



George Orwell a life in letters

George Orwell

A LIFE IN LETTERS

SELECTED AND ANNOTATED

BY

Peter Davison



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Introduction

George Orwell 'is in the peculiar position of having been a by-word for fifty years'. No, not Orwell of course, but Rudyard Kipling as described by Orwell. However, it is not far off the mark for Orwell himself. Orwell also wrote of Kipling, 'before one can even speak about Kipling one has to clear away a legend that has been created by two sets of people who have not read his works'. This may be a little further from the mark but many of those who refer to Orwell seem not to have read much more than *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, if those. The millions who have heard of *Big Brother* and *Room 101* know nothing of their progenitor. Ignorance of Orwell is also to be found in academic circles and in what would regard itself as the higher reaches of journalism. When Professor Raymond B. Browne of Bowling Green University died he was credited by the *Daily Telegraph* with having launched 'popular culture' into the mainstream. Browne's *Journal of Popular Culture* was published in 1967, but Orwell was writing most intelligently about popular culture over twenty-five years earlier. Indeed, when *Critical Essays* was published in the United States in 1946 as *Dickens, Dali and Others* it was given the subtitle *Studies in Popular Culture*. At one extreme Orwell is canonised hence the sub-title, *The Making and Claiming of 'St. George' Orwell*, of John Rodden's excellent study analysing *The Politics of Literary Reputation* (1989). At the other he is subjected to the vigorous wielding of the hatchet, something Scott Lucas does 'with remarkable efficiency' in his *Orwell* (2000) according to Terry Eagleton in the *London Review of Books*, 19 June 2003. Where does poor old George stand? Professor Eagleton in his review of the three biographies of 2003, aptly titled, 'Reactor Me-Down Romantic', suggests that Orwell 'combined cultural Englishness with political cosmopolitanism, and detested political personality cults while sedulously cultivating a public image of himself'. Despite world-wide acclaim, Orwell saw himself as dogged by 'Failure, failure, failure'. 'Failure', as Eagleton says, 'was his forte.'

I am inclined to think that Orwell had within his deepest self an unresolved conflict that made him so contradictory a character. He was ever in arms against organised religion, especially the Roman Catholic Church. He thought there was no afterlife. Yet he was married in church, had his adopted son Richard baptised, and wished to be buried, not cremated, according to the rites of the Church of England. For so rational a man it was strange that he should ask Rayner Heppenstall to cast his horoscope for Richard (21 July 1944); that he should believe he saw a ghost in Walberswick churchyard (16 August 1931); and discuss poltergeists with Sir Sachaverell Sitwell (6 July 1940), not to mention the quasi-religious conclusion to *A Clergyman's Daughter* (but that, after all, is 'only a novel'). Perhaps most telling is Sir Richard Rees recalling that Orwell had told him that it 'gave him an unpleasant feeling to see his real name in print': 'how can you be sure your enemy won't cut it off and work some kind of black magic on it?' Was this mere whimsy, or was it deeply felt? Not 'some enemy or other' but 'your enemy'. Who was that? The title of Rees's study sums up his subject perfectly: *George Orwell: Fugitive from the Camp of Victory* (1961). He fled from triumph and sought refuge in 'Failure, failure, failure'.

Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair in Motihari, Bengal, on 25 June 1903. His father, Richard Walmsley Blair was born in 1857 in Milborne St Andrew, Dorset, where his father was the Vicar. Orwell's father served in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service. His mother, Ida Mabel Limouzin, was born in 1875 at Penge, Surrey but her family had a long association with Burma. Indeed, there seems to be a curious survival of the Limouzin family in Moulmein, Myanmar, to this day, as Emma Larkin discovered a year or two ago. She found not only that Orwell was well (and covertly) remembered, but she noticed a street called *Leimmaw-zin*, 'the nearest Burmese

pronunciation for “Limouzin”. However, when she asked a passer-by to interpret the name, he confidently offered, ‘Orange-Shelf Street’ (*Secret Histories*, pp. 145–6).

Orwell’s parents married in the intriguingly-named church of St John in the Wilderness at Nailston Tal on 15 June 1897. Orwell would surely have found that appropriate. Their first child, Marjorie, was born at Gaya, Bengal, on 21 April 1898. Ida Blair returned with her two children to live in England at Henley-on-Thames, in 1904. In 1907 Richard Blair took three months’ leave at Henley. On 6 April 1908, Orwell’s younger sister, Avril, was born. From 1908–11, Orwell attended a Roman Catholic day-school run by Ursuline nuns. He then boarded at St Cyprian’s, a private preparatory school at Eastbourne where he would meet Cyril Connolly, who was to feature significantly in his later life. Orwell’s essay, ‘Such, Such Were the Joys’ is based (sometimes loosely) on his experiences at St Cyprian’s, but the school educated him well enough for him to enter Eton as a King’s Scholar in March 1917.

A letter that has only very recently come to light gives an account of his life thereafter from Orwell’s point of view. The letter has not previously been published and I am very grateful to its owner (who wishes to remain anonymous) for permission to include it here. Orwell had been asked by Richard Usborne, the editor of the *Strand*, a monthly literary periodical published from January 1895 to March 1950, to contribute to the journal and to give some account of his life. As Orwell’s last paragraph indicates, he felt far too busy to contribute – he was writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – but despite that went to some trouble to respond to Mr Usborne. It was typical of Orwell, as some of the letters in this selection show, that he would go to great trouble to respond to correspondents whom he hardly knew – if at all. The letter to Richard Usborne was written from Barnhill, Jura, on 26 August 1947:

Dear Mr Usborne,*

Many thanks for your letter of the 22nd. I will answer your queries as best I can. I was born in 1903 and educated at Eton where I had a scholarship. My father was an Indian civil servant, and my mother also came of an Anglo-Indian family, with connections especially in Burma. After leaving school I served five years in the Imperial Police in Burma, but the job was totally unsuited to me and I resigned when I came home on leave in 1927. I wanted to be a writer, and I lived most of the next two years in Paris, on my savings, writing novels which no one would publish and which I subsequently destroyed. When I had no more money I worked for a while as a dishwasher, then came back to England and did a series of ill-paid jobs usually as a teacher, with intervals of unemployment and dire poverty. (That was the period of the slump.) Nearly all the incidents described in *Down and Out* actually happened, but at different times, and I wove them together so as to make a continuous story. I did work in a bookshop for about a year in 1934–5, but I only put that into *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* to make a background. The book is not, I think, autobiographical, and I have never worked in an advertising office. In general my books have been less autobiographical than people have assumed. There are bits of truthful autobiography in *Wigan Pier*, and, of course, *Homage to Catalonia*, which is straight reporting. Incidentally *Keep the A.F.* is one of several books which I don’t care about and have suppressed.

As to politics, I was only intermittently interested in the subject until about 1935, though I think I can say I was always more or less ‘left.’ In *Wigan Pier* I first tried to thrash out my ideas. I felt, as I still do, that there are huge deficiencies in the whole conception of Socialism, and I was still wondering whether there was any other way out. After having a fairly good look at British industrialism at its worst, i.e. in the mining areas, I came to the conclusion that it is a duty to work for Socialism even if one is not emotionally drawn to it, because the continuance of present conditions is simply not tolerable, and no solution except some kind of collectivism is viable, because that is what the mass of the people want. About the same time I became infected with a horror of totalitarianism, which indeed I already had in the form of hostility towards the Catholic Church. I fought for six months (1936–7) in Spain on the side of Government, and had the misfortune to be mixed up in the internal struggle on the Government side, which left me with the conviction that there is not much to choose between Communism and Fascism, though for various reasons I would choose Communism if there were no other choice open. I have been vaguely associated with Trotskyists and Anarchists, and more closely with the left wing of the Labour Party (the Bevan-Foot end of it). I was literary editor of *Tribune*, then Bevan’s paper, for about a year and a half (1943–5), and have written for it over a longer period than that. But I have never belonged to a political party, and I believe that even politically I am more valuable if I record what I believe to be true and refuse to toe a party line.

Early last year I decided to take a holiday, as I had been writing 4 articles a week for 2 years. I spent 6 months in Jura, during which time I did not do any work, then came back to London and did journalism as usual during the winter. Then I returned to Jura and started a novel which I hope to finish by the spring of 1948. I am trying not to do anything else while I get on with this. I

very occasionally write book reviews for the *New Yorker*. I mean to spend the winter in Jura this year, partly because I never see to get any continuous work done in London, partly because I think it will be a little easier to keep warm here. The climate is not quite so cold, and food and fuel are easier to get. I have a quite comfortable house here, though it is in a remote place. My sister [Avril] keeps house for me. I am a widower with a son aged a little over 3.

I hope these notes will be of help. I am afraid I cannot write anything for the *Strand* at present, because, as I have said, I am trying not to get involved in outside work. We have only 2 posts a week here and this letter won't go until the 30th, so I shall address it to Sussex.

Yours sincerely
George Orwell

Although Orwell says he was never a member of a political party, he had either forgotten, or glossed over, that for a short time he was a member of the Independent Labour Party. He wrote about joining in 'Why I Join the I.L.P.', 24 June 1938. He left when war broke out because it retained its pacifist stance. His forgetting might have been a wish for disassociation.

Orwell makes only the briefest, indirect, reference in his letter to his first wife, Eileen. Typical for a man of his character and time, he does not harp on her loss in his letters, though there is no doubt he felt it keenly. Eileen O'Shaughnessy was born in South Shields in 1905. He and Eileen met at a party given by Mrs Rosalind Obermeyer at 77 Parliament Hill, London, in March 1935. For Orwell it was love at first sight. On leaving the party he told a friend, 'The girl I want to marry is Eileen O'Shaughnessy', something he also said to Mrs Obermeyer. Eileen was at the time reading for her master's degree in psychology at University College London. Despite the hard fact that Orwell was earning very little and his obvious prospects limited, they were married from Orwell's cottage at Wallington in the adjacent parish church on 9 June 1936. She died under anaesthetic at Newcastle upon Tyne on 29 March 1945.

There is a very curious link between Orwell and Eileen that quite possibly neither may have realised. Both 'celebrated' the year 1984. The title of Orwell's novel, only chosen shortly before he sent his typescript to his publisher, Fredric Warburg, could obviously not have been known to Eileen, but did he know that she had written a poem to celebrate the centenary of her school, Sunderland High School, called 'End of the Century: 1984'? It has three fourteen-line stanzas, entitled 'Death', 'Birth', and 'The Phoenix' and seems to have no obvious link with anything Orwell was to write. Her poem celebrates the past; Orwell's novel warns of the future.

Over 1,700 letters by George Orwell are included in Vols X–XX of *The Complete Works of George Orwell* and in *The Lost Orwell*. This figure does not include the many letters he wrote in reply to readers of *Tribune*, nor the many dozens of internal memoranda he wrote making programme booking arrangements whilst working for the Indian Section of the BBC Overseas Service, 1941–43. *The Complete Works* and *The Lost Orwell* also include many letters written to Orwell or about him and most particularly, letters by his wife, Eileen. This compilation is, therefore, only a small proportion of what is available.

In making this selection I have had two principles in mind. Firstly, that the letters chosen should illustrate Orwell's life and hopes; and secondly that each one should be of interest in its own right. Most of the letters are given in full, but I have cut the lengthier passages that repeat what is printed elsewhere. As Orwell's horizons narrowed in his last couple of years as a result of increasing illness and confinement to hospitals and Jura, even though his circle of friends grew rather than narrowed, there is more repetition and hence more excisions.

It is surprising how many people saved letters that Orwell wrote to them. Inevitably what has survived varies over the years and sometimes, in order to tell the story of Orwell's life, one must refer to letters sent to Orwell. A notable example of this last is the important correspondence with Ihor Szewczenko regarding the publication of the Ukrainian version of *Animal Farm* from 11 April 1944.

onwards. Even if one wished to include an equal number of letters from each year of Orwell's adult life, mere survival defines what can be chosen for inclusion. Thus, and most obviously, there are no extant letters from the five years Orwell spent in Burma.

Despite exhaustive searches by Ian Angus and the editor in the preparation of *The Complete Works*, material about Orwell, including valuable letters, still comes to light – hence, of course, *The Lost Orwell*. It has been gratifying to be able to include here a few letters – and important ones – for the first time. I am especially grateful to the owners of the ‘new’ letters for allowing their inclusion. I am also grateful to those who have acquired already published letters for permission to include them here; their names are given in the notes to their letters. Rumours abound that a further batch of letters to Eleanor Jaques was initially offered for sale by Bonhams in 2009 and then withdrawn.

Orwell's letters tend to be businesslike. This applies equally to friends as to his literary agent. He is quick to apologise if he feels he has been slow in explaining some action or has neglected some social pleasantries – such as on 24 December 1934 when he regrets not writing earlier to send Christmas greetings to Leonard Moore, adding ‘Please remember me very kindly to Mrs Moore’. Even the letters that have come to light to Eleanor Jaques, Brenda Salkeld, and Lydia Jackson are short of endearments although his wish for a loving relationship is plain. The deaths of Eileen, his father and mother, and his sister Marjorie were all deeply felt by him, but he is reticent about expressing his pain. This is not a mark of coldness of character but how those brought up in the first half of the twentieth century expected to be seen to behave, at least publicly. Pain and suffering were thought to be relative and given that experienced by millions in the two ‘Great’ wars, personal loss, especially natural loss, was felt in context. One suffered in silence. Orwell can strike the casual observer as dour. His close friends likened him to his creation Benjamin, the donkey of *Animal Farm*. But, as David Astor told the editor, when he was depressed or troubled he would telephone Orwell and ask him to meet him in a local pub because he knew Orwell would make him laugh, would cheer him up. One could almost put this dourness into financial terms. Orwell was often poor – see his letters responding to Jack Common's pleas for even small sums of money when Orwell was in French Morocco. He even speaks of making do for much of 1936 at The Stores by living on potatoes. *Animal Farm* earned him good royalties but when he died, and before the huge royalties that flooded in from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, at his death he was shown to have £9,909 at probate – perhaps some £250,000 today, the cost of a modest house. But, at the time, he was owed £520 that he had lent to friends: George Kopp £250; Paul Potts £120; Sonia £100; Inez Holden £75; and Jack Common £50.

It is apparent how hard he worked on his correspondence. It is easy to forget nowadays, when using a personal computer with its facility to copy, paste, and save, that typing letters on a mechanical machine could be hard physical work, especially if, as for Orwell, he had to type when ill in bed. There was a limit as to how many copies could be typed at a time. Thus, if he or Eileen wanted to pass on the same information to more than one person, each one would receive a separate letter and each of those would have to be typed afresh. (See the conclusion to Eileen's letter to Mary Common, December 1938.) Yet Orwell would patiently type and retype his news in letters to different friends.

One very significant characteristic of Orwell's letter-writing, telling something of his generosity of character, is how he would write at length to those he did not know, may never have met, and to whom he owed nothing. The letter above to Richard Osborne, and that to Jessica Marshall written from Hairyres Hospital on 19 May 1948 are both letters on which he spent considerable time although a brief acknowledgement would have sufficed for most of us.

Eileen's letters are completely different in content and style. It is to Eileen we must turn to discover what it was like staying with her husband's parents at Southwold, what it was like living in their almost primitive cottage at Wallington, and it is to Eileen we turn for irony. She had a fine sense of humour and although both she and Orwell were self-deprecatory, in Eileen this is put with delicious

wit.

Because so much has been published of Orwell's work and because so many of his letters have survived, we know (or think we know) what to expect. Eileen so often comes as a surprise. There are the lovely letters written to her husband (then working as a war correspondent on the Continent) telling him how their little boy was developing and also her hopes for their future away from London (which Orwell would realise on Jura) and her anxieties about the operation which we now know would bring an end to her life. Eileen also lived a life that we did not know about until the batch of letters to Norah Myles was published in *The Lost Orwell* and reproduced here. It was known that she went to Chapel Ridding at Windermere in July 1938 but we have never known why – and still do not know. Something of this other side of Eileen is revealed in her letters. One thing that is certain from them is that she had a very affectionate nature.

A small handful of letters by others than Orwell and Eileen have been included. Each one – such as Jennie Lee's letter to Miss Goalby on page 68 – illuminates Orwell's character or his medical condition (as does that from Dr Bruce Dick to David Astor on page 433). These few letters help to develop further our picture of Orwell – for example, the unforgettable image of his arrival in Spain just after Christmas 1936: 'This was George Orwell and his boots arriving to fight in Spain.' As Jennie Lee explains, 'He knew he could not get boots big enough' in Spain and he had come with a spare spare hanging round his neck. The problem of getting footwear large enough for his feet came back to haunt him towards the end of his life.

Taken together, this volume and its companion volume, Orwell's *Diaries*, go some way to offering the autobiography that Orwell did not write.

Peter Davis

This edition

Most letters are reproduced in full but their layout has been regularised. I have made a few cuts to avoid repeating what is readily available elsewhere in the selection (for example, Orwell's instructions for making the journey from London to Barnhill, Jura). Where a cut is made, this is indicated within square brackets. A complete record with the original styling is available in *The Complete Works*. Addresses from which letters are sent are often shortened and standardised. After each letter is an inconspicuous reference to its source in *Complete Works*. Such explicatory notes and letters are provided as are deemed to be helpful in a volume of this kind. They are not exhaustive but, again, *Complete Works* can usually be consulted for further information.

Over ninety much-abbreviated biographies of many of those to whom letters were written are given in the Biographical Notes. This will save too-frequent repetition of biographical information and the need to search for such notes where the individuals are first mentioned. Those for whom biographical notes are given are indicated by asterisks after their names in the body of the book. 'George Orwell' as we tend to call him, was born Eric Blair. He continued to use his birth name throughout his life. Some of his friends knew him as 'Eric', some as 'George'. His first wife, Eileen, was always Eileen Blair and his son is Richard Blair. In this book, 'the Blairs' refers to Orwell's parents and family and 'the Orwells' to George and Eileen as a couple.

The sources of these letters together with full notes are to be found in *The Complete Works of George Orwell* and its supplementary volume, *The Lost Orwell*. The first nine volumes of *The Complete Works* comprise Orwell's books. These were published by Secker & Warburg in 1986–1988 and have been printed in paperback since by Penguin Books. Volumes X–XX were published in 199

and then in paperback (with some supplementary material) in 2000–2002. The supplementary volume was published by Timewell Press in 2006. The facsimile of the extant manuscript of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published in 1984 by Secker & Warburg in London and M&S Press, Weston, Massachusetts. These volumes were edited by Peter Davison and amount to 9,243 pages. It will be evident that the present volume offers only a small proportion of what is to be found in the whole edition to which, of course, further reference might, if necessary, be made.

In the main the texts of letters are printed as Orwell wrote them. Slight oversights are silently corrected and titles of books and magazines and foreign-language expressions are italicised (something Orwell could not do on a typewriter). Occasionally (as in *Complete Works*) Orwell's typical misspellings are retained but indicated by a superior degree sign (°). References to the *Complete Works* are given as Volume number in roman figure + item number + page(s), e.g., XIX, 3386, pp. 321–2. References to letters from *The Lost Orwell* are given similarly but preceded by *LO* and page numbers; their position in *Complete Works* follows. References to books listed in 'A Short List of Further Reading' are given by the author's name + page number – e.g. Crick, p. 482, except for *Orwell Remembered* and *Remembering Orwell*, which are so designated followed by their page numbers.

Initials such as ILP, sometimes appear with and sometimes without stops after each letter, e.g. ILP and I.L.P. Orwell's practice is followed. Many are defined when used. Those that are not but which might be unfamiliar to some readers are:

ARP:	Air Raid Precautions
CB:	Commander of the Bath
CBE:	Commander of the Order of the British Empire
CH:	Companion of Honour
CP:	Communist Party
FDC:	Freedom Defence Committee
GPU:	Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravlenye (Soviet Secret Police)
IB:	International Brigade
ILP:	Independent Labour Party
IRD:	Information Research Department
KG:	Knight of the Order of the Garter
Kt:	Knight(ed)
LCC:	London County Council
NCCL:	National Council for Civil Liberties
NKVD:	Narodniy Kommissariat Vnutrennykh Dyel (Soviet Secret Police)
<i>NL:</i>	<i>New Leader</i>
NYK:	Nippon Yusen Kaisha (Japanese Mail Steamer Co.)
OBE:	Officer of the Order of the British Empire
OUP:	Oxford University Press

PAS:	para-amino-salicylic acid
PEN:	International Association of Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists and Novelists
POUM:	Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Revolutionary (anti-Stalinist) Communist Party - under whose aegis Orwell fought in Spain)
PR:	<i>Partisan Review</i>
RAMC:	Royal Army Medical Corps
TUC:	Trades Union Congress
YCL:	Youth Communist League

It is difficult to give precise equivalents of value with today's prices because individual items vary considerably. However, a rough approximation can be gained if prices in the 1930s are multiplied by forty; by thirty-five during the war; and by thirty between then and Orwell's death. In pre-decimal coinage there were 12 pence to a shilling and twenty shillings to £1 – so 240 pence to a £. Sixpence old coinage = 2½p; one shilling (12 pennies) = 5p; 10 shillings (10/-) = 50p. For the Orwells' time in Morocco it might be convenient to refer to R.L. Bidwell's *Currency Conversion Tables* (1970). It records the French franc as being 165 to the £ (39.8 to the \$) in March 1938. In January 1939 he gives 176.5 to the £ (39.8 to the \$). Thus, the Orwells' rent for their cottage – 7s 6d per week – is approximately £1.50 for four weeks in 1930s equivalences and, say, £60 per month at current values. The rent for the villa in Morocco was 550 francs per month, approximately £3.25 then but, say, £13 at today's values.

Grateful thanks are due to The Orwell Estate, in particular Richard Blair and Bill Hamilton, and Gill Furlong, Archivist, and Steven Wright, UCL Special Collections Library, for enabling these letters to be published. I am indebted to my grandson, Tom, for much technical support. The Orwell Estate and the publishers expressed thanks to copyrights holders of letters published in the *Complete Works* and *The Lost Orwell* and that gratitude is renewed here. Thanks are also due to those who have allowed letters not previously published, or for which the originals have changed hands, to be reproduced. I am immensely grateful to Myra Jones for her careful proofreading (once again) and Briony Everroad of Harvill Secker for her courtesy and her splendid support.

Peter Davis

An asterisk after a correspondent's name indicates that that person will be found in the Biographical Notes. Cross references to other letters are emphasised in bold.

From Pupil to Teacher to Author

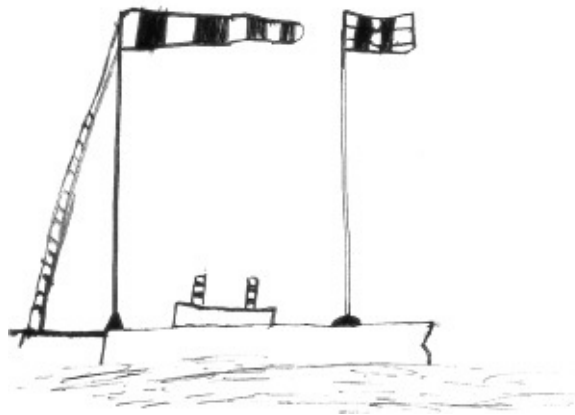
1911–1933

Orwell left Eton in December 1921. He had applied to join the Indian Imperial Police and was coached for the competitive entrance examination. The results were published on 23 November 1922. He had come seventh of twenty-nine successful applicants obtaining 8,464 marks out of a possible 12,400, the pass mark being 6,000. His strongest subjects were Latin, Greek, and English. He just passed the horse-riding test and scored 174 out of 400 for Freehand Drawing (so he had advanced from the little drawings with which he embellished his letters to his mother from St Cyprian's).

He arrived in Burma on 27 November 1922. He learned Hindi, Burmese, and Shaw Karen and could converse in fluent 'very high-flown Burmese' with Burmese priests. He served in a number of stations and he did see a hanging and did shoot an elephant, about both of which he wrote important essays. For shooting the elephant (which had killed a coolie) he was despatched by an angry commanding officer to Katha on 23 December 1926, the basis for Kyauktada of *Burmese Days*.

He left Burma on 12 July 1927 to take the six months' leave he was due. Whilst on leave he resigned from the Police. He had evidently saved a fair amount of his pay and went to Paris where he attempted to earn a living as a writer. He did have six articles published in Paris in French and one that was published in England, but he failed to get short stories or a novel accepted and they were all destroyed. When he ran out of money he worked for a few weeks as a kitchen hand in a luxury hotel, either the Crillon or the Lotti. For a short while he was a patient in the Cochin Hospital with 'un grippé', an experience about which he also wrote.

Orwell returned to England and, using the family home in Southwold as a base, made forays into tramping and hop-picking. He began to get articles accepted (for very little money) and from April 1932 to July 1933 taught boys aged ten to sixteen at The Hawthornes, a private school in Hayes, Middlesex. He did not return for the autumn term at The Hawthornes, which had, in any case, run into financial difficulties, but went to teach at Frays College, a private school for boys and girls, Uxbridge, Middlesex; it is illustrated in Thompson, p. 40. On 9 January 1933 Victor Gollancz published *Down and Out in Paris and London*.



From Orwell's letter to his mother, 15 October 1911

To Ida Blair*

2 December 1920
St Cyprian's School
Eastbourne

My dear Mother, I hope you are alright,

It was Mrs: Wilkes¹ birthday yesterday, we had a fun after tea and played games all over the house. We all went for a walk to Beachy-Head.

I am third in Arithmatick.

'Its' very dull today, and dosent look as if its going to be very warm.

Thank you for your letter.

It is getting very near the end of term, there are only eighteen days more.

On Saturday evening we have dncing, and I am going to say a piece of poetry, some of the boys sing.

Give my love to Father and Avril. Is Togo alright, We had the Oxford and Cambridge Match yesterday. Cambridge won in the first and third, and the second did not have a Match. I am very glad Colonel Hall² has given me some stamps, he said he wold last year but I thought he had forgotten. Its a beastly wet day today all rain and cold.

I am very sorry to hear we had those beastly freaks of smelly white mice back. I hope these arent smelly one. if they arnt I shall like them.

From your loveing son,
E.A.Blair.

[X, 8, p. 10; handwritten with original spelling and errors]

1. Mrs Vaughan Wilkes, wife of the headmaster and owner of St Cyprian's.
2. Colonel Hall was a neighbour of the Blairs at Shiplake.

To Steven Runciman*

[?] August 1920
Grove Terrace
Polperro R.S.C.
Cornwall

My dear Runciman,

I have a little spare time, and I feel I *must* tell you about my first adventure as an amateur tramp. Like most tramps I was driven to it. When I got to a wretched little place in Devonshire, — Seaton Junction, Mynors,² who had to change there, came to my carriage & said that a beastly Oppidan who had been perpetually plaguing me to travel in the same compartment as him was asking for me. As

was among strangers, I got out to go to him whereupon the train started off. You need two hands to enter a moving train, & I, what with kit-bag, belt etc had only one. To be brief, I was left behind. I despatched a telegram to say I would be late (it arrived next day), & about 2½ hours later got a train at Plymouth, North Rd, I found there were no more trains to Looe that night. It was too late to call a telephone, as the post offices were shut. I then made a consultation of my financial position. I had only enough for my remaining fare & 7½d over. I could therefore either sleep at the Y.M.C.A. place, priced at 6d, & starve, or have something to eat but nowhere to sleep. I chose the latter, I put my kit-bag in the cloak-room & got 12 buns for 6d: half-past-nine found me sneaking into some farmer's field, — there were a few fields wedged in among rows of slummy houses. In that light I of course looked like a soldier strolling round, — on my way I had been asked whether I was demobilized yet, & I finally came to anchor in the corner of a field near some allotments. I then began to remember that people frequently got fourteen days for sleeping in somebody else's field & 'having no visible means of support', particularly as every dog in the neighbourhood barked if I ever so much as moved. The corner had a large tree for shelter, & bushes for concealment, but it was unendurably cold; I had no covering, my cap was my pillow, I lay 'with my martial cloak (rolled cape) around me'.³ I only dozed & shivered till about 1 oc, when I readjusted my puttees, & managed to sleep long enough to miss the first train, at 4.20. by about an hour, & to have to wait till 7.45 for another. My teeth were still chattering when I awoke. When I got to Looe I was forced to walk 4 miles in the hot sun; I am very proud of this adventure, but I would not repeat it.

Yours sincerely,
E. A. Blair.

[X, 56, pp. 76–7; handwritten]

1. Railway Sorting Office, which acted as poste restante. Polperro had no station. The nearest was at Looe, three miles to the east. The Blair family spent most of its summer holidays in Cornwall at either Looe or Polperro. On this particular journey Orwell was returning from an Eton Officers' Training Corps exercise and was therefore in uniform.
2. Roger Mynors (1903–1989; knighted 1963) was a member of Orwell's Election. He and Orwell produced the school journal *Election Times*. He was a leading classical scholar; he became a Fellow of Balliol in 1926 and later a Professor at Cambridge and Oxford. He married Lavinia, daughter of Cyril Allington, Headmaster of Eton in his and Orwell's time.
3. From stanza 3 of 'The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna' by Charles Wolfe, a poem parodied by Orwell at Eton in *Collected Days* (X, p. 69).

Extract from letter to Cyril Connolly*

Easter 1921

The original and the complete text of this letter are lost. What survives does so because Cyril Connolly quoted part of Orwell's letter when writing to Terence Beddard at Easter 1921; Connolly copied out this section for the Orwell Archive in June 1967.

*Another version, with interspersed ironic comments by Connolly, exists at Tulsa University, and that is given in Michael Sheldon's biography of Orwell (pp. 75–76). In a note added to the copy made for the Archive, Connolly explained that this extract was part of a letter to Beddard which Connolly printed in *Enemies of Promise* (1938), pp. 256–59. Beddard was dead by the time Connolly made the copy. It is impossible to be sure how reliable is Connolly's copy. Beddard was a King's Scholar in the Election before Orwell's; he left Eton exactly a year before Orwell and was no longer there when Connolly wrote to him. Christopher Eastwood is described by Connolly in his notes as 'an attracti*

boy with a good voice & rather a prig'.¹ He went on: 'The point of the letter is that Eastwood, being my election, was bound to see much more of me than of Blair, in the election above us.' E. A. Carø was in Blair's Election, and Redcliffe-Maud³ two Elections below Connolly's. For something of the background to this letter, see chapters 20 and 21 of *Enemies of Promise*. Michael Shelden remarks that it would be unwise to assume that Orwell's 'adolescent affections for other boys ever reached an advanced stage of sexual contact. He may well have been as chaste in his relationships with boys as he was in his relationship with Jacintha. As his letter to Connolly reveals, he was awkward in romantic matters and was slow to assert himself.'

I am afraid I am gone on Eastwood. This may surprise you but it is not imagination I assure you. The point is that I think you are too, at any rate you were at the end of last half. I am not jealous of you. But you though you aren't jealous are apt to be what I might call 'proprietary'. In the case of Maud & Carøe you were quite right but what I want you to do is not regard me as another Carøe whatever points of resemblance there may be. Don't suspect me of any ill intentions either. If I had not written to you, about 3 weeks into next half you would notice how things stood, your proprietary instincts would have been aroused & having a lot of influence over Eastwood you would probably have put him against me somehow, perhaps even warned him off me. Please don't do this I implore you. Of course I don't ask you to resign your share in him only don't say spiteful things.

[X, 60, pp. 79–80]

Connolly's copy in the Orwell Archive concludes: 'Rather a revelation . . . Anyhow Eastwood had noticed it and is full of suspicion as he hates Blair.'

1. Christopher Eastwood (1905–1983) became a senior civil servant. See *Remembering Orwell*, 16–18, for his reminiscences of Orwell at Eton.
2. Einar Athelstan Carøe (1903–1988) became a grain merchant and broker, associated with Liverpool. According to Connolly's notes, he was unpopular at Eton.
3. Baron Redcliffe-Maud (1906–1982) became a particularly distinguished civil servant, and he later became High Commissioner, then Ambassador, to South Africa, 1959–63; Master of University College, Oxford, 1963–76.

A letter from Jacintha Buddicom*

*This letter seeks to comfort a relative. It looks back on the writer's own history and, in particular, her relationship in her youth with Eric Blair long before he became George Orwell. Its full background is explained in the Postscript by Dione Venables to Jacintha Buddicom's *Eric & Us*, 2006. I have omitted one or two personal names not relevant to Orwell. I am deeply grateful to Dione Venables and Jacintha's relatives for permission to publish this letter and to Mrs Venables for providing background notes and the two photographs reproduced in the plates.*

4 May 1957

'Dragon'

John Street

Bognor Regis

I have just finished reading your sad letter and hasten to answer it. I cannot believe that the same miserable tragedy has struck twice in the same family but I CAN give you my total understanding and sympathy which might help a little. Strangely, your letter comes at a time when my mind and

concentration are centred on similar events that took place in my life also some time ago.

~~After the publication last year of *The World of George Orwell* for which I wrote the opening essay I am now writing a short monograph of my own on the subject (they edited out most of the important bits) in the hope of ridding myself of a lifetime of ghosts and regrets at turning away the only man who ever really appealed on all levels.~~

Your experience has many similarities, but the difference is that you briefly carried Xxxxx's child and then refused his proposal. The loss of the first was your decision (I did not have the option and the result has been the cross I have had to bear ever since). But your integrity and courage in refusing the proposal of such a high profile figure makes me feel very proud [*a few words omitted*]. Such a union in 1958 would certainly have ended in tears, especially as he died so young. How I wish I had been ready for betrothal when Eric asked me to marry him on his return from Burma. He had ruined what had been such a close and fulfilling relationship since childhood by trying to take us the whole way before I was anywhere near ready for that. It took me literally years to realise that we are all imperfect creatures but that Eric was less imperfect than anyone else I ever met. When the time came and I was ready for the next step it was with the wrong man and the result haunts me to this day.

You were absolutely right to reject marriage with a man who you know will be constantly unfaithful because that is the way he is made. What credit that decision did you, even though you are still plagued by it. Memories of the joys and fun that Eric and I shared, knowing each others' minds so totally ensured that I would never marry unless that 'oneness' could be found again.

You are still an extremely beautiful woman, even if you feel that this has been your downfall. The men in your life have not wanted your very great intelligence and so it has caused you to drift from relationship to relationship, looking for something you never find. A tragedy which you simply *must* take control of, or life will begin to depend on the bottle rather than the fascination of other lives and situations. At least you have not had the public shame of being destroyed in a classic book as Eric did to me. Julia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is clearly Jacintha, of that I feel certain. He describes her with thick dark hair, being very active, hating politics – and their meeting place was a dell full of bluebells. We always wandered off to our special place when we were at Ticklerton which was full of bluebells. They die so quickly if you pick them so we never did but lay amongst them and adored their heavenly pungent scent. That very bluebell dell is described in his book and is part of the central story but in the end he absolutely destroys me, like a man in hob nailed boots stamping on a spider. It hurt my mother so much when she read that book that we always thought it brought on her final heart attack a few days later. Be glad that you have not been torn limb from limb in public.

Gather yourself together, my Dear. Our family is well blessed with looks and brains and you have both in liberal quantities. You are an extremely elegant communicator so enjoy what you have instead of looking at the past. [*sentence omitted*] You have the finest of minds which outstrips your physical attributes. Make both work for *you*. Look ahead. What is past is gone. It is the only way I manage to keep my reason.

What the writer and recipient of this letter had in common was that both had conceived children outside marriage, at that time a matter of shame. The recipient terminated her pregnancy; the writer, Jacintha, gave birth to the child she was carrying but it was adopted by her uncle and aunt, Dr and Mrs Noel Hawley-Burke. A street photographer caught the moment when Jacintha, her uncle and her aunt left the solicitor's office after she had signed over her six-month-old baby to them. The contrast in the body language, even in such a poor quality photograph, perfectly captures her pain and the joy.

Dione Venables, in her Postscript to Jacintha Buddicom's Eric & Us, gives a graphic account of the occasion that led to Jacintha's break with Orwell before he went to Burma. He had 'attempted to

take things further and make **SERIOUS** love to Jacintha. He had held her down (by that time he was 4" and she was still under 5') and though she struggled, yelling at him to **STOP**, he had torn her skin and badly bruised a shoulder and her left hip'. The assault went no further and Orwell stayed with the family for the rest of the holiday but he and Jacintha kept apart (p. 182). It will be recalled that in *Clergyman's Daughter* Orwell was required by Gollancz's libel lawyer to tone down the first line of p. 41 and Orwell responded to the lawyer's concerns by saying he had 'altered the statement that Mr Warburton "tried to rape Dorothy".'

As Dione Venables goes on to explain, on Orwell's return from Burma, he 'lost no time in contacting the Buddicombs and was invited to join Prosper and Guiny [Jacintha's brother and sister] at Ticklerton. There was no Jacintha – and the family were evasive and embarrassed on the subject so that Eric must have assumed that, even after all this time, she was still angry with him and would never forgive his momentary fall from grace. The tragedy is that in fact, Jacintha had just, in March 1927, given birth to her daughter Michal Madeleine. . . . The father escaped abroad as soon as his condition was discovered' (p. 183). Michal emigrated to Canada. She had six children and was killed in a car crash in 1997. As Jacintha's sister, Guinever, later observed, Orwell 'might well have welcomed the little girl as his own child' (p. 186).

Because Jacintha was not at Ticklerton on his return, Orwell persuaded Prosper to give him her London telephone number. He rang begging her to meet him, but in vain. He tried again a fortnight later, but she still could not face meeting him. He was desperate to patch up the past; she was distressed over the imminent adoption of her baby yet still felt unable to tell Orwell of Michal's existence. Orwell had gone so far as to bring her an engagement ring from Burma. They never again met. Jacintha did not know that Eric was Orwell until 8 February 1949 when her Aunt Lilian wrote from Ticklerton to tell her. She asked his publisher for his address and wrote to him at Cranham Sanatorium. He immediately replied with two letters on **14 and 15 February 1949**. He hoped she would visit him but she felt she could not. So, there was a kind of reconciliation but, alas no meeting. So much was lost for both of them. Although Jacintha might not be Orwell's only inspiration, it is clear that many of his female characters as well as Julia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* owed much to Jacintha.¹

1. A forthcoming study by William Hunt, *Orwell's Demon: The Lonely Rebellion of Eric Blair*, explores in much greater detail than is possible here the links between Orwell and many of those he knew and the places where they met. (The title draws on 'Why Write', XVIII, 3007, p. 320.)

To Max Plowman*

1 November 1936
3 Queen
Southwold, Suffolk

Dear Mr Plowman,

Thank you very much for the copy of the *Adelphi*, which I found an interesting one. I see that Mr Murry* says in his article, 'Because orthodox Christianity is exceedingly elaborate, it presents a greater appearance of unity than (childish superstition)'. I know this is so, but the *why* is beyond me. It is clear that the thicker the fairy tales are piled, the more easily one can swallow them, but this seems so paradoxical that I have never been able to understand the reason for it. I don't think Roger Clarke

his article on Sex & Sin gets to [the] very bottom of the question. He says rightly that the 'spiritual love' stuff fixes the desires on something unattainable, & that this leads to trouble. The point he doesn't bring out is that the 'sinful lust' stuff also fixes it on something unattainable, & that attempts to realise the impossible *physical* desire are even more destructive than attempts on the spiritual side. Of course it is important to teach boys that women like Esther Summerson¹ don't exist, but it is just as important, & far harder, to teach them that women like the *Vie Parisienne* illustrations² don't exist. Perhaps the writer had not the space to bring this out thoroughly. You will, I know, forgive me for troubling you with my reflections, as I was interested by the questions raised.

Thanks very much for the books. I find the novel³ well enough, the Cayenne book⁴ interesting though it is almost certainly exaggerated. The book on Bodley is more solid stuff, but I don't know that it is the kind of thing you would care to use much space on. What I suggest is doing about 1000 words altogether on the three, either in one article or separately as you prefer. I think they are worth mentioning, but not worth more than 1000 words between them. Would this do? If so, I can let you have the review in about 10 days. If you don't think it worthwhile, I will send the books back.

I enclose the other article, reduced to 3,500 words.⁵ Thank you for giving my M.S^o to Mr Murry. I hope he understands that there is no hurry & I don't want to be a nuisance to him.

Yours sincerely
Eric A. Blair

[X, 100, pp. 189–90; handwritten]

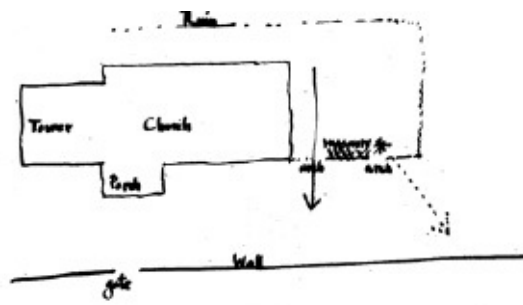
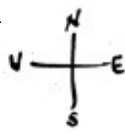
1. The docile heroine and pseudo part-author of *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens (1882–3).
2. Highly glamorised pictures of showgirls.
3. In the April 1931 issue, Orwell reviewed *Hunger and Love* by Lionel Britton and *Albert Grope* by F O. Mann (X, 105, pp. 203–5). Neither may be referred to here, though Britton's book is a possibility.
4. Reviewed December 1930 (X, 101, pp. 190–1).
5. From its length and timing, this is probably 'The Spike,' April 1931 (X, 104, pp. 197–203).

To Dennis Collings*

16 August 1931
At 1B Oakwood Road
Golders Green NW

Dear Dennis,

I said I would write to you. I haven't anything of great interest to report yet about the Lower Classes & am really writing to tell you about a ghost I saw in Walberswick cemetery. I want to get it on paper before I forget the details. See plan below.



Above is W'wick church as well as I can remember it. At about 5.20 pm on 27.7.31 I was sitting at the spot marked *, looking out in the direction of the dotted arrow. I happened to glance over my shoulder, & saw a figure pass along the line of the other arrow, disappearing behind the masonry & presumably emerging into the churchyard. I wasn't looking *directly* at it & so couldn't make out more than that it was a man's figure, small & stooping, & dressed in lightish brown; I should have said workman. I had the impression that it glanced towards me in passing, but I made out nothing of its features. At the moment of its passing I thought nothing, but a few seconds later it struck me that the figure had made no noise, & I followed it out into the churchyard. There was no one in the churchyard & no one within possible distance along the road—this was about 20 seconds after I had seen it; & in any case there were only 2 people in the road, & neither at all resembled the figure. I looked into the church. The only people there were the vicar, dressed in *black*, & a workman who, as far as I can remember, had been sawing the whole time. In any case he was too tall for the figure. The figure had therefore vanished. Presumably an hallucination.

I have been up in town since the beginning of the month. I have made arrangements to go hop-picking, but we shan't start till the beginning of September. Meanwhile I've been busy working. I met recently one of the editors of a new paper² that is to start coming out in October, & I hope I shall be able to get some work from them—not enough to live on, of course, but enough to help. I've been making just a few enquiries among the tramps. Of the three friends I had before, one is believed to have been run over & killed, one has taken to drink & vanished, one is doing time in Wandsworth. I met a man today who was, till 6 weeks ago, a goldsmith. Then he poisoned his right forefinger, & had to have part of the top joint removed; that means he will be on the road for life. It is appalling what small accidents can ruin a man who works with his hands. Talking of hands, they say hop-picking disables your hands for weeks after—however, I'll describe that to you when I've done it.

Have you ever looked into the window of one of those Bible Society shops? I did today & saw huge notices 'The cheapest Roman Catholic Bible 5/6d. The cheapest Protestant Bible 1/—', 'The Douay ° version *not* stocked here' etc. etc. Long may they fight, I say; so long as that spirit is in the land we are safe from the R.C.'s—this shop, by the way, was just outside St Paul's. If you are ever near St Paul's & feel in a gloomy mood, go in & have a look at the statue of the first Protestant bishop of India, which will give you a good laugh. Will write again when I have news. I am sending this to S'wold.

Yours
Eric A Blair

[X, 109, pp. 211–212; handwritten]

1. In 1930–31 Orwell lived with his parents in Southwold but made forays tramping and writing what would become *Down and Out in Paris and London*. When he visited London he would stay with Francis and Mabel Sinclair Fierz in Golders Green. Mabel Fierz reviewed for *The Adelphi* and her husband was a Dickens enthusiast. It was Mrs Fierz who was instrumental in getting *Down and Out* published and having Orwell taken on by Leonard Moore as his literary agent. She died in 1990 aged 100.
2. *Modern Youth*. Orwell submitted two stories but the publication evidently went bankrupt and the printers seized Orwell's stories.

To Leonard Moore*

26 April 1932
The Hawthorns [School]
Station Road
Hayes, Middlesex

Dear Mr Moore,

Thank you for your letter. The history of the ms. 'Days in London and Paris' is this. About a year and a half ago I completed a book of this description, but shorter (about 35000 words), and after taking advice I sent it to Jonathan Cape. Cape's said they would like to publish it but it was too short and fragmentary (it was done in diary form), and that they might be disposed to take it if I made it longer. I then put in some things I had left out, making the ms. you have, and sent it back to Capes,^o who again rejected it. That was last September. Meanwhile a friend who was editor of a magazine had seen the first ms., and he said that it was worth publishing and spoke about it to T. S. Eliot, who is a reader to Faber and Faber. Eliot said the same as Cape's— i.e. that the book was interesting but much too short. I left the ms. you have with Mrs Sinclair Fierz and asked her to throw it away, as I did not think it a good piece of work, but I suppose she sent it to you instead. I should of course be very pleased if you could sell it, and it is very kind of you to take the trouble of trying. No publishers have seen it except Faber's and Cape's. If by any chance you *do* get it accepted, will you please see that it is published pseudonymously, as I am not proud of it. I have filled up the form you sent, but I have put in a clause that I only want an agent for dealings with publishers. The reason is this. I am now very busy teaching in a school, and I am afraid that for some months I shan't be able to get on with any work except occasional reviews or articles and I get the commissions for these myself. But there is a novel¹ that I began some months ago and shall go on with next holidays, and I dare say it will be finished within a year: I will send it to you then. If you could get me any French or Spanish books to translate into English I would willingly pay you whatever commission you think right, for I like that kind of work. There is also a long poem describing a day in London which I am doing, and it *may* be finished before the end of this term. I will send you that too if you like, but I should not think there is any money for anybody in that kind of thing. As to those stories² you have I should shy them away, as they are not really worth bothering with.

Yours truly
Eric A Blair

P.S. I tried to get Chatto & Windus to give me some of Zola's novels to translate, but they wouldn't. I should think somebody might be willing to translate Zola—he has been done, but atrociously badly. Or what about Huysmans? I can't believe *Sainte Lydwine de Schiedam* has been translated into English. I also tried to get Faber's to translate a novel called *A la Belle de Nuit*, by Jacques Roberti. It is very good but apallingly^o indecent, & they refused it on that ground. I should think somebody might take it on—do you know anybody who isn't afraid of that kind of thing? (The book isn't pornographic, only rather sordid.) I could get hold of the copy I had & send it if necessary. I could also translate old French, at least anything since 1400 A.D.

1. *Burmese Days*.
2. These stories do not appear to have survived.
3. Zola's novels had been published in England by Henry Vizetelly (1820–1894), who also established the Mermaid Series Dramatists and published translations of Dostoevsky, Flaubert, and Tolstoy. The publication in English of Zola's *La Terre* (though 'amended') led to Vizetelly's being fined and in 1889 jailed on the charge of obscenity. British publishers, and Gollan in particular, feared expensive legal costs if charged with defamation, libel or obscenity. (See 14.11.34, n.2.)

To Eleanor Jaques*

Tuesday [14 June 193
The Hawthorn

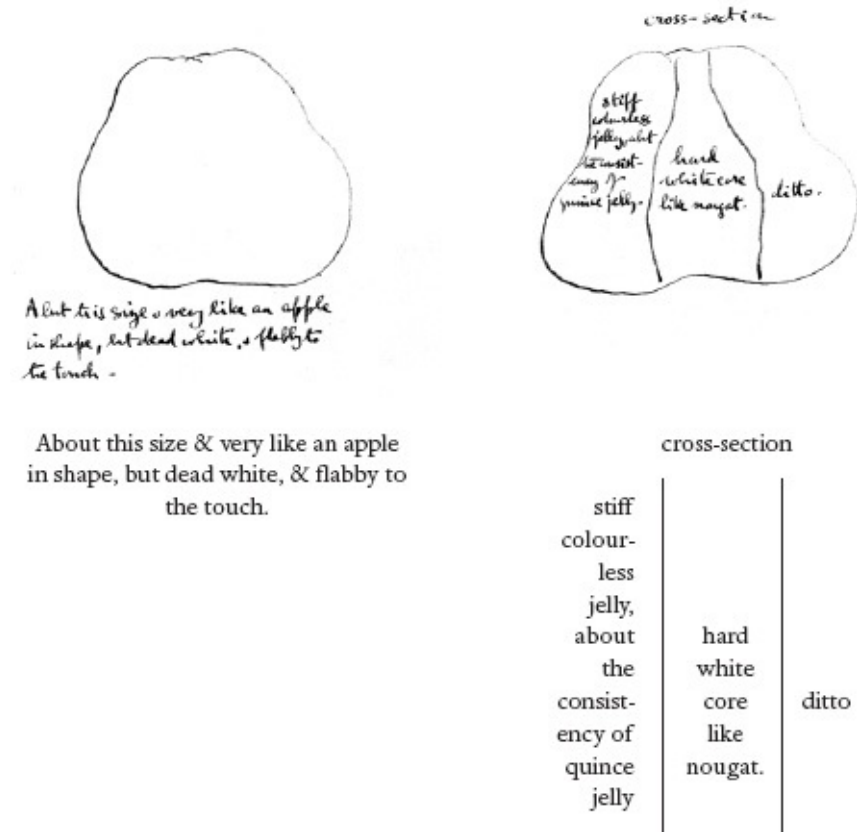
Dear Eleanor,

How do things go with you? I hope your father is better, & that you have got your garden into shape. I have been teaching at the above foul place for nearly two months. I don't find the work uninteresting but it is very exhausting, & apart from a few reviews etc. I've hardly done a stroke of writing. My poor poem, which was promising not too badly, has of course stopped dead. The most disagreeable thing here is not the job itself (it is a day-school, thank God, so I have nothing to do with the brats outside of school hours) but Hayes itself, which is one of the most godforsaken places I have ever struck. The population seems to be entirely made up of clerks who frequent tin-roofed chapels on Sundays & for the rest bolt themselves within doors. My sole friend is the curate—High Anglican but not a creeping Jesus & a very good fellow. Of course it means that I have to go to Church, which is an arduous job here, as the service is so popish that I don't know my way about it & feel an awful B.F.¹ when I see everyone bowing & crossing themselves all round me & can't follow suit. The poor old vicar, who I suspect hates all this popery, is dressed up in cope & biretta & led round in procession with candles etc., looking like a bullock garlanded for sacrifice. I have promised to paint one of the church idols (a quite skittish-looking B.V.M.², half life-size, & I shall try & make her look as much like one of the illustrations in *La Vie Parisienne* as possible) & to grow a marrow for the harvest festival. I would like to 'communicate' too, only I am afraid the bread might choke me. Have you read anything interesting lately? I read for the first time Marlowe's *Faustus*, & thought it rotten, also a mangy little book of Shakespeare trying to prove that Hamlet = Earl of Essex,³ also a publication called *The Enemy* by Wyndham Lewis (not the professional R.C.⁴), who seems to have something in him, also something in Osbert Sitwell, also some odes of Horace, whom I wish I hadn't neglected hitherto—otherwise nothing, not having much time or energy. Mrs. Carr⁵ sent me two books of Catholic apologetics, & I had great pleasure in reviewing one of them⁶ for a new paper called the *New English Weekly*. It was the first time I had been able to lay the bastinado on a professional R.C. at any length. I have got a few square feet of garden, but have had rotten results owing to rain, slugs & mice. I have found hardly any birds' nests—this place is on the outskirts of London, of course. I have also been keeping a pickle-jar aquarium, chiefly for the instruction of the boys, & we have newts, tadpoles, caddis-flies etc. If you are passing, if you ever do, the pumping station at the beginning of the ferry-path, you see an egg of puss-moths on the poplar trees there, I should be awfully obliged if you would pick the leaf & send them me by post. I want some, & have only been able to find one or two here. Of course I don't mean make an expedition there, I only mean if you happen to be passing. What is Dennis⁷ doing these days? I want to consult him about an extraordinary fungus that was dug up here, but of course I

never answers letters. I may or may not come back to S'wold for the summer holidays. I want to go on with my novel⁸ and if possible finish the poem I had begun, & I think perhaps it would be best for me to go to some quiet place in France, where I can live cheaply & have less temptation from the World, the Flesh & the Devil than at S'wold. (You can decide which of these categories you belong to.) By the way, if you are ever to be in London please let me know, as we might meet, that is if you would like to. Please remember me to your parents, also to Mr and Mrs Pullein⁹ if you see them.

Yours
Eric A Blair

P.S. In case you see Dennis, you might tell him the fungus was like this (below.) It was dug up underground.



P.P.S. I trust this adress^o is all right.

[X, 129, pp. 249–50; handwritten; dated from postmark]

1. B.F.: Bloody Fool
2. B.V.M.: Blessed Virgin Mary
3. Probably *The Essential Shakespeare* by J. Dover Wilson (1932)
4. D. B. Wyndham Lewis (1891–1969), a Roman Catholic and a *bête noire* of Orwell's. He was one of the contributors to a joke column in the *Daily Express* under the pseudonym, 'Beachcomber'.
5. A Southwold friend of Orwell and Eleanor Jaques.
6. *The Spirit of Catholicism* by Karl Adam. Orwell's review appeared in *New English Weekly*, 9 June 1932 (X, 127, pp. 246–8).
7. Dennis Collings.
8. *Burmese Days*.
9. Collett Cresswell Pulleyne, a Yorkshire barrister and his mother. He was a friend of both Orwell and Collings. Orwell had some difficulty spelling his name.
10. Published by kind permission of Richard Young.

In addition to Orwell's letters to Brenda Salkeld which have been published in the Complete Works he wrote at least nineteen others to her, seventeen of them between 13 May 1931 and 25 June 1940. These letters survive in private hands. Gordon Bowker was permitted to read them for his biography of George Orwell (2003) and summaries of the letters derived with permission from his biography are given in The Lost Orwell, pp. 92–8. Many of the letters described events in Orwell's life but there is a thread running through them indicating his wish to have an affair with Brenda. She refused such attentions but they remained friends throughout his life. In his penultimate letter of 15 February 1940 he invited her to high tea at 27b Canonbury Square to see Richard. She accepted, as she did a later invitation by Orwell's sister, Avril, to stay at Barnhill, Jura. In the last of these letters, 30 June 1940, Orwell sent Miss Salkeld instructions for the journey.

To Brenda Salkeld*

Sunday [September 1931]
The Hawthorns

Dearest Brenda

I am writing as I promised, but can't guarantee an even coherent letter, for a female downstairs making the house uninhabitable by playing hymn-tunes on the piano, which, in combination with the rain outside & a dog yapping somewhere down the road, is rapidly qualifying me for the mental hospital. I hope you got home safely & didn't find the door barred against you. I reached home just on the stroke of midnight. It was ever so nice seeing you again & finding that you were pleased to see me, in spite of my hideous prejudice against your sex, my obsession about R.C.s, etc.

I have spent a most dismal day, first in going to Church, then in reading the *Sunday Times*, which grows duller & duller, then in trying to write a poem which won't go beyond the first stanza, then in reading through the rough draft of my novel,¹ which depresses me horribly. I really don't know which is the more stinking, the *Sunday Times* or the *Observer*. I go from one to the other like an invalid turning from side to side in bed & getting no comfort whichever way he turns. I thought the *Observer* would be a little less dull when Squire² stopped infesting it, but they seem deliberately to seek out the dullest people they can get to review the dullest books. By the way, if you are by any chance wanting to impose a penance upon yourself, I should think you might try Hugh Walpole's recent 800-page novel.³

I hope you will read one or two of those books I mentioned to you.⁴ By the way, I forgot to mention, what I think you told me before you had not read, Dr Garnett's (not Richard or Edward Garnett) *The Twilight of the Gods*.⁵ If you haven't read that, it's a positive duty to do so. The story the title is taken from is far from being the best, but some of the others, such as 'The Purple Head' are excellent. I suppose you have read Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*? And J. S. Haldane's *Possible Worlds*? And Guy Boothby's *Dr Nikola*? And Mrs Sherwood's *The Fairchild Family*? And these are in different ways a little off the track (*Dr Nikola* is a boy's sixpenny thriller, but a first rate one) & I can recommend all of them. H. L. Mencken's book *In Defence of Women* would probably be amusing, but I haven't read it. I see Wyndham Lewis (not D. B. Wyndham Lewis, a stinking RC) has just brought out a book called *Snooty Baronet*, apparently a novel of sorts. It might be interesting. All I've ever read of his was a queer periodical called *The Enemy*, & odd articles, but he's evidently got some kick in him—whether at all a sound thinker or not, I can't be sure without further acquaintance.

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