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ORWELL'S MORRIS AND 'OLD MAJOR'S' DREAM

William Morris and Eric Blair/George Orwell wrote some of the most stubbornly independent and compelling political literature of their respective centuries. Morris wrote essays and journalism, as well as the nineteenth century's most attractive utopia, *News from Nowhere*, and many volumes of narrative poetry and prose romances, with titles such as *The Earthly Paradise* and *The Well at the World's End*. Orwell wrote essays and reviews, realistic novels, the retrospective satire *Animal Farm*, and one of the twentieth century's most influential dystopias, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Morris strove to envision and realize a socialism which would provide for each worker a life of egalitarian fellowship, 'fearless rest and hopeful work', and the outlines of a truly universal art which would serve as 'man's expression of his joy in labour' and in the beauty of the earth'.¹ Orwell, by contrast, was by temperament more critic than artist, and more satirist than visionary; his ideals were more reactive and elusive than Morris's, and his idiosyncratic appeals to 'socialism' were often as ambiguous as they were fundamental to his view of the world. Again and again, he defended what he called 'decency' and 'common sense', traits which he identified with his own views and with those of the 'ordinary man' and the 'ordinary decent person', and — less frequently — with 'socialism' or 'democratic socialism'. He often characterized himself accurately as a 'Tory anarchist',² and a significant aspect of his complex and self-conscious populism for many years was a tendency to express vitriolic contempt for what he called 'Utopian Socialism'. He frequently mocked savagely a 'left-wing intelligentsia', and a 'pansy Left' whose ranks variously included pacifists, anarchists, 'cranks', 'dogooders', vegetarians, 'utopians', Communists, and other 'middle-class socialists'. Recent critics such as Raymond Williams and Daphne Patai have remarked that Orwell's narrowest arguments virtually confined application of the word 'socialist' to sufficiently-enlightened middle-class intellectuals³ (as in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, where he remarks that 'as far as my experience goes, no genuine working man grasps the deeper implications of Socialism'),⁴ but turned on them when they failed to resonate with his vaguely proletarian but deeply complex notions of 'ordinary decency'.

Unlike Morris, then, 'democratic socialist' Orwell — who belonged briefly in

¹ 'The Lesser Arts of Life', in *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. May Morris, Vol. XXII (London, 1914), 269; 'Art Under Plutocracy', in *The Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. A. L. Morton, New York, 1973, 67, 59.

² Bernard Crick, *George Orwell: A Life*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1928, 174 et passim.

³ Raymond Williams, *George Orwell*, New York, 1971, chapter V and VI, 'Politics' and 'Projections'; Daphne Patai, *The Orwell Mystique: A Study in Male Ideology*, Amherst, 1984, passim.

⁴ *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Gollancz, 1937, reprt. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1984, 154.

the late thirties to the I.L.P., and consistently professed 'Socialist sympathies'⁵ — was in fact a rather fiercely self-protective individualist; he brooked few fellow travellers (in the literal sense of the word), and acknowledged few of these predecessors. In spite of all this, we wish to suggest that among these predecessors, obliquely acknowledged in *Animal Farm*, was Morris himself.

The early Orwell (through the late thirties) routinely dismissed Morris as a straw-figure of muddle-headed nineteenth century utopianism. During the first years of his political and literary career, Orwell casually employed the facile stereotype of Morris as Victorian romantic and quintessentially woolly guild socialist, who assumed that arts and crafts would gentrify the world. Even the narrative 'How the Change Came' (Chapter Seventeen of *News from Nowhere*) would have strained this simple stereotype, and Orwell never acknowledged (and may never have read) the sustained arguments in such Morrisian works as *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, coauthored with E. B. Bax in 1893, or the closely-argued socialist essays collected in *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1883), *Signs of Change* (1888), and *Architecture, Industry, and Wealth* (1902).

Nevertheless, Orwell's view of Morris — and of 'utopianism' as well — softened in the years before his death. The figure of 'Old Major' in *Animal Farm* is Orwell's clearest and perhaps most sympathetic expression of a still-uncorrupted socialist vision, and we will argue that this noble old spokesboar of 'animalism' and social revolution is not Marx, but — at least in many lineaments — Morris himself.

Among Orwell's recorded references to William Morris as a 'Utopian Socialist' are two dismissive early allusions in the 1937 *Road to Wigan Pier*, and three more favorable, even nostalgic ones in reviews of 1946 and 1948. Of the Orwell of 1935, Peter Stansky and William Abrahams remark that: 'Politics, after 1936 a ruling passion in his life, figured in his conversation then almost not at all, except for an occasional disparaging reference to William Morris and socialism — no matter that he was *pro forma* a socialist himself.'⁶

The 1937 *Road to Wigan Pier* is a compassionate and cranky book in which Orwell furiously dismisses the sentimentalism of the 'middle-class Socialist', and

...the outer-suburban creeping Jesus, a hangover from the William Morris period, but still surprisingly common, who goes about saying, 'Why must we level down? Why not level up?' and proposes to level the working class 'up' (up to his own standard) by means of hygiene, fruit-juice, birth-control, poetry, etc. (194)

Among socialists of 'the William Morris period', Morris was himself one of the most consistent opponents of such palliative condescension; he never mentioned birth-control; was not a teetotaller; and repeated many times that neither material comfort nor art, much less 'fruit-juice [and] poetry', etc. would

⁵ Letter to A. H. Joyce, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume I: An Age Like This, 1920-1940*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1968, 337.

⁶ *The Unknown Orwell* Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts, 1974, 65.

have serious meaning for an alienated class of workers who toiled for the welfare of their masters. Orwell may or may not have read Morris's essays, but his stereotype is taken from somewhere else.

Orwell's other remark in *Wigan Pier* is pure blunderbuss:

The real Socialist writers, the progagandistic writers, have always been dull, empty windbags — Shaw, Barbusse, Upton Sinclair, William Morris, Waldo Frank, etc... I am not, of course, suggesting that Socialism is to be condemned because literary gents don't like it... I am merely pointing to the fact that writers of genuine talent are usually indifferent to Socialism... (216)

Shaw went on at times, but *dull!* Orwell's casual dismissal of this list of 'progagandistic writers' looks suspiciously like a clearing of the rhetorical field for himself.

Orwell's *Animal Farm* finally reached print, after a long struggle, in August, 1945, the month in which the Pacific war ended, and the first atomic bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁷ In January of the next year, he reviewed several books on socialism for the *Manchester Guardian*, and alluded to Morris and 'Utopian Socialism' in ways which are laudatory by comparison:

If one studied the genealogy of the ideas for which writers like Koestler and Silone stand, one would find it leading back through Utopian dreamers like William Morris and the mystical democrats like Walt Whitman, through Rousseau, through English diggers and levellers, through the peasant revolts of the Middle Ages, and back to the early Christians and the slave revolts of antiquity ...

The 'earthly paradise' has never been realized, but as an idea, it never seems to perish, despite the ease with which it can be debunked by practical politicians of all colours.

Underneath it lies the belief that human nature is fairly decent to start with, and is capable of indefinite development. This belief has been the main driving force of the Socialist movement, including the underground sects who prepared the way for the Russian revolution, and it could be claimed that the Utopians, at present a scattered minority, are the true upholders of Socialist tradition.⁸

Notice that Orwell does *not* mention Marx here as 'the main driving force of the Socialist movement', but instead evokes the levellers, diggers, and the peasants of Morris's *A Dream of John Ball*, and he even has a kind word for early religious sectaries.

Later in 1946, Orwell reviewed James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution*, whose grim portrayal of bureaucratic totalitarianism suggests *Nineteen-Eighty-Four's* 'Ingsoc':

Burnham does not, of course, deny that the new 'managerial' regime, like the regimes of Russia and Nazi Germany, may be called 'socialist'. He means merely that they will not be Socialist in any sense of the word which would have been accepted by Marx, or Lenin, or Keir Hardie, or William Morris, or indeed, by any representative socialist prior to about 1930.⁹

⁷ As noted by C. M. Woodhouse, in his introduction to *Animal Farm*, New York, reprinted from the *Times Literary Supplement*, London, August 6, 1954. Page numbers of quotations from *Animal Farm* are indicated in parentheses after the text.

⁸ 'What is Socialism?', *Manchester Evening News*, January 31, 1946, cited in Bernard Crick, *George Orwell*, 507.

⁹ *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol IV: *In Front of Your Nose 1945-50*, 507.

Notice the marked improvement in Morris's company, from juice-squeezers to Keir Hardie and Karl Marx. The intensely Britophilic Orwell thus includes him in a rather select canon of 'representative socialists', which ascends — non-chronologically — from two foreign *maitres-penseurs* and the selfless founder of the Independent Labour Party, to the British prophet of a still-unrealized, extra-parliamentary socialist ideal.

A much-muted version of the old stereotype appears in Orwell's last allusion to Morris, in a 1948 review of Oscar Wilde's essay, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*:

Wilde's pamphlet and other kindred writings — *News from Nowhere* — consequently have their value. They may demand the impossible, and they may — since a Utopia necessarily reflects the aesthetic ideals of its own period — sometimes seem 'dated' and ridiculous, but they do at least look beyond the era of food queues and party squabbles, and remind the socialist movement of its original half-forgotten objectives of human brotherhood.¹⁰

There is little 'kindred' between Morris' long prose romance and Wilde's brief and derivative monograph (twenty-seven pages in the 1891 *Fortnightly Review*) but both writings are praised for their invocation of socialism's 'half-forgotten objectives of human brotherhood'.

Orwell's famous beast-fable, *Animal Farm*, was written in 1943 but not published until 1945, and its portrait of 'Old Major', the noble old prophet of 'animalism', may mark an inflection in Orwell's transition from casual early contempt to qualified respect for the socialist movement's 'original half-forgotten objectives'. Other important figures of *Animal Farm* have obvious historical analogues (Snowball-Trotsky; Napoleon-Stalin), and at least one critic has suggested that Old Major represents Marx, who in life resembled Old Major little if at all, and for whom Orwell expressed little of the intermittently nostalgic affection of his allusions to William Morris. In fact, Old Major is a virtual cameo-portrait of Old Morris, the Morris one can find in the socialist essays, 'Songs for Socialists', and as self-portrayed in *News from Nowhere* and *A Dream of John Ball*.

Animal Farm's setting is Morris's (and Orwell's) beloved English countryside, and the affectionate description of Old Major's species and physical appearance strongly suggests the bearded and amiably patriarchal William Morris of the 1880's and 90's:

He was twelve years old and had lately grown rather stout, but he was still a majestic looking pig, with a wise and benevolent appearance in spite of the fact that his tusks had never been cut. (16)

In the essay 'Under the Elm Tree' Morris had identified himself with the image of the White Horse in the countryside; Old Major is a 'prize Middle White

Boar'. Old Major represents his ideology as Morris did so often, in the form of a dream, described in lilting, quasi-biblical cadences. Like the Morris of the 1890's, Old Major is acutely conscious that his is a farewell message; and like Morris he tries to speak not only of 'politics', but of the physical nature of life on earth:

Old Major: I have had a long life, I have had much time for thought as I lay alone in my stall, and I think I understand the nature of life on this earth as well as any animal now living. (18)

Morris: This was a bad look-out, and, if I may mention myself as a personality and not as a mere type, especially to a man of my disposition,... with a deep love of the earth and the life on it, and a passion for the history of the past of mankind.¹²

As Morris often did in his essays, Old Major describes in brief, plain language the cruelty of economic repression, its basis in subtle and not-so-subtle forms of slavery, and his 'dream' of the well-being which the animals (peasants, workers) might achieve, if they could only control the produce of their labor:

The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth... This single farm of ours would support a dozen horses, twenty cows, hundreds of sheep — and all of them living in comfort and a dignity that are now almost beyond our imagining. Why then do we continue in this miserable condition? Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is being stolen from us by human beings. (18)

Compare many similar passages in Morris's writings, for example, in 'How We Live and How We Might Live':

[Y]ou will surely see what a hideous nightmare that profit-market is: it keeps us sweating and terrified for our livelihood, unable to read a book, or look at a picture, or have pleasant fields to walk in, or to lie in the sun, or to share in the knowledge of our time, to have in short either animal or intellectual pleasure, and for what? That we may go on living the same slavish life till we die, in order to provide for a rich man what is called a life of ease and luxury; that is to say, a life so empty, unwholesome, and degraded, that perhaps, on the whole, he is worse off than we the workers are...¹³

Old Major's final prescription, like Morris's, is unequivocal: 'This is my message to you comrades: Rebellion!' (20) Compare Morris¹⁴

... here I stand before you, one of the most fortunate of this happy class, so steeped in discontent, that I have no words which will express it: no words, nothing but deeds, wherever they may lead me to, even [if] it be ruin, prison, or a violent death.

Let us... take care that our present struggle leaves behind it no class distinction, but brings about one condition of equality for all, which condition of society is the only one which can draw out to the full the varying capacities of the citizens and make the most of the knowledge and skill of mankind, the gain of so many ages, and thus do away for ever with MAKESHIFT.¹⁵

¹² 'How I Became a Socialist', in Morton, ed., 244.

¹³ 'How We Live and How We Might Live', in Morton, ed., 141.

¹⁴ 'Misery and the Way out', in *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* by May Morris, Oxford, 1936, vol. II, 156.

¹⁵ 'Makeshift', in *Ibid*, 483.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 428.

¹¹ Isaac Rosenfeld, *Nation*, September 7, 1946, reprinted in *George Orwell: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers, London, 1975, 202.

The cadences of Old Major's speeches have the simple beauty, resonant emotion, and direct personal identification of *A Dream of John Ball*, and of Morris's best socialist essays. Old Major looks toward a receding ideal:

... Comrades, you have already heard about the strange dream I had last night... 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... (20)

Again, compare Morris:

If you ask me... when there would be effected any change in the face of society, I must say, I do not know. I can only say that I did not measure my hope, nor the joy that it brought me...¹⁶ our own lives may see no end to the struggle...¹⁷ if the blank space must happen, it must, and amidst its darkness the new seed must sprout.¹⁸

As Morris had so often done, Old Major explicitly warns against corruption and subordination of the ideals of 'animalist' solidarity:

And remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him... And above all, no animal must tyrannize over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal... (21-22) [emphases ours]

Morris's last essays expressed similar fears:

Take this for the last word of my dream of what is to be: the test of our being fools no longer will be that we shall no longer have masters.¹⁹ ... let us forgive the mistakes that others make, even if we make none ourselves, and be at peace amongst ourselves, that we may the better make War upon the monopolist [emphases ours]²⁰

In *Animal Farm*, of course, Old Major's admonitions, and Morris's warning that we shall only be 'fools no longer' when we 'no longer have masters', are grimly echoed in the fable's outcome, the notoriously revised 'commandment' that 'all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others' (123), and in the final sentence:

The creatures outside [the subordinate animals] 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. (128)

Not so coincidentally, we believe, the 'dreamer of *Nowhere* and *John Ball* was also the composer of 'Songs for Socialists'. Nowhere in the opening pages of *Animal Farm* are the parallels with Morris's 'dream' more suggestive (and from Marx more remote), than in Old Major's introduction of a simple ancestral hymn which he learned 'when I was a little pig':

¹⁶ 'How I Became a Socialist', in Morton, ed., 242.

¹⁷ 'Useless Work Vs. Useless Toil', in Morton, ed., 108.

¹⁸ 'The Lesser Arts', in Morton, ed., 40.

¹⁹ 'The Society of the Future', in Morton, ed., 203-204.

²⁰ 'Communism', in Morton, ed., 240.

... now comrades, I will tell you about my dream of last night. I cannot describe that dream to you. It was a dream of the earth as it will be when Man has vanished... Many years ago, when I was a little pig, my mother and the other sows used to sing an old song of which they knew only the tune and the first three words. I had known that tune in my infancy, but it had long since passed out of my mind. Last night, however, it came back to me in my dream. And what is more, the words of the song also came back — words, I am certain, which were sung by the animals of long ago and have been lost to memory for generations. I will sing you that song now, comrades. I am old and my voice is hoarse, but when I have taught you the tune, you can sing it better for yourselves. It is called 'Beasts of England'. Old Major cleared his throat and began to sing. As he had said, his voice was hoarse, but he sang well enough, and it was a stirring tune.

Soon or late the day is coming
Tyrant man shall be o'erthrown,
And the fruitful fields of England
Shall be trod by beasts alone...

Bright will shine the fields of England
Purer shall its waters be,
Sweeter yet shall blow its breezes
On the day that sets us free.

For that day we all must labour,
Though we die before it break;
Cows and horses, geese and turkeys,
All must toil for freedom's sake.

Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland
Beasts of every land and clime,
Hearken well and spread my tidings
Of the golden future time. (22-23)

Compare the deeply lyrical historicism of Morris's invocation of socialist ideals in works such as *The Pilgrims of Hope* (about the Paris Commune), *The Roots of the Mountains*, or *A Dream of John Ball*:

Yea, forsooth, once again I saw as of old, the great treading down the little, and the strong beating down the weak, and cruel men fearing not; and kind men daring not, and wise men caring not; and the saints in heaven forbearing and yet bidding me not to forebear; forsooth I know once more that he who doeth well in fellowship, and because of fellowship, shall not fail though he seem to fail to-day, but in days hereafter shall he and his work yet be alive...²¹

Or in his songs such as 'The Voice of Toil':

I heard men saying, leave tears and praying,
The sharp knife heedeth not the sheep;
Are we not stronger than the rich and the wronger,
When day breaks our dreams and sleep? ...

Come, shoulder to shoulder ere Earth grows older!
The Cause spreads over land and sea;
Now the earth shaketh, and fear awaketh,
And joy at last for thee and me.

²¹ *The Collected Works of William Morris*, Vol. XVI, 233.

fierce defensive pride. Orwell once described Dickens, in words which Bertrand Russell quoted in his own obituary of Orwell, as a person whose face was

... laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity. 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* — in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls.²⁴

Orwell's Swiftian rhetoric reveals the temperamental intensity and priority of his emotions; he is at least as repelled by 'smelly little orthodoxies' as he is respectful of 'generous anger'. Morris resolutely ignored sects, distinctions, and rivalries (Fabian 'gas and water socialism', for example) which seemed irrelevant, or petty; and the essential motivations of his communism could also be described as 'generous anger' — active compassion for the grinding oppression of industrial workers, and love of what he described as 'the simple joys of the lovely earth'.²⁵

... nor when I had become conscious of the wrongs of society as it now is, and the oppression of the poor people, could I have ever believed in the possibility of a partial setting right of those wrongs.²⁶

Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization...²⁷

Russell continued in his eulogy to characterize Orwell with genuine eloquence as a man who

... preserved an impeccable love of truth, and allowed himself to learn even the most painful lessons. But he lost hope... Perhaps it is impossible in the world as it is, to combine hope with truth; if so, all prophets must be false prophets... [But] I find in men like Orwell the half, but only the half, of what the world needs; the other half is still to seek,²⁸

The other half, we believe, is preserved in old Major's dream.

Perhaps, to extend Russell's image, Morris and Orwell in their eu/dystopias spoke complementary truths. The implacable determinism of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* was not, after all, written to encourage passive complicity; the slow destruction of alternatives creates in their readers an almost insufferable tension, until they burst out that 'This cannot happen! Something must be done!' Orwell himself defended his intention in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in just this way:

The moral to be drawn from this dangerous nightmare situation is a simple one: *Don't let it happen. It depends on you.*²⁹

²⁴ Bertrand Russell, *World Review*, June 1950, reprinted in *George Orwell: The Critical Heritage*, 300.

²⁵ 'The Society of the Future', in Morton, ed., 193.

²⁶ 'How I Became a Socialist', in Morton, ed., 244.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 282.

²⁸ Bertrand Russell, *op. cit.*, 301.

²⁹ Bernard Crick, *George Orwell*, 566.

Likewise Morris was no simple optimist. He uttered Old Major's warnings many times, and was as aware as Orwell of the dangers of perverted hopes and failed nerve. In the last socialist essays, he is careful to qualify his visions as 'hopes', and even *News from Nowhere*'s ringing final sentences express this hope in complexly conditional form:

... Go on living while you may, striving, with whatsoever pain and labour needs must be, to build up little by little the new day of fellowship, and rest and happiness! ... Yes, surely! and *if* others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream.³⁰
[emphasis added]

Only gradually, we have argued, did Orwell come to acknowledge Morris as a genuine predecessor, fellow 'dreamer', and theorist of an undogmatic left. Later writings offer some redress of earlier parodies, and the portrayal of Old Major seems to express a clear indebtedness to the egalitarian visions of such early 'representative socialists' as William Morris. If so, Old Major was one of Orwell's last and finest tributes to an uncorrupted socialist ideal.

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³⁰ *Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. May Morris, Vol. XVI, 211.

There is something especially Morrisian about the hymn's provenance as a tale inherited from past generations, and remembered from Old Major's childhood. The fervent tone and simple language of Old Major's apologue recall not only the many hortatory passages of *A Dream of John Ball*, and the resonant emotion and personal identification of Morris's other socialist writings, but also his radical egalitarianism; earnest desire for accommodation within socialist ranks; aversion to revolutionary cant and 'sham socialism'; and above all, his submergence of self in a communal vision.

Such parallels only reinforce the principal questions of *Animal Farm's* interpretation. Is it a fable of revolution suborned by ambition and greed, or of the operation of some iron law of porcine (human) oligarchy? Orwell publicly stated that his fable represented only the murderous outgrowth of Lenin's 'workers' state with a bureaucratic disease', for example, in the preface to *Animal Farm's* Ukrainian edition:

... in my opinion, 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 Socialist movement.

On my return from Spain I thought of exposing the Soviet myth in a story which could easily be translated into other languages.²²

Similarly Orwell attacked Koestler in 1944 for failure to envision any constructive politics, and remarked that 'All revolutions are failures, but they are not all the same failure'.²³

Still, his tale has the allegorical generality of fable, and a case can be made that its charming simplicity and clocklike inevitability are even angrier and more despairing than the ration-book despotism of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Against this background, we believe, the warmth of Orwell's portrait of Old Major gains in importance. The old boar's revolution is subverted, 'Animal Farm' does regress to 'Manor Farm', and worse: for there is a suggestion of horrible accuracy in the neighboring farmers' praise, that 'the lower animals on Animal Farm did more work and received less food than any animals in the country'. (125) Correlatively, Ingsoc and O'Brien do successfully reduce Winston Smith to repellantly snivelling worship of Big Brother by the end of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Still the arc of Winston's timid resistance has grown in intensity and purpose, before it is broken in this nauseating conclusion, and in its course Winston has managed to assert and defend every important feature of his values and identity. On one reading of his failed rebellion ('All revolutions are failures...'), an anxious, quiet person of uncertain consistency and moderate integrity can be surprisingly difficult to destroy; what Orwell would have called 'decency' dies hard. The sickening inanity of Winston's final submission

(if it is final) also bears witness to the loneliness and intensity of his loss ('... but they are not the *same* failure').

Similarly significant is the noble isolation in *Animal Farm* of Old Major, the fable's only animal (or human) who is permitted a natural life and peaceful death. His vision may have been 'naive' but he has no complicity in the events which follow. It is a testimony to the power of his memory that as the regime tightens, Napoleon forbids continuance of the weekly processional past Old Major's skull, and that when Napoleon finds that it is expedient to ban the singing of 'Beasts of England', the animals continue to sing it to themselves for consolation.

The whole work, in short, is emblazoned with Old Major's prescient warning that 'in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him' (21), and his premonitory ability to assess real dangers contrasts sadly with the fates of the farm's decent but slower-witted animals, most notably the admirable proletarian heroes Boxer and Clover. Boxer's earnest credulity causes him to sacrifice himself in servitude to the evil master who can exploit his great heart and simple mind, expressed by his two pathetic mottos: 'I will work harder', and 'Napoleon is always right'. Old Major cannot avert the fate of these deluded 'beasts', but his example remains clear, and at the book's conclusion he remains closer than any other character to the narrative's moral center — a still remembered champion of his fellow-beasts, and of their betrayed hopes.

Thus, on our account, *Animal Farm's* obliquely affectionate and respectful presentation of 'Old Major' belatedly acknowledges a 'utopian' debt to a 'representative socialist before 1930'. (Orwell, after all, was in many respects a thoroughly 'utopian' socialist himself: on one of the bleaker interpretations of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*, 'ordinary decent men' (or beasts) are just what is 'nowhere' in sufficient numbers to be found). Orwell and Morris shared a deep common tendency to transfer their values to an ideal past — the middle ages, in Morris's case; in Orwell's, ironically, the later nineteenth-century which Morris so heartily despised. Both of these 'ordinary decent men' also professed deep hatred of the class system; impatience with rigid political orthodoxies; distrust of formal education, and affinity with what they believed to be popular culture; temperamental distaste for reliance on machinery; a devout loathing of state socialism and authoritarianism in all its forms; and finally, an ultimate view of politics (decency?) as a search for human freedom.

Such an enumeration of affinities, of course, only brings into sharper relief Orwell's and Morris's many cultural and temperamental differences. Politics is in good part temperament (compare the feminist slogan that 'the personal is political'), and Orwell seemed alternately attracted and viscerally repelled by a succession of people and positions. He was sometimes too skilled at *ad hominem* invective for his own good, and his prejudices (anti-feminism, for example) were as deep as his sentiments. He was perhaps at his best when he analyzed the petty constraints embodied in a great evil; Morris was at his best when he analyzed the small pleasures contained in a great good.

Both men were capable of a great anger, but in Morris's case, this anger was almost never personal; vigorous but companionable, he felt little of Orwell's

²² *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. III, *As I Please*, 1943-45, 458.

²³ *Ibid.*, 282.