transparency inevitably implies that artistic representation should strike a balance between scene and summary, showing and telling, *mimesis* and *diegesis* — such a balance as had already been remorselessly disrupted by Woolf's definition of life as "the spasmodic, the obscure, the fragmentary, the failure"[13].

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[5] Ibid., "Tamerlane and Genghis Khan seem credible figures now, and Machavelli seems a serious thinker, as they didn't in 1910. We have got out of a backwater and back into history. I haven't an unqualified admiration for the writers of the early nineteen-twenties, the writers among whom Elliot and Joyce are chief names".
[6] "By large the best writers of our time have been reactionary in tendency, and though Fascism does not offer any real return to the past, those who yearn for the past will accept Fascism sooner than its probable alternatives […] The relationship between Fascism and the literary intelligentsia badly needs investigating, and Yeats might well be the starting-point" ("W. B. Yeats" [Horizon, Jan. 1943], CEJL, II, p. 276).
[7] "The best illustration of a permanent collusion between the ancient and the modern in Orwell's system of thought is probably the conception he has of the microphone: the new device would return poetry to its ancient role of oral music, thus freeing it from its contemporary 'intellectual pretentiousness'" ("Poetry and the Microphone" [Autumn 1943], CEJL, II, p. 331).
[8] I have shown elsewhere that the question of feeling was paramount in Orwell's aesthetics: F. Regard, 1984 de George Orwell (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 22 sqq.
[9] "Why I write" [1946], CEJL, I, p. 7.
[10] According to Orwell, "England [had] produced very few better novelists" than Gissing ("George Gissing" [March-June 1948], CEJL, IV, p. 433.
[11] Ibid.
[12] See "Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown" (1924), in Collected Essays (London: The Hogarth Press, 1966, rpt. 1968), I, p. 330: "For us those conventions are ruin, those tools are death".
[13] Ibid., p. 337.

Throughout his literary career, Orwell's dominant mode of writing fundamentaly remained that of a Gissing, never questioning the validity of an authorial discourse that controlled the discourse of the characters and predetermined the resolution of the issues. Even his use of free indirect speech in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* — by far Orwell's most daring experiment in writing — is never led astray into some kind of mimetically objectified style, and though in Part III the text tends to become multipersonal and varied in consciousness (one is even at pains to distinguish between the hero's voice and his torturer's), it remains clear throughout that the narrator never really absents himself entirely from the text. His voice assumes O'Brien's worldview, but the Inner Party member's definition of the future (a human face being stamped upon by a boot) is easily ascribable to the author of, say, "The Lion and the Unicorn", or any other famous political essay by Orwell, Never does the *diegesis* become wholly intractable: the narrator's initial monologic stance is most evidently "in ruins"; the rhetorical devices that had been designed to achieve a totalizing effect give the impression of having been subterraneaously eroded; the text obscenely exhibits its gnawing epistemological doubt; but never does the author allow the narrative to delete its own source of enunciation.

However, contrary to what appears to be commonly accepted, Orwell's ingrained classicism does not seem to me to be the result of a makeshift approach to the literary issue. What was consistently at stake was *the place of the writing subject*. Indeed, there is not a single theoretical essay by Orwell that does not foreground the *archaic* conception of *a source of meaning located in an authoritative centre*[14]. Whatever the issue tackled — politics, literary history, sciences, art — Orwell wages a permanent war against the growing arbitrariness between the signified and the signifier, between the thing *felt to be true* and the thing written — in his own terms: between the "dream-thought" and the "verbal thought"[15]. If one wishes to find a perfect opposite to Morris Zapp, let him fetch, Philip Swallow, not self-conscious enough, but Eric Blair[16].

Stephen Boyd, of the University of St. Andrews, recently half-jokingly remarked to me in passing that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* could indeed be construed as a satire on deconstruction, and that it should have been called *The Last Liberal Humanist in Europe*: his theory is that Winston (the Last Liberal Humanist) is cured of his false consciousness and old-hat metaphysical worldview by a Derrida-figure (O'Brien). The joke is one that obliquely reaches the essential Orwell. For him, every decoding simply could *not* be tolerated to erupt into another encoding. What was at stake was nothing less than the survival of Man — Man as an individual with a sense of his own consciousness, Man as a free agent capable of making his own moral history, Man as a source of meaning… Man as a transcendent principle. Winston is indeed the explicit incarnation and guardian of a certain "principle", which guarantees "the Spirit of Man"[17].

Winston's liberal idea of a transcendent humanity and Orwell's idea of the genuiness and legitimacy of the written text rejoin at some point, as both conceptions rest upon the apparently unshakeable assumption that there exists a "pre-verbal" domain which is also the lost realm of pure thought where the subject is validated. The slightest utterance, or even the slightest word, could find its own source, that is also, its own power and legitimacy, nowhere

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[14] The best illustration of this probably remains the very last sentence of "Why I write": "It is invariably where I lacked a political purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally" (CEJL, I, p. 7).

[15] See "New Words", CEJL, II, p. 4.

[16] Two of the protagonists in David Lodge's novel Small World (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984): Zapp is a caricature of the trendy deconstructionist (his motto is "every decoding is another encoding), whereas Swallow, a Hazlitt specialist, unwittingly becomes a hero of the antitheory school of English criticism.

[17] III, 3; p. 282 (I shall be using the 1989 Penguin edition. For the sake of my reader's comfort, I chose to give first the Part of the book, then the chapter — these are common to all editions — and, after the semicolon, the page number in my own particular edition).

but in this pre-verbal, pre-political, absolute centre of signification, of which the human soul unquestionably remained the recipient[18]. It is not enough to note that Orwell displayed a rare unawareness of the major modernist assets; nor does it suffice to reflect that, after all, such must have been the wonderland of pre-deconstructionist days: what has most to be said is that in an age of organized lying, writing just simply could not be made of *words*; one had to see the life-and-death necessity of positing the irreductibility of pre-verbal *thought*, of a sphere of authenticity and freedom, the validity of which was to be daily measured at the gauge of political efficiency[19]. *Language could not be left to speak by itself.*

It should always be borne in mind, therefore, that Orwell's eminently archaic conception of language and of the written word was not the symptom of a retarded fallacy, but rather the prominent sign of a decisive "post-modernist" move, prompted as much by the political environment in which Orwell had matured as an artist, as by what Orwell judged to be the modernist's indifference to ethical matter — their "benefit of clergy"[20]. What I propose to demonstrate now, is that Orwell's belief in a pre-verbal sphere of pure meaning was not solely a *meta-physical* question; what Orwell's writing was pre-eminently concerned with — and what gave his metaphysics of the sign an objective and even political correlative — was a preservation and a redefinition, not of an absent truth, but of a truth made every day tangible in *human experience.* "The first thing that we ask a writer is that… he shall say what he really thinks, what he really feels"[21].
The word *feel*, or *feeling*, bears strongly a multitude of ways, but we do not need to expand on this point to remind ourselves that, from Blake to Dickens, feeling, in its multi-faceted sense, had been considered the most absolute experience in humanity. Yet, Orwell's affirming emphasis on such a notion should not be analysed as one more desperate attempt at clinging to a mooring pole that could have saved him from the tide of modernism: here again, feeling is a dimension made dangerously necessary by political and ideological pressure[22]. Undeniably, however, here is a most unwieldy term. But perhaps the difficulty does not come so much from the semantic indeterminacy of the term, as from the usage it has been subjected to. Indeed, the present demonstration would now be smoothly drawing to an end, had not Herbert Read — a notable figure in the period that interests us, and one that also happened to know personally both Orwell and the most illustrious modernists — circulated the idea that the notion of *feeling* had been essential to the origins of… modernism[23]. What general relation

[18] Hence Orwell's motto for a writer (borrowed from Shakespeare): "To thine own self be true" ("Literature and Totalitarianism", CEJL, II, 134).
[19] See ibid., pp. 136-137: "It is easy to pay lip-service to the orthodoxy of the moment, but writing of any consequence can only be produced when a man feels the truth of what he is saying… Whoever feels the value of literature, whoever sees the central part it plays in the development of human history, must also see the life and death necessity [sic] of resisting totalitarianism, whether it be imposed on us from without or from within".
[20] See "Benefit of Clergy: Some Notes on Salvador Dali", CEJL, III, pp. 156-164.
[21] "Literature and Totalitarianism", op. cit., p. 134. I have analysed elsewhere the truly archaic way (from the Greek arché: beginning, ultimate underlying substance, ultimate undemonstrable principle) in which the coincidence of thought and feeling seems to be taken for granted throughout Orwell's theoretical work: "Archaïsme et modernité. La question du sens chez George Orwell", in Les Liens et le vide, Contraintes et libertés de la modernité, L. Roux ed. (Saint-Etienne: Presses de L'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1994).
[22] This is what in his eyes makes Dickens so much more modern than more immediate contemporaries: "When one reads any strongly individual piece of writing, one has the impression of seeing a face somewhere behind the page… It is the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is generously angry — … a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelling orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls" (CEJL, I, p. 460).
[23] See The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry (London: Faber and Faber, 1968). It is worth noticing that in his Cambridge lectures, Raymond Williams also made "the structure of feeling" the central element in the development of the modern novel, from Dickens to Lawrence: see The English Novel. From Dickens to Lawrence (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

obtains between Orwell's insistence on recentring the literary on feeling and the modernists' use of the Romantic notion, is the issue that will be pursued through the rest of this study.

While he was painfully completing one of the innumerable draft versions of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell wrote an essay entitled "Writers and Leviathan", in which he proposed to clarify his (as well as Winston Smith's) own particular predicament: "the position of the writer in an age of State control". "This is a political age", Orwell asserted, and " a purely aesthetic attitude towards life" had now become an irrelevancy to be ignored: "No one, now, could devote himself to literature as single-mindedly as Joyce or Henry James"[24]. It should be clear that this judgment cannot be sorted solely to a wartime moral code of conduct — the sort of moral code which urged Henry Moore to lay aside abstraction for the wartime period. The judgment pertains to the aesthetic sphere as much as to the moral one.

We already know that in "New Words", Orwell had made a clear distinction between what he considered to be the two fundamental layers of human consciousness: abstraction, or "verbal" thought — "a kind of chessboard upon which thoughts move logically and verbally" — and feeling, or "dream-thought — the "unverbal part of the mind", "the source of nearly all motives", from which everything that is authentic and valuable should issue:

> It is true that most of our waking thoughts are "reasonable" — that is, there exists in our minds a kind of chessboard upon which thoughts move logically and verbally… But obviously it is not the whole. The disordered, un-verbal world belonging to dreams is never quite absent from our minds… In a way this unverbal part of your mind is even the most important part, for it is the source of nearly all *motives*. All likes and dislikes, all aesthetic feelings, all notions of right and wrong (aesthetic and moral considerations are in any case inextricable) spring from feelings which are generally admitted to be subtler than words[25].

At about the same time, Orwell had also written an "Autobiographical Note" in which he had readily acknowledged the influence of James Joyce, T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence on his own development[26]. But about one year later, Orwell's position had become much clearer and his rejection of modernism more outspoken. He remarked on the BBC that whereas Auden, Spender and MacNeice had "swamped" literature in "propaganda", Eliot, Pound and Woolf, on the other hand, had "clogged" it with "technique"[27]. It was only a few weeks later, still on the BBC, that Orwell made his Shakespeare's maxim, "To thine own self be true", thus indirectly pointing out what he considered to be the artificiality essential to both previous attitudes.

Indeed the broadcast, dated June 19th 1941, is central to an understanding of Orwell's conception of commitment but also of his reading of modernism: albeit the link between the modernist "obsession with technique" and the totalitarian entrapment of intellectual integrity within "an artificial universe" is not explicitly made, it is one that remains deafeningly implicit. What is made particularly conspicuous in the conclusion of this broadcast is the radical opposition between technical *detachment* (form imposed from the *outside*) and the writing of *feeling* (form proceeding from the *inside*): "For writing is largely a matter of feeling which cannot always be controlled from outside"[28]. The fundamental ingredient to Orwell's aesthetics of "partisanship" is then unmistakably its ingrained reluctance to a

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[24] CEJL, IV, pp. 407-409.

[25] CEJL, II, p. 4. It should be noted that the recurrent image of the chessboard was not simply an allusion to an historical datum (see 1984 de George Orwell, op. cit., pp. 118-119): from Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass (from which, among many other possibilities, Orwell's initial title for Nineteen Eighty-Four, "The Lion and Unicorn", may have been derived), to Ezra Pound's "Dogmatic Statement on the Game and Play of Chess" (published in Blast, July 1915), chess had indeed become a privileged metaphor for the modernists' insistence on what Gaudier Brzeska called "the arrangement of surfaces".

[26] CEJL, II, p. 24.

[27] "The Frontiers of Art and Propaganda", broadcast talk, 30 April, 1941, CEJL, II, pp. 123-4.

[28] "Literature and Totalitarianism", op. cit., p. 136.

detachment which, from his own point of view, is seen as characterizing modernist, as well as politically orthodox writing. Granted Read's proposition to assign to feeling a primordial role in the constitution of modernism, the whole point then becomes the assessment of that particular sphere of feeling where likeness eventually yields to dissimilarity.

What, according to Read, distinguished modern from pre-Romantic writing was the sudden realization that literature could no longer be thought of as a game of wits with binding rules; literature had to repudiate its former sophistry by ascribing to form the specific role of a natural translation of the poet's integrity:

> It has been a question, not of adopting this or that form of composition, but of believing enough in what one feels (the phrase is Yeats's) and of knowing and expressing the feeling accurately[29].

The programme sounds puzzlingly Orwellian, and yet Read's analysis forcefully traces "the voice of feeling" through the vast expanse of modernist poetry, from Keats to Hopkins, from Patmore to Lawrence, from Lawrence to Hulme. At some point in this remarkable — yet not altogether convincing demonstration, the Orwell reader may even receive a shock at being reminded of the very first outlines of the principles of imagist poetry, consisting in a vibrant appeal to "clothes made to order, rather than ready-made clothes", a phrase which to a certain extent, sounds once more prophetically Orwellian[30]. But here does the comparison end.

The hulmian tearing off of ready-made clothes was not to be accomplished with a view to revealing some hard core of intellectual integrity. What the poet was to concern himself with, was the "*momentary* phases" of the mind, the *fragmentary* nature of experience, the *accidental* stroke that was the result from a *direct* experience with the sensational base. Nowhere do we recognize if only a vague reminiscence of Orwell's attachment to the myth of a transcendental subject. "We only want the work to LIVE, and to feel it's [*sic*] crude energy flowing through us"[31]: when he wrote these lines to introduce the first issue of *Blast*, Wyndham Lewis operated a movement which, as it defined the individual as that which was to be traversed and dislocated by the vortex of an instinctive flow, ran directly counter to Orwell's concern for the self-contained integrity of the subject. In *Blast*, war itself was praised, not as a necessary evil to ensure the integrity of the thinking subject (as was the case in Orwell's wartime political essays), but as what Gaudier-Brzeska called "a great remedy" which would kill "the arrogance of humanity" through its "paltry mechanism[32]. As a matter of fact, the point at issue was a radical redefinition of feeling:

> I shall derive my emotions solely from the arrangement of surfaces, I shall present my emotions by the arrangement of my surfaces, the planes and lines by which they are defined.
> Just as this hill where the Germans are solidly entrenched, gives me a nasty feeling, solely because its gentle slopes are broken up by earth-works, which throw long shadows at sunset. Just so shall I get feeling, of whatsoever definition, from a statue according to its slopes, varied to infinity[33].

It is clear from Gaudier's letter from the trenches that the *human element* was to be ignored, to the benefit of an aesthtic emotion drawn exclusively from an "arrangement of surfaces". This is of the utmost importance and was to have dramatic consequences on Orwell's

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[29] Op. cit., p. 9.

[30] See Read, op. cit., p. 102; cf. Orwell, "The English People", CEJL, III, p. 22 sqq.

[31] "Long Live the Vortex", Blast, n°1, June 1914 (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head), p. 11.

[32] Op. cit., p. 33.

[33] Ibid., p. 34. Amused allusions are often made to Orwell's liking for old, formless corduroys, crumpled Tweed jackets and unkempt hair, but this, together with his love of derelict farmhouses and desolate places, takes on special significance when one reflects on Wyndham Lewis's obsessive interest in well-ordered surfaces, and, more particularly, in well-ordered hairstyles. In the 1914 issue of Blast, he had written "BLESS THE HAIRDRESSER", exalting formality and order or the expense of the disorderly and the unkempt. For a good commentary on Lewis's "Bless the Hairdresser" drawing, see T. A. Normand, Burlington Magazine, n° 128, July 1986, pp. 35-36.

apprehension of modernism; in Orwellian terms, feeling had become an abstration, or a sort of "chessboard". It was no longer the manifestation of an irreducible truth, the tangible sign of a pre-verbal sphere of authority, but slopes varied to infinity, a series of moves, a play upon forms, a surface effect — language gone loose, *language speaking by itself...* homicide. For Orwell, the modernist redefinition of feeling could only sound like the death sentence of the liberal humanist.

Definitely not an expert on modernism, Geroge Orwell was nonetheless very much aware of the extremest forms and implications of modernist experiments; he knew Dedalus and Tarr, knew of an art that boasted about having "no inside", knew of a modern hero no longer "impelled like a machine by a little egoistic inside"[34], and in this system of thought he could only relate this to Lewis's fascination for Hitler, Pound's admiration of Mussolini, or Eliot's defence of Maurras. The reason why Orwell found it "a very heavy labour to read [*Tarr*] right through" may have been, not so much the technical novelty of Wyndham Lewis's writing, as his depiction of the human being. Here was not man as an origin of discourse, but as a source of the comic; man exposed, not as an individual, but as a physical body *behaving as* a person; man, not as a transcendental subject, but as an absurd "thing"[35].

That the mature Orwell finally rejected the influence of James Joyce should not therefore come as a surprise. It needs only to be remembered how some parts of *Ulysses* present themselves as a pure translation apparatus which manages to inspire writing with a new epic quality, but an epic without God, an epic without Man — an epic of the linguistic. It has now become a truism to note that after the fourth episode of *Ulysses*, it is the technique itself that evidently becomes the subject-matter of writing. This "Odyssey of style", as it has come to be called, could only appear as the final blow dealt to "the dream of a natural relation between a self and the language it happens to speak". As Levenson brilliantly puts it, "identity ha[d] been made relative to the vicissitudes of style"[36].

Seen from that angle, Orwell's distrust of experimental writing (Joyce, Pound, Eliot), as well as of politically orthodox writing (Auden, Spender), becomes fairly intelligible. What lies hidden behind his attacks on "the technical obsession" or on "the swamps of propaganda" seems to be the confuse sense that somehow aesthetics may have participated in a more general process of *dehumanization*. This process was nowhere more visible that in the field of politics, but it was equally lurking in the alluring arabesques of artisitic representation. A new medium had to be invented. A new "structure of feeling" had to be given form, a form whose urgent requirement was to offer a place, neither for disincarnate ontological meditations, nor for abstract artistic constructions, but for *human emphasis.*

My final argument will be that it is not only against a political system, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, against such a disagregation of the self and its redistribution among a myriad of surface effects, that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was conceived. I hope to demonstrate at a stroke that Orwell's last book finally manages to offer a radically new "structure of feeling". The world of Big Brother is obviously characterized by its arbitrariness. But this arbitrariness is not only political as the world as a whole is depicted as an entirely *artificial arrangement*. Reality has been superseded either by the written record, or by the movie footage; human relationships are strictly codified; any genuine expression of the self is banned; all natural goods have been abolished. "Newspeak" is not a modernized version of today's English; it is

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[34] In 1920, Pound wrote that Tarr, by saying this, was "really get[ting] at something". He also remarked that Joyce was saying "something of the sort very differently" (Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, 1954 (rpt; London: Faber and Faber, 1985, p. 430).

[35] See Michael Levenson, Modernism and the Fate of Individuality: Character and Novelistic Form from Conrad to Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), p. 124, and Orwell, "Good Bad Books" (1945), CEJL, IV, p. 31.

[36] Ibid., p. 182.

the rhetoric of this arbitrariness, language cut off from the real, language exiled from the world of *feeling*, speaking by itself, ruling out the locutor's consciousness, denying the very presence of man as the origin of discourse. Winston Smith's sole crime may even come down to this: he believes in the necessity of *feeling* as an absolute weapon against artificiality and all forms of uniformity.

This includes his feeling for Julia, but it also includes the translation of emotions, the rejection of masks and uniforms, the enjoyment of bodily functions, the rediscovery of authenticity through everything that is "real" — real coffee, real tea, real sugar, real chocolate, and almost on the same plane, real femininity. Genuineness, it is then inferred, stems from a true correspondence between inside and outside, product and packing, form and substance, essence and existence[37]. The novel ends not only after Winston and Julia have betrayed each other, but after Winston has resumed his place within the perfect artificial arrangement that is epitomized throughout the novel by the Chestnut Tree Café — its homo-sexual *clientèle*, its bleating telescreens, its oily gin, its chesssboards. Again such a dismal horizon looms the world of feeling, a place for human emphasis, running directly counter to the universal encoding to which Big Brother subjects both reality and humanity. Feeling is what enables the subject to break free from encoding. But what is essential to a full understanding of the book's deep implications is that feeling seems to be capable of reopening *the vast expanse of Time*.

The passage in II, 10 (pp. 228-229), showing Julia and Winston just before they are arrested by the Thought Police, should indeed be read as a veritable epiphany of this concomitance of feeling and Time. The "mystical reverence" that Winston feels for the gross body of the singing woman triggers off reveries about the inevitable downfall of Big Brother's government. It is because the proles have "never learned to think", because they have been storing up a wealth of feelings "in their hearts and bellies", that the past they represent is also the future of humanity. For the first time, Winston understands the profound meaning of the vague notion he has been clinging to: "If there was hope, it lay in the proles!" The same is true of Winston's diary: it is only after the hero has gone through an experience of elementary feelings that writing can again become a question of Time[38].

"Curiously, the chiming of the hour seemed to have put new heart into him. He was a lonely ghost uttering a truth that nobody would ever hear" (I, 2; p. 30). The truth that Winston has just discovered is that there is a time for writing, which is also the time *of* writing: authentic Time, snatched from an all-inclusive totalitarian rearrangement of reality, obviously comprising coercive spatial restriction (Winston must stay visible), but, above all, rigid *emplotments of the time sequence* ("The telescreen struck fourteen. He must leave in ten minutes", p. 29). One should always bear in mind that Winston is an expert on Time: the story of Comrade Ogilvy may even stand for a caricature (I, 4; pp. 49-50) of his perfect mastery of the inner workings of totalitarian emplotments.

Feeling, then seems, to be considered as that which guarantees individuality at the same time as it safeguards a genuine apprehension of Time and of its categories (the past, the present and the future). This is highly reminiscent of what Augustine, then Ricoeur, call the *distensio animi*[39]: there can be no subjectivity outside the *distensio animi*, that is what guarantees subjectivity is an acute awareness of Time's conflating categories. Similarly, what *Nineteen Eighty-Four* strives to preserve is something that can subtract the individual from the fictive model of his temperal world, to return him to a genuine *feeling of Time*. Winston Smith is no epic hero, but his frailty and his uncertainties cast the figure of a subject agonized with

[37] For reasons of space, I can only once more refer the reader to 1984 de George Orwell, op. cit., pp. 68-76.

[38] See the progression in the tone and style of the entries, from the "stream of consciousness" passage (pp. 10-11) to the "greetings" passage (p. 30: "To the futre or to the past… [f]rom the age of uniformity… — greetings!").

[39] See Temps et récit, vol. I: L'intrigue et le récit historique (Paris: Seuil, 1983), p. 40.

discordant ideas that precipitate a crisis in the temporal encoding imposed by the totalitarian power.

No serious comment seems to gave ever been made concerning Shakespeare's place either in Orwell's or in his protagonist's intellectual development. Shakespeare is the very symbol of great literature, but there is more to it than that, and the question in itself would require an entire paper (Orwell's implicit reading of *Hamlet* is particularly interesting). But if Franck Kermode is right in his appreciation, Shakespeare's political tragedies are sublime instances of such conflations of past, present and future[40]. This, indeed, seems to me to be the profound reason for which the noun of Shakespeare functions throughout Orwell's last book as a sort of "humanitarian corridor" through Time. Whereas totalitarianism strives after concordance, true literature strives after discordance; while the totalitarian power wishes to make sense of Winston's rebellion by inventing a fiction that is intent on preserving a concordance of beginning, middle and end (O'Brien's perfect control of the situation from the beginning to the end), the book as a whole seems to be structured so as to "defeat" O'Brien's end-determined fiction. In other words, *it has the structure of a feeling*.

The profound reason for which none of the supplements to the main body of Orwell's text should be neglected is that they alone manage to disengage the fiction from the totalitarian emplotment of time. In the Appendix that apparently concerns itself solely with the functioning of Newspeak, the reader cannot fail to notice that the world of Big Brother is indeed described in the past tense: this implies that this form of government did not eventually prevail, that Winston's "principle" eventually overcame O'Brien's historiographic phantasms (see III, 3; pp. 282-283). Moreover, the syntactical and lexical rules of Newspeak are expounded in Oldspeak, that is in normal English, which once again confirms that Big Brother did not eventually manage to blow out the candle of feeling: Winston was *not* "the last man" (p. 285).

The disconfirmation is all the more stringent as the only footnote Orwell inserts into the body of the novel appears at a very early stage of its development (only two pages after the beginning), and concerns Newspeak, referring the reader to the Appendix, which, so to speak, annuls the fiction. The footnote is here as if to let the reader know Big Brother's government eventually collapsed, that Winston was not a man of the *past*, but a man of the *future — the unextinguishable principle of humankind*. To parody a famous authorial intrusion, Orwell's foonote reads as a potential reversal of procedure, the death sentence, not of Winston, but of O'Brien: "Reader, I killed him!".

However, the preterite used in the Appendix reinforces the impression of verisimilitude. The world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is presented as having actually existed, although it seems to have been nothing more than a nightmarish parenthesis. What the reader is left with, consequently, is the feeling of a tension: poised between beginning and end, forced to bundle together perception of the present, memory of the past and expectation of the future, the reader's mind distends to include and conflate not only the three categories of time, but also those of probability, actuality, and possibility — this *could* have happened, fortunately it did *not*, but it makes it *possible to redefine the future*[41]. The connecting power is not therefore in the narrative's capacity "to describe credible human beings, and … to show them acting on everyday motives'; nor is it in the narrative's capacity to efface itself for the reader to observe the *diegesis* as through 'a window pane"; the connecting power is in the narrative's capacity

[40] See The Sense of an Ending, 1966 (Oxford: Oxford UP, rpt, 1968), pp. 82 sqq.

[41] See what Orwell himself wrote in June 1949 (he died in January 1950) to Francis A. Henson, of the United Automobile Workers: "I do not belive that the kind of society I describe [in Nineteen Eighty-Four] will arrive, but I believe… that something resembling it could arrive… The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasise that the English-speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if not fought against, could triumph anywhere" (CEJL, IV, p. 502; underlined by Orwell).

to compose an intimate relationship with the reader through such a complication of the time-scheme. This is *the structure of feeling made fiction*, the form of the novel proceeding, not from the totaltitarian *outside*, but from the torn *inside* of the novel — from a feeling.

What I have tried to show is that Orwell's alleged classicism was to be related, not to his ignorance of modernist aesthetics, but rather to an apprehension of modernism that concerned itself primarily with the place of the writing subject. The Orwellian paradox — his archaic post-modernism — is marked by a stark refusal of the modernist conception of man as the playtoy of his own laguage — man not speaking, but being spoken by language —, but it is marked at the same time by a desire to redefine the future of man, man as a writing subject, that is as a feeling subject, immersed in the conflicting categories of Time. What makes Orwell's post-modernist theory of writing something that is not altogether metaphysical, is that it eventually managed to find its true expression in a book that indeed keeps resisting both ideological reduction and simplistic popularization — an artisitic achievement that forcibly established a new mode of writing.

The scope of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a antitotalitarian novel can only be measured after the reader's implication in writing's deep core of feeling has been assessed. What Orwell saw as "a good idea in ruins"[42] may in fact have been the invention of a new, "post-modernist" form, as yet unknown, an implapable structure whose complication testifies to the sheer impossibility of dissociating the question of writing from that of feeling, and concomitantly from that of Time. Writing, for Orwell, was offering a place for human emphasis, and human emphasis was time for feeling. A "good idea" meeting its perfect formal achievement would undoubtedly have fulfilled both Orwell's and the reader's most naive requirements of fiction; but the disintegration of the form, or what might be called its essential *cruci-fiction*, forces the reader to distrust his own ingrained desire for concordant fictive structures, and to recognize in himself the sublimity of a self torn inside by an hermeneutic uncertainty.

This is also the structure of freedom. And it puts us all in George Orwell's debt.

[42] CEJL, IV, p. 454.