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The representation of ideology: Orwell's (re)reading of "Boys' Weeklies"¹

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to unmask the underlying assumptions of Orwell's reading strategy in order to illustrate that texts written from a conscious and specific ideological perspective is much more vulnerable to ideological "unmasking" than texts which do not have such a specific ideological bias. A number of key aspects with regard to commitment, ideology and representation are identified and used as criteria for a critical reading of "Boys' Weeklies", one of Orwell's most famous essays.

1. Introduction

Frederic Jameson, in the preface to *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1986), states that the interpretation of texts is not an isolated act, but takes place within a Homeric battlefield, on which a host of interpretative options are either openly or implicitly in conflict and that only "another, stronger interpretation can overthrow and practically refute an interpretation already in place" (1986: 13). The aim of this article is to take to the Homeric battlefield in a somewhat unconventional and *undercover* way by unmasking the underlying ideology of Orwell's interpretative strategies and in so doing argue that a text which has been written from an explicit ideological point of view is even more vulnerable to ideological "unmasking" than texts which have been written without any explicit bias.

1. This article is based on a chapter from the present writer's MA dissertation entitled *Artful Propaganda: A Study of George Orwell's Technique in Selected Essays* (UNISA, 1987). Material used with permission.

The method followed is as follows: a number of theses regarding commitment, ideology and language as representative medium are posited, and then used as criteria against which Orwell's approach and style in a key essay in his critical *oeuvre* are measured after his basic ideological stance has been delineated.

2. Theses

- *Commitment* is the representation of a writer's implicit or explicit ideology and manifests itself in literary or critical texts in which the writer either pleads openly for a particular point of view or ideology of a political, social or religious nature, or subtly tries to manipulate his readers into accepting his particular ideology or point of view with the ultimate aim of affecting a change in his reader's attitude and approach (Bachrach, 1980: 372; my translation – AMdeL).
- The concept *ideology* is used in a wide variety of contexts and can therefore often be misunderstood if it is not clearly defined within each context. McCormick and Waller (1987: 195-196) emphasize that it should not merely be seen as a set of alien or wrong ideas, but should be seen as pointing to "(t)hose common values, practices, ideas, and assumptions of a particular society that, in fact, hold it together: the deeply ingrained, sometimes only partly conscious, habits, beliefs, lifestyles of a particular time and place." The major function of an ideology is to define and limit the cultural practices of society by structuring their experience of reality in a way which would suggest that the existing order of things is permanent, natural, universally acknowledged and true. As such it provides coherence and a *logical* pattern to a society's social, political and cultural expression and practices.
- *Language* is a writer's only medium by means of which he can effect a change of heart in his readers. It is therefore imperative for the committed writer to accept the arbitrary nature of the various codes embedded in a linguistic system and therefore also the premise that language can engage meaningfully with reality by inventing, representing, cheating, playing, enchanting and animating (Nuttall, 1984: 192-193). A committed writer invariably invents a new reality which has a very definite and recognizable link with *reality* as perceived by the reader, but at the same time perverts the language to emphasize his interpretation of reality, or to point out why somebody else's interpretation of reality is *invalid* or not *as valid* or *truthful* as his. While it is readily acknowledged that all literary works attempt to influence their readers in some way or another, it should be emphasized that this is the committed writer's *primary* aim, and care should be taken not to be misled by the writer's "perversion of words" (Orwell, 1980b: 20), but to look for the subtleties and nuances when studying the ways and means through which a committed writer tries to effect this change.

The key question which logically falls within the ambit of this article, is: how does a writer's ideology effect or influence his own literary and critical texts, as well as his interpretation of other texts?

McCormick and Waller see this influence as analogous to "a powerful force hovering over us as we write or read a text ... [always reminding] us of what is correct, commonsensical, or 'natural'. It tries ... to *guide* the readings of a text ..." (1987: 197; my italics – AMdeL). One could therefore argue that a committed writer's ideology, embedded implicitly or explicitly in his work, will attempt to *guide* or *manipulate* a reading of a text much more strongly than would, say, that of a text dealing not so much with societal issues but with very personal and intense emotions. These *guiding* principles will therefore either be strengthened or opposed by the society's literary ideology,² as this shows how a society's general ideology³ is articulated through its literary and cultural practises. These guiding principles will furthermore paradoxically expose the writer's own ideology as these will differ markedly from the society's literary ideology. The greatest effect is achieved when a writer succeeds in camouflaging his approach so that the disparity between a reader's ideology and the writer's ideology seems insignificant and not at all relevant. Adorno (1962: 303-304) emphasizes this aspect strongly when he distinguishes between commitment and tendency:

In esthetic theory, 'commitment' should be distinguished from 'tendency'. Committed art in the proper sense is not intended to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions – like earlier propagandist (tendency) plays against syphilis, duels, abortion or borstals – but to work at the level of fundamental attitudes ... But what gives commitment its esthetic advantage over tendentiousness also renders the content to which the artist commits himself inherently ambiguous.

Before investigating the underlying ideology represented in Orwell's essay "Boys' Weeklies" (1982a: 505-531), it will first be necessary to refresh one's memory with regard to the context in which it originated, as well as Orwell's ideology as self-appointed spokesman of the working-class, his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, his personal experience of the English educational system, and, finally, his views on the relationship between writer and society.

2,3 McCormick and Waller (1987: 194) define *literary* and *general* ideology as follows: "The term *ideology* ... refers to the shared though very diverse beliefs, assumptions, habits and practices of a particular society. Some of these are specifically literary matters, such as whether the author is seen as a unique genius or as a spokesperson for society, what literary genres and conventions are most highly valued, whether women's writing is valued as highly as men's, and so forth. We refer to such aspects as *literary ideology*. We refer to all other, non-literary, matters as *general ideology*".

3. Orwell's ideology⁴

Orwell's personal *ideology* must first be defined if one is to see the subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, representation of this ideology in his reading of "Boys' Weeklies".

This ideology was influenced by many things, three of the most important being his stay at Eton, the machinations of the British class system in general and the Spanish Civil War.

Orwell's experience of the English educational system had a lasting effect on his view of the English class system, and later became a full-scale attack on the public-school ethos.⁵ As a schoolboy coming from "a lower-upper middle-class family" (Crick, 1980: 58), he experienced both the subtle and blatant nuances of class prejudice. His parents could only manage to send him to St Cyprians, a second-rate preparatory school, where, unknown to Orwell, he was kept at half-fees.⁶ He eventually overcame his problems at St Cyprians and won a scholarship to Eton, where he experienced upper-class snobbery at first hand. T.R. Fyvel accurately articulates the effect Eton had on the development of Orwell's outlook when he says that "Eton also gave him a sharp idea of how the English class system worked and who was truly of the English upper-class and who was not" (1982: 48). Orwell's awareness of his parents' lack of money and his experience at Eton changed his attitude from feelings of guilt – which caused him many hours of anguish and shame at St Cyprians – to a determined stubbornness. To excel at Eton meant to conform to the norms and expectations

4. Orwell never outlined his *ideology* as such. However, the most coherent representation of his ideas and beliefs was outlined in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1980). His *ideology* is based on two key concepts, *justice and common decency*.

5. Orwell's reminiscences about his schooldays were published in a very negative essay, "Such, Such Were the Joys" (1982b: 379-422) and evoked severe criticism from his old school friends.

6. Years later Orwell expressed his guilt feelings about his parents' poverty through Gordon Comstock, the protagonist of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*:

Even at the third-rate schools to which Gordon was sent nearly all the boys were richer than himself. They soon found out his poverty, of course, and gave him hell because of it. Probably the greatest cruelty one can inflict on a child is to send it to a school among children richer than itself. A child conscious of poverty will suffer snobbish agonies such as a grown-up person can scarcely imagine (1981: 46).

of the upper-class and he firmly decided against this.⁷ His career at Eton was an unglamorous one: no prizes, no university entrance, and no position in the Civil Service. Orwell's experience at Eton, poignantly emphasized by the following statement – “The English class system is so subtle an instrument of discomfort that its victims can suffer pains quite imperceptible to those on the receiving end of a sharper divisiveness. Orwell was a connoisseur of social shame both upwards and downwards: a poor boy at Eton, an Etonian among the poor” (Hope, 1971: 10) – formed the basis of his hatred of everything which had to do with the English class system.

While his ideology found its most coherent articulation in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1930), it was given impetus by his experiences as a policeman in Burma and as an unemployed writer-to-be, “slumming” in Paris and London during the thirties. Orwell, as spokesman for the working-class, fought against everything *upper-class* and stated his intentions quite clearly:

For perhaps ten years past [1928-38] I have had some grasp of the real nature of capitalist society. I have seen British imperialism at work in Burma and I have seen something of the effects of poverty and unemployment in Britain. In so far as I have struggled against the system, it has been mainly by writing books which I hoped would influence the reading public. I shall continue to do that . . . (1982a: 374)

His experiences during the Spanish Civil War and the insights he gained proved to be a major formative influence. His first-hand contact with Communist propaganda made a deep impression on his developing ideas. This is emphasized by Stansky and Abrahams: “At the heart of his socialism . . . was a belief in honour and decency. And the way in which the POUM⁸ was being misrepresented by its enemies seemed to him indecent and dishonourable: the politics of lying, the malignant distortions of language” (1981: 229).

4. Orwell's “Poetics of Commitment”

Orwell wrote a great deal about the relationship between a writer and his

7. Cyril Connolly once summarized Orwell's stubbornness at Eton as follows: “I was a stage rebel. Orwell was a real one” (1961: 178).

8. POUM: Partido Obrero de Unification Marxista (Worker's Party of Marxist Unification).

society. If one looks at the six key essays⁹ regarding this relationship one can almost posit an Orwellian “poetics of commitment” which will delimit the parameters within which he operated and help one to grasp the subtleties of his approach as well as the pitfalls which even a writer as subtle and cunning as Orwell cannot escape.

Each writer, says Orwell, has a desire not to become involved in politics, but is inevitably drawn into making his allegiances public because of the increasing attack on freedom of speech. “All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia” (Orwell, 1980b: 167). Because a writer [in the 20th century] lives in a tumultuous age, his spiritual hinterland will be one from which he cannot escape, one which forces a writer to become a committed writer. The age determines that there is no such thing as “non-political literature” (Orwell, 1980b: 88). Eagleton (1986: 59) underscores Orwell’s view when he states that in cases where authorial ideologies are in conflict with a dominant general ideology, “their modes of ideological disinheritance from that contemporary historical moment are determined, in the last instance, by the nature of that moment itself”.

Given the situation that all issues are political issues, a modern writer should use his work to *guide* his readers in a particular direction. In stating four *universal* motives which guide all writers, Orwell states emphatically that one of these motives is “... a desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people’s idea of the kind of society that they should strive after” (1982a: 26). The committed writer should strive to transmit his *message* which is inherent in every text and from which no text can escape clearly and unequivocally.¹⁰

If a committed writer has set himself these aims, how then should he go about changing the readers’ attitudes? Orwell says that a writer should not *consciously* tell lies, but should report events truthfully, “or as truthfully as is consistent with the ignorance, lies and self-deception from which every observer necessarily

9. These essays are “Why I Joined the Independent Labour Party” [1938] (1982a: 373-375); “Why I Write” [1946] (1982a: 23-30); “The Prevention of Literature” [1946] (1980b: 81-95); “Politics vs. Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver’s Travels* [1946] (1980b: 241-261) and “Writers and Leviathan” [1948] (1980b: 463-470).

10. Orwell often repeated this idea, two of the most prominent reiterations being: “... no book is genuinely free from political bias” (1982a: 26) and “But every writer, especially every novelist, *has* a ‘message’, whether he likes it or not, and the minutest details of his work are influenced by it. All art is propaganda” (1982a: 492).

suffers” (1980b: 83). Committed writing is, says Orwell:

Largely a perversion of words, and I would even say that the less obvious the perversion is, the more thoroughly it has been done. For a writer who *seems* to twist words out of their meanings (e.g. Gerard Manley Hopkins) is really, if one looks closely, making a desperate attempt to use them straightforwardly. *Whereas a writer who seems to have no tricks whatever . . . [is] making an especially subtle flank attack upon positions that are impregnable from the front.* (1980a: 19-20; my italics – AMdeL)

When one bears all this in mind, the representation of Orwell’s ideology becomes much more transparent in his rereading and unmasking of the subtleties and falsehoods of language and upper-class ideology in such apparently *innocent* texts as “Boys’ Weeklies”.

5. Orwell’s (re)reading of “Boys’ Weeklies”

The main theme of the weekly stories Orwell selects for scrutiny is the public-school life at the imaginary schools of Greyfriars and St Jim’s, which are depicted as “ancient and fashionable foundations of the type of Eton or Winchester” (1982a: 507). Orwell raises a number of objections to this theme: the harsh realities of life that had to be endured as a result of the British class system¹¹ allow no places for fantasy, not even in a boys’ paper. He objects to the

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11. Orwell’s hatred of the class system is nowhere as poignantly articulated as in the following passage in *The Road to Wigan Pier*:

The train bore me away, through the monstrous scenery of slagheaps, chimneys, piled scrap-iron, foul canals, paths of cindery mud criss-crossed by the prints of clogs. This was March, but the weather had been horribly cold and everywhere there were mounds of blackened snow. As we moved slowly through the outskirts of the town we passed row after row of little grey slum houses turning at right angles to the embankment. At the back of one of the houses a young woman was kneeling on the stones, poking a stick up the leaden waste-pipe which ran from the sink inside and which I suppose was blocked. I had time to see everything about her – her sacking apron, her clumsy clogs, her arms reddened by the cold. She looked up as the train passed, and I was almost near enough to catch her eye. She had a round pale face, the usual exhausted face of the slum girl who is twenty-five and looks forty, thanks to miscarriages and drudgery; and it wore, for the second in which I saw it, the most desolate, hopeless expression I have ever seen. It struck me then that we are mistaken when we say that ‘it isn’t the same for them as it would be for us’, and that the people bred in the slums can imagine nothing but the slums. For what I saw in her face was not the ignorant suffering of an animal. She knew well enough what was happening to her – understood as well as I did how dreadful a destiny it was to be kneeling there in the bitter cold, on the slimy stones of a slum backyard, poking a stick up a foul drain-pipe (1980: 16-17).

generating of “a complete fantasy life” (Hunter, 1984: 112) and for being “fantastically unlike life at a real public-school” (Orwell, 1982a: 507) as no mention is made of the beatings and humiliation suffered by the boys. On the other hand the glamour and paraphernalia of the public-school, the “lock-up, roll-call, house matches, fagging, speeches [and] cosy teas round the study fire” (1982a: 511) are exploited fully and presented in such a way that life at a public school becomes an ideal for the readers. Upper-class names, manners and moral abound: Talbot, Manners and Lowther are frequently used and readers are often reminded of the presence of titled boys: “Gussy is the honourable Arthur A. D’Arcy, son of Lord Eastwood ... Jack Blake is heir to ‘broad acres’ ... Hurree Jamset Ram Singh (nicknamed Inky) is the Nabob of Bhanipur ... [and] Vernon-Smith’s father is a millionaire” (1982a: 511). Their speech mannerisms are typical of upper-class speech, albeit in a caricatured form: “Bai Jove! This is a go, deah boy! ... I have been thrown into quite a fluttah! Oogh! The wuffians! The fearful outsiders!” (1982a: 508).

Orwell sees the underlying morality as similar to that of the Boy Scout Movement.¹² The “good” boys are good in the “cleanliving Englishman tradition – they keep in hard training, wash behind their ears, never hit below the belt” (1982a: 509), while the “bad” boys, on the other hand, regularly visit pubs, smoke and place bets. Orwell’s ridicule of upper-class ideology is palpable.

As stated earlier, it is interesting to note that Orwell’s “re-reading” of “Boys’ Weeklies” provoked quite a caustic retort from Frank Richards, the author of many of the stories in the *Gem* and *Magnet*. If one studies Richard’s rebuttal closely, his own personal ideology is clearly represented in a way which exposes the points at which Orwell’s underlying ideology differs from that of Richards. Thus by contrasting the two writers’ views, the differences, strengths and weaknesses of each writer’s ideology are exposed. In answering to Orwell’s charges of cleanliness and snobbishness, Richards implicitly confirms the fact that the weeklies are produced from within a particular ideological framework. His sarcastic retort – “Now, although Mr Orwell may not suspect is, the word ‘aristocrat’ has not wholly lost its original Greek meaning. It is an actual fact that, in this country at least, nobleman are generally better fellows than commoners” (1982a: 535) – not only hints at Orwell’s own background, but also reveals the typical upper-class morality which Orwell has set out to expose. Richards, however, seems to realize the implications of such a stance a bit

12. A Boy Scout had to “promise that on his honour he would do his best to do his duty to God and his country (or sovereign), to help other people at all times and to obey the scout law, itself a code of chivalrous behaviour easily understood by the boy” (Corbett, 1971: 41).

further in his essay and weakens his argument by stating that “they [the workers] are not only the backbone of the nation: they *are* the nation”; all other classes being merely trimmings” (1982a: 536). This back-peddalling, if not downright contradiction, is an attempt prompted less by honest conviction than by hard headed expediency, to allay working class readers’ annoyance and only confirms Orwell’s stand that these weeklies are propagandist.

Orwell’s criticism of the manners and morality shows that these are represented in the characters’ attitudes in ways that would influence readers to blithely and unquestioningly accept the political and social *status quo*. As such the weeklies are themselves instruments in the hands of their upper-class owners and the educational system. The obvious attempt to emphasize the difference in education merely serves to focus even more sharply on the crucial issue of wealth. The characters are portrayed in a way which, says Orwell, reinforces the position of the upper-class. The characters are the typical upper-class public school characters: there are the born leaders, the boy-assistants, the studious lads, the eccentrics and – of particular importance to Orwell’s argument – the scholarship boy: “Then there is the scholarshipboy, an important figure in this class of story because he makes it possible for the boys from the very poor homes to project themselves into the public school atmosphere” (1982a: 514). The autobiographical strain of this adds a certain poignancy to Orwell’s argument.

He maintains further that while most of the characters are from the upper-class, the working class characters are presented only in an unfavourable light: “The working-classes only enter into the *Gem* and *Magnet* as comics or semi-villains ... [they] appear as prize-fighters, acrobats, cowboys, professional footballers and Foreign Legionnaires – in other words, as adventurers. There is no facing of the facts about working-class life, or indeed, about *working* life of every description” (1982a: 526). Thus the unattainable ideal serves to impress their deprived status even upon their already conditioned minds.

Another accusation levelled at the weeklies is that, despite the fact that some of the characters are ostensibly working class,

they are all living at several pounds a week above their income. And needless to say, that is just the impression that is intended. . . . Not only is a five-to-six pound a week standard of life set up as the ideal, it is tacitly assumed that that is how the working class people really *do* live. The major facts are simply not faced. It is admitted, for instance, that people lose their jobs; but then the dark clouds roll away and they get better jobs instead. No mention is made of the dole, no mention of tradeunionism. No suggestion anywhere that there can be anything wrong with the system as a *system*. (Orwell, 1982a: 527)

It seems then as if Orwell is suggesting that the working class characters and their lifestyles are presented in ways which undermine the morale of the working class and make them feel inferior, their presentation being based on the assumption that “inferior” people will not challenge the validity of a system dominated by “superior” people.

Richard’s (see Orwell, 1982a: 531-540) answers to these accusations serve as a clear indication of how Orwell’s ideology leads him to use the very methods of propaganda which he abhors. Richards states firmly that a misrepresentation of the working class would not only be bad manners, but bad business as well, as circulation figures depend on working class readers. Orwell seems to (conveniently?) lose sight of the aims of a boys’ paper’, namely entertainment and escape. Richards’s rhetorical “are these [strikes, slumps and unemployment] really subjects for young people to meditate upon?” (Orwell, 1982a: 537) underlines the fact that Orwell deliberately seems to “forget” what boys papers set out to do, or is deliberately distorting the real issues.

However, Orwell’s analysis does not end with the weeklies only. He also turns his attention to the readers, whom he divides into three significant groups: boys who attend public schools and read *Gem* and *Magnet* up to twelve years of age; boys at private schools who cannot afford to go to public schools and read the weeklies for much longer, lingering on the impossible dream of a public school education; and working class boys who work in offices, factories and mines and are enthralled by the glamour of the public schools. Orwell argues that the weeklies are aimed at precisely the third group, many of whom will never read anything else other than newspapers, the assumption being that the readers with some subordinate job are led to identify with people in positions of command and that therefore they will never come to question “the system”.

Certain political and social implications presented in these papers strike Orwell with a particular force, namely that nothing ever changes and that all foreigners are funny.

The ironical summary of the pre-1914 political attitude – “the King is on his throne and the pound is worth a pound” – conveying a lack of political evolution, forms a corollary to Orwell’s argument that the *status quo* will never be questioned. What is again significant is that there is no facing of realities, thus deluding their readers as to the nature of the adult world: “The outlook inculcated by all these papers is that of a rather stupid member of the Navy League in the year 1910” (Orwell, 1982a: 528). Hitler, the Nazis and the threat of Communism are only mentioned in occasional remarks: “The clock was stopped at 1910. Britannia rules the waves, and no-one has heard of slumps,

booms, unemployment, dictatorships, purges or concentration camps” (1982a: 525).

Richards’s ignorance with regard to dangers of totalitarianism is a point in Orwell’s favour. Note, however, that Orwell is pleading for the same things that are being done by the weeklies, namely indoctrination, albeit in a different form as he seems to be pleading that a more realistic approach in the weeklies will prepare (indoctrinate?) the youthful readers for the events to come.

The attitude to foreigners derives from English group insularity and xenophobia¹³ fostering the concomitant belief that everybody outside this group is necessarily a clown.

The lack of social progress depicted in the weeklies runs parallel to the lack of political development. Any improvement in the work situation of the working class characters are depicted as resulting from the employers’ benevolence and not from honest, hard work.

The clearest evidence of the representation of Orwell’s ideology can be found in his artistic *perversion* of words, his ability to manipulate words and phrases in such a confident and assertive way that the reader is almost certain to believe him without questioning the truth of validity of his statements. He criticizes the style and idiom of the stories, pointing out their tautologous nature. The following few examples will suffice to prove the point; note how Orwell tries to *persuade* his readers by leaning heavily on loaded adjectives, rhetorical questions and bland *assertions*:

So far as *I know*, there are extremely few stories in foreign languages (1982a: 511; my italics – AMdeL).

All I can say from *my own observations* is this... (1982a: 512; my italics – AMdeL).

Needless to say, these stories are *fantastically* unlike life at a real public school (1982a: 509; my italics – AMdeL).

This kind of thing is *a perfectly deliberate incitement* to wealth fantasy (1982a: 511; my italics – AMdeL).

The reason, *obviously*, is that in England education is a matter of status (1982a: 511; my italics – AMdeL).

13. Orwell’s critique of English xenophobia is developed further in “The English People” (1982b: 15-56).

These examples serve as illustrations of the practical manifestations of Orwell's ideological assumptions. By *retracing* his steps through his argument, as it were, one is able to identify and unmask the words and concepts which embody his ideological presuppositions.

6. Concluding remarks

A study of Orwell's accusations and an analysis of Richards's replies clearly expose the ideological parameters of each. It also informs a central concern of Orwell's, namely the use and abuse of language as a propaganda medium. Orwell's Spanish experiences brought him into contact with Communist propaganda methods. In "Spilling the Spanish Beans" (Orwell, 1982a: 301-309) he mentions that Communist propaganda depends on "terrifying the people with the (quite real) horrors of Fascism" (1982a: 306). His criticism of the boys' weeklies seems to imply that the reverse is also quite true, that is that the upper-class owners of the weeklies aim to foster an attitude of subordination and dependence among working class readers by convincing them that the class system is not so unfair as is generally believed and that the relative welfare of the workers is the result of the upper class' benevolent concern. As in Spain, where there was a deliberate conspiracy to prevent the real situation from being understood (1982a: 308), so a similar situation seems to exist in England: while the Communists in Spain instilled fear into the people and deliberately misinformed them, the British upper-class seems to prefer the far more subtle methods of "persuasion" through subtle emotional blackmail.

Yet Orwell himself is not free from distortion, from "the powerful force hovering over us as we write or read a text" (McCormick and Waller, 1987: 197). In his essay "Boys' Weeklies" Orwell uses methods of distortion to bring the weeklies into disrepute. He criticizes the weeklies for *indoctrinating* their readers to accept the class system and all its ramifications, ignoring obvious facts and emphasizing only that which will strengthen his argument. He criticizes the weeklies for their plagiarism (which in fact is shown to be Orwell's lack of knowledge about *Alice* and Chaucer), being outdated and snobbish. Yet by championing the cause of the working class through ridiculing the things which the upper class hold dear – a love of titles, cleanliness of mind and patriotism – Orwell is paradoxically also being "snobbish" and class conscious, by only allowing the working class breathing space. "Boys' Weeklies" is one of the best examples of how Orwell's ideology encroaches on his approach and technique. While not denying the sharp focus and perspective of his observations and his skilful use of rhetorical devices, he grossly overstates his case. The prose is "like a window pane" (1982a: 30). Orwell's spectacles, however, do not seem to be quite as spotless.

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