

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*: In Between the Factual and the Literary

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Abstract

George Orwell decided to visit Spain as a journalist during the Civil War. Once there, he joined the militia to experience war from the inside and soon he noticed a clear manipulation of the events, especially by the British press. He wrote *Homage to Catalonia* in order to throw light on some aspects of the Spanish Civil War. He narrates his experiences at the front at the same time as he provides factual details of the situation. This is a mainly autobiographical book, written with a didactic and informative aim. However, the book contains perceptible literary strategies to catch the reader's attention and to relate the story in an aesthetic and pleasant mood. *Homage to Catalonia* is then an autobiographical account in between the factual and the literary but, to what extent is it considered a piece of journalism or a work of literature?

I. Introduction

Eric Arthur Blair (25th June 1903) is known under the pseudonym George Orwell, first used in the publication of *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) (Wallhead, 2011: 191). Orwell, as a journalist and writer of many well known articles and novels, used his writing to develop and explain his moral and political ideas (Woodcock, 1996:129). However, he did not neglect the aesthetic side of writing. *Homage to Catalonia*, published in 1938, is a clear example of Orwell's intention to write "good prose" at the same time as he pursues objectivity. Although, as he himself affirms in the book, it is impossible to be totally objective in the narration of a war experience, his main aim was to tell the truth about the Spanish Civil War, in which he fought as a militant. Like many writers of the Generation of the Thirties, he was attracted to a form of factual writing in order to give vent to his political concerns (Woodcock, 1996:159). But,

despite this apparent objectivity, his literary imagination coloured not only his fiction but also his journalism (Woodcock, 1996: 129). This is the reason why some of his writings are very difficult to classify: are they a piece of factual writing or a piece of fiction? My intention in this dissertation is to explore *Homage to Catalonia* from the perspective of genre. I will follow David Lodge's theories about what may be considered literature and what is not literary writing, focusing especially on his analysis of Orwell's "A Hanging", and extrapolating his conclusions to *Homage to Catalonia*. In *Homage to Catalonia* there are three different aspects of its author: Orwell the militant, Orwell the journalist and the political analyst and finally Orwell the novelist. These three aspects of the book are going to be analysed in order to explain the issue of genre in *Homage to Catalonia*.

I.1. David Lodge on Literature and "A Hanging"

Lodge asserts that there is "something" in literature that allows the reader to feel it as literature. He explains in his book *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature* the concept of literature through two main definitions. The first one deals with a text in which language is used for purposes of imitation and so to create fictional stories. The second one corresponds to the texts in which language is used aesthetically to please the audience, which leads the reader to pay attention to it as a medium. Hence, according to his definitions, there is literature which is not necessarily fictional, as in the case of autobiographies, and there is also fiction that is not considered literature, as in the case of some adverts in narrative form (Lodge, 1977:1). Lodge also draws on the School of Prague's theories stating that "any

item that attracts attention to itself for what it is rather than acting merely as a vehicle for information is ‘foregrounded’” (Lodge, 1977:2) Roman Jakobson asserts that literature is a better transmitter of messages than ordinary language (Lodge, 1977:6) and this could be the reason why some authors include literary elements in their writings. Dell Hymes explains that there are “axiomatically literary books”, which have no other thing to be than literature; and texts belonging to other categories that can be read as literature by “cultural consensus” (Lodge, 1997:7). This is clearly the case with Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*, primarily associated with history or autobiography, but which can also be read as a novel.

“A Hanging” can be clearly associated with *Homage to Catalonia*, since both writings are partly based on Orwell’s personal experience, are written in a journalistic, plain and clear style and raise genre issues. This is the reason why I will apply the conclusions Lodge reached in his analysis of “A Hanging” to *Homage to Catalonia*. Lodge states that in spite of its clearly factual and quasi-journalistic character, “A Hanging” can be read as literature. At first, it seems to be a realistic account of a Burmese policeman witnessing a hanging. Nevertheless, Lodge realises that there are some elements which are closer to fiction, used by Orwell to create a literary effect (Lodge, 1977:10). Although it follows a chronological order, the narrative structure is more complex than a mere sequence of actions, since the movement towards the condemned man is interrupted twice, once by a dog and then by the prisoner trying not to step into a puddle, and the ending is extended, as after the hanging the story continues. With these techniques Orwell defamiliarises the idea of capital punishment and introduces other ideas such as time and death, central to fiction writing (Lodge, 1997: 13-15). Lodge’s conclusions can be extrapolated to the analysis of *Homage to Catalonia* in order to explain its genre.

II. Analysis of *Homage to Catalonia*

II.1. Orwell the Militant

To start the analysis of *Homage to Catalonia* it is necessary to highlight the fact that the story narrated by Orwell is a semi-biographical one based on his own experiences, both as a militia-man at the front line and as a British war correspondent. As Woodcock states, “the impulse to render his own experiences into some meaningful form was in fact much stronger in him than the impulse to invent original situations and sequences of events” (Woodcock, 1996:159). This is also the case with “A Hanging”, based on his experience working at the Burmese police.

Orwell’s original intention was to visit Spain and, especially, the front, as a war correspondent and record as much information about the events as it was possible for him to do. However, it is easy to believe that he went there with some desire to join in (Woodcock, 1996:114). It must be said that George Orwell’s political ideas changed over the years, according to the experiences he lived through. At the time of his death, it was known that he was not only a convinced socialist but also a strong opponent to Communism. He considered the Soviet Union to be “a new form of class society, oligarchic or bureaucratic collectivism” (Newsinger, 1999: ix). As a supporter of the Labour Government in Britain, and without being an active member of any party, he went to Spain at the outbreak of the Civil War. Orwell saw in the Spanish Civil War a utopian context in which he could experience some of his revolutionary ideas. The Spanish Civil War, as he also explained in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), was seen from the outside as an opportunity to fight against Fascism, a term that was associated by foreigners with Hitler and Totalitarian regimes.

Orwell considered the plan of joining the “militia” the only reasonably thing to do to be faithful to his values and, as his references were from the ILP (Independent Labour Party) in England, he joined the POUM (Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification) unit, since both parties were affiliated, becoming part of the militia in the Aragon-front (Orwell, 1938:4). Subsequent to this experience, which undoubtedly marked his life and turned his prose more political, he wrote the book *Homage to Catalonia*, one year after he left Spain. As Orwell describes in the book, his diaries and camera were confiscated by the Communist police. Thus, he wrote it almost without any records. In the words of George Woodcock:

The reason for his success was obviously that the experiences in Spain had been so intense that he was able to live through them again in the light of the inner eye, and to transfer them to the page in such a way that to the reader also the scenes appear with the greatest luminosity. (Woodcock, 1996:112)

The book is, then, an autobiographical narration of Orwell’s participation in the Spanish War, motivated by his intention to fight against Franco and Fascism. The experience of Orwell the militant provides the raw material, the historical facts that make up *Homage to Catalonia*. The emphasis on the factual is also characteristic of the second persona in the book that I now move on to analyse.

II.2. Orwell the Journalist and Political Analyst

George Orwell was always very much influenced by his job as a journalist. He was highly concerned with finding the best style of writing and with revealing the truth of the event as precisely as possible. *Homage to Catalonia* presents reality through a narration based on verifiable events, accurate descriptions and an apparent objectivity,

as happens in *A Hanging*. Both stories seem to be factual and it is impossible to know to what extent Orwell added some fictional elements (Lodge, 1977:10).

In his essay “Why I Write” (1946), Orwell states that there are four main reasons why authors decide to carry out their task. These reasons are denominated “sheer egoism”, “aesthetic enthusiasm”, “historical impulse” and “political purpose”. They correspond, in equal order, to the desire to be remembered along the years, the perception of beauty in the external world and its transmission to writing, finding out facts and storing them for the use of posterity and the desire to put the world into some direction and alter people’s idea of the kind of society they should support (Orwell, 1946). Every author, according to the experiences lived, Orwell explained, will focus more on one or another. Orwell clarified that the first three reasons were more important for him, but he also explained that after he survived the Spanish Civil War (1936-37) every work he did was invariably against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism. As he stated, one could not avoid those subjects in the period he was living. Nevertheless, what Orwell offered in his novel is “decency” rather than an historical impulse, a concept very much in need in a world moved by individual interests and sympathies (Lucas, 2003:134).

It is necessary to consider at this point that Orwell tried to write a factual book, based on true data, in order to tell the British audience the truth about the Spanish Civil War. In “Why I Write” it is explained that *Homage to Catalonia* is a “frankly political book (...) but in the main it is written with a certain detachment and regard for form. I did very hard in it to tell the whole truth without violating my literary instincts” (Orwell, 1946). However, analysing the context of the story, he does not provide objective facts but an account biased by his own subjectivity.

George Orwell's political ideas were not radical continuously during his life but changed according to the circumstances experienced. Orwell was in his youth a well educated boy belonging to the conventional middle-class. His family tradition pushed him to join the Imperial Police service in Burma (Newsinger, 1999: x). It was in that place where he comprehended the whole meaning of colonialism and he developed a strong anti-Imperialist sentiment at his return to England. At the beginning of the year 1936, he was sent by his editor to immerse himself in the lives of the northern England miners' life. This fact is of vital importance for Orwell, who became aware of the working class condition. Nevertheless, although these experiences contribute to the development of Orwell's political values, they gave him a puzzling political orientation. It was his immersion in the Spanish militia that leads him to fully develop his political ideology, which coincides with his creative maturity (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:13).

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was a conflict between the Republican Government and the so-called "Nationalists", rebel conservative people fighting for the control of the country. The International aid was divided; the Soviet Union supported the republican side while Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy supported the Nationalists. With the desire to make the trip to Spain in order to experience what was occurring, Orwell sought help from the British Communist Party but they denied it. The reason is not difficult to imagine since his political ideas were still vague and he had no intention of becoming a member of any political party. Orwell, a man in possession of many contacts, then came to the Independent Labour Party in England. There they provided him with a recommendation letter to join in the POUM, under the thought that it was close to the Party's ideals.

He arrived in Barcelona in the middle of an ideological struggle among two different ways of considering the revolution and the best strategy to vanquish the Nationalists, and with them their military leader, Francisco Franco (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:16)

Barcelona was for him a symbol and an example of the war. He was highly dazzled by the revolutionary atmosphere in the city. The admiration that he felt for life in Barcelona at the moment of his arrival is noticeable. There it seemed that the dissolution of the working class was taking place. The Anarchist Party was still in power in Catalonia. As Orwell reported in the book:

It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in a saddle. Practically every building of any size had been seized by the workers and was draped with red flags or with the red and black flag of the Anarchists; every wall was scrawled with the hammer and sickle and with the initials of the revolutionary parties; almost every church had been gutted and its images burnt. (...) every shop and cafe has an inscription saying that it had been collectivized (...) waiters and shop-walkers looked you in the face and treated you as an equal. (Orwell, 1938:4)

This quote perfectly shows the first impression Orwell had when he arrived in Spain and can be noticed by the reader that he had some hope for this to be continued. He felt hope in the Catalanian atmosphere. As he stated, he sometimes even did not like it but it pushed him to wholly recognise that it was the kind of affair worth fighting for (Hicks, 1952). However, Orwell in his essay “Spilling the Spanish Beans” (1937) explained, after having realised it, the real political situation of Spain at that moment. He claimed that the English people had no access to true information since the pieces of news that appeared in the British newspapers were manipulated. Indeed, it is this manipulation of the information that led Orwell to write *Homage to Catalonia*, and to have an interest in the current political situation in Spain. He incorporated two chapters aimed to explain the political and historical context from the time he was in Spain.

At the beginning I had ignored the political side of the war, and it was only about this time that it began to force itself upon my attention. If you are not interested in the horrors of political parties, please skip; I am trying to keep the political parts of this narrative in separate chapters for precisely that purpose. (Orwell, 1938:26)

As can be seen, Orwell explains that these two chapters will be boring and asks the reader who is looking for adventures to skip them. These chapters are the 5th and the 11th. In subsequent editions of the novel, George Orwell decided to move these chapters to an appendix since he considered that the description of the personal experiences he had and the political and historical clarifications should be separated and not mixed in the same narration (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:66). The events that George Orwell experienced in first person, about what the Communist Party did to the other left sided parties, was a fact that clearly influenced and affected him deeply. They were all supposed to fight against Franco's forces and not between themselves (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:65). However, the reality was that there was a strong division of ideals and a cross of accusations among the left wing parties.

As Orwell explains in the 5th chapter, when he arrived in Spain he accepted the version of the *News Chronicle-New Statesman* British newspapers, for whom the Civil War was a military rebellion of a Colonel in the pay of Hitler (Orwell, 1938:26). From an outside point of view it was a fight between Fascism and Hitler and the Communist Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it had more to do with economic interests than with the political ideas each side supported (Orwell, 1938:29).

It should be highlighted that Orwell wrote "Spilling the Spanish Civil Beans" in 1937 with the aim of explaining and clarifying the aspects of the Spanish Civil War that, he considered, were manipulated in the international press, specifically focusing on the British press. In fact, he started the essay talking of "The richer crop of lies than any event since the Great War". (Orwell, 1937) Orwell was shocked to realise the fight

between the Anarchists and the POUM. Papers from each side attack each other instead of being united to defeat Franco. In addition, people feared a larger struggle, which would have meant the loss of the war against the Nationalists (Orwell, 1938:75). This struggle will end with the outlawing of the POUM party; an issue that he tried to relate as objectively as possible. However, yet again he states at the beginning of the 11th chapter “It will never be possible to get a completely accurate and unbiased account of the Barcelona fighting, because the necessary records do not exist. Future historians will have nothing to go upon except a mass of accusations and party propaganda” (Orwell, 1938:83). “Spilling the Spanish Beans” states that the reason why left wing newspapers such as *News Chronicle* and *Daily Worker* manipulated the information resided in the fact that the Spanish Government and the semi-autonomous Catalan Government feared the revolution rather than the Fascists (Orwell, 1937). In addition to it, George Orwell expresses in *Homage to Catalonia* some of his claims against the *News Chronicle*. According to him, the only paper that seems to be honest is the *Manchester Guardian*. As he writes:

I should like to make an exception of the *Manchester Guardian*. In connection with this book I have had to go through the files of a good many English papers. Of our larger papers, the *Manchester Guardian* is the only one that leaves me with an increased respect for its honesty. (Orwell, 1938:37)

Orwell asserts in the short essay “Why I Write” that some people have specifically criticised these chapters. Their criticism is based on the claim that Orwell has turned a “novel” into a piece of journalism. However, he defended the integration of these two politically aimed chapters as he was concerned about the false accusations that the Trotskyists were suffering, accusations that made them guilty of plotting with Franco. He wanted to inform the British people about the truth of the issues and this is mainly his main reason for writing *Homage to Catalonia* (Orwell, 1946).

Notwithstanding his honest intention of dividing the topics, it is necessary to highlight that Orwell's analysis of politics is limited by his scarce knowledge about it. The hostility of the Spanish Government and the Communist Party towards the POUM and the Anarchists can be considered the only thing which he describes accurately (Lucas, 2003:47-48). As Orwell himself admitted in the novel, "When I came to Spain, and for some time afterwards, I was not only uninterested in the political situation but unaware of it" (Orwell, 1938:26). The reader may also feel lost since there is no explanation for the outbreak of the Civil War, which, as Scott Lucas remarks, is not only a question about the social classes and the power for the working classes, but also a question about the status of the Church in Spain, the sort of government that should rule the country, the role of the army and other divisions —by way of illustration: the urban and the rural, the north versus the south and the national versus the regional (Lucas, 2003:47-48). This is a technique used by Orwell to "defamiliarize" the main topic of the book, that is, the war. These chapters allow the reader to explore other subordinate aspects, such as the morals and the political ideologies, through a process of mediation, and not only the war itself. The same happens with "A Hanging", as Lodge suggest: there are subordinated topics that come to the foreground of the narration and become the main point of analysis of the internal speaker. Taking into account all of these factors, it is possible to be aware of the fact that Orwell is essentially producing a didactic political approach. Hence, as Woodcock asserts, it has always been problematic to establish the distinction between what is creative or non-creative in Orwell's writings (Woodcock, 1996:129).

II.3. Orwell the Novelist

The historian Pierre Vilar has stated that “the image of a country (even if it is not exact) that shadows a testimony with a great audience (even if its reasons are debatable) becomes a part of the history of this country” (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:21). Indeed, *Homage to Catalonia* is one of the most important written foreign testimonies of the Spanish Civil War. As Orwell himself admitted “A true history of this war never would or could be written”. Nevertheless the text that constitutes *Homage to Catalonia* is believed to be one of the most widely read texts and also one of the most appreciated testimonies of the struggle (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:21). Although *Homage to Catalonia* is considered a canonic text among war writings (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:21), it can also be considered a work of literature, and this has been decided “by popular consensus”, as Lodge explains following Todorov’s theories (Lodge, 1977:7).

George Orwell is not only known for his factual and journalistic essays but also for his novels, such as *1984* (1948) or *Animal Farm* (1945). It must be said that *Homage to Catalonia* can be considered not only a factual text but also a literary narration since it follows a series of noticeable conventions, typical of literature works. Writers of literature aim to present facts in an aesthetic form, catching the readers’ attention through some narrative strategies. As Scott Lucas stated, *Homage to Catalonia* contains the best elements of Orwell’s style of writing. He perfectly evokes the atmosphere in every situation, even including sounds and smells and his mixture of formal and informal language (Lucas, 2003:46). The reader witnesses Orwell’s ability to create a narration from the history, a significant sequence that uses in a clever manner the mechanisms of fictional narration to describe human experiences, that is, time and memory (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:22).

What should be analysed first is the very beginning of the book. There is no explanation of the breaking out of the Spanish Civil War as the book starts directly with his personal narration of experiences, a strategy used with literary aims. Indeed, *Homage to Catalonia* starts directly with Orwell's encounter with an Italian militiaman the first time he arrived at the front, the day before he joined the militia. As he does in many of his novels, he here catches the reader's attention by a descriptive account of an event that stands for an overture (Woodcock, 1996:234-235): "In the Lenin Barracks in Barcelona, the day before I joined the militia, I saw an Italian militiaman standing in front of the officers' table" (Orwell, 1938:1). The reader is also aware of the fact that some feelings are being expressed in his account. Orwell is no more offering a perspective in which he has no contact with human beings, as he did in the short text "A Hanging" (1931) in which his narration of events is indifferent to individuals. Among the pages of *Homage to Catalonia* some different feelings can be slightly glimpsed. One example of it, and following with the topic of the Italian militiaman, can be the following quotation: "I hardly know why, but I have seldom seen anyone – any man, I mean – to whom I have taken such as immediate liking. (...) Queer, the affection you can feel for a stranger!" (Orwell, 1938:1).

Some critics have stated that the whole book is a sort of elegy on men, like the Italian he met on the eve of his incorporation to the militia in the Aragon front. These were men that he met only once but provided key inspirations for the whole narration. "I mention this Italian militiaman because he has stuck vividly in my memory" (Orwell, 1936:1). George Orwell wrote about him again and even compose a poem dedicated to the Italian militiaman in his essay "Looking back on the Spanish Civil War" (1942).

Orwell allows the reader to have access not only to his feelings but also to his thoughts at some points of his narration. His experience at the trenches, his description

of the Spanish militiamen, the first time he felt fear on the front, etc. are clear examples of the account in first person of the feelings and thoughts he had during these situations. For a clever audience, this is a key clue about the fact that the narration is biased by his perspective. One vital element to take into account is that the narrator uses the past tense to relate the events, typical of literary narrations, which means that there has been a process of reflection between the experiences and the writings, but this is a factor that will be examined in detail later on in this essay.

Another point that should be considered in *Homage to Catalonia* is the noticeable narcissism that appears in some descriptions throughout the narration. The irony and the comic descriptions are perceptible. The reason is that Orwell, as a British man with previous knowledge about war, cannot avoid comparing the British and the Spanish style. One of the first moments in which the reader is aware of this is when Orwell describes the instruction that every man wishing to join the militias should do.

I had been told that foreigners were not obligated to attend “instruction” (the Spaniards, I noticed, had a pathetic belief that all foreigners knew more of military matters than themselves), but naturally I turned out with the others. (...) To my dismay I found that we were taught nothing about the use of weapons. The so-called instruction was simply parade-ground drill of the most antiquated, stupid kind; right turn, left turn, about turn, marching at attention in column of threes and all the rest of that useless nonsense which I had learned when I was fifteen years old. (Orwell, 1938:6)

He even describes one of the most typical stereotypes that foreign people applied to the Spanish. “The answer was always a harassed smile and a promise that there should be machinegun instruction manana. Needless to say manana never came” (Orwell, 1938:7). In spite of the patience he had and the disgusting experiences he lived at the beginning due to, according to Orwell, the Spanish incompetence to make war (Orwell, 1938:8), he ended the experience by being grateful to them. Scott Lucas asserts that Orwell devotes most of the book to his personal experiences using black humor as a sort of

defense against the cold, inactivity and very slow military preparations at the line front of the war (Lucas, 2003:47).

The best examples of the narrative strategies utilised by Orwell were analysed by Davison in his book *Orwell en España*. The first strategy is the fact that Orwell mixes the element of time, that is, the time between the moment of the incidents and the time in which he is writing. Thus, the smart reader can perceive that Orwell is narrating the story after a period of reflection. Hence, the “truths” that are stated in the first chapters of *Homage to Catalonia* may not be correct afterwards. Hence, the reader is also being warned about the fact that the first impressions can be false. However, the last chapters of the books explain the central message of the book: “This was late December 1936, less than seven months ago as I write, and yet it is a period that has already receded into enormous distance.” (Orwell 1938:3).

Secondly, the fact that the narrator is constantly being situated inside and outside the narration should be highlighted. If the narrator shows a sort of feeling for anyone, for instance, as it has been mentioned above, for the Italian militiaman, it is followed immediately by some objective comments, typical of an external narrator’s point of view.

As we went out he stepped across the room and gripped my hand very hard. Queer, the affection you can feel for a stranger! It was as though his spirit and mine had momentarily succeeded in bridging the gulf of a language and tradition and meeting in utter intimacy. I hoped he liked me as well as I liked him. But I also knew that to retain my first impression of him I must not see him again; and needless to say I never did see him again. One was always making contacts of that kind in Spain. (Orwell, 1938:3)

In addition, the fact that the narrator interrupts the narration with some comments about the reasons for writing the book can be considered another strategy used by Orwell. This is a device that was commonly used in 18th century novels. This broken narration

has the aim of letting the reader know the values of the POUM unit so they will not complain about the limitations that this political unit has.

The political epiphany that the writer suffered is narrated through a series of trips to different places (London/Barcelona/Aragón/Barcelona/Aragón/Barcelona/London). In this transition, the narrator starts with an idealistic political idea that ends with a betrayed revolution. These repeated destinies are full of contrast from one time to the other. The first trip in which he is risking his life going to the front is clearly comparable with the end of the book in which going back to England appears as a synonym of personal safety and pleasure. Orwell gives a detailed description about the situations, dressing etc. This can also be considered part of the aesthetic principles that Orwell explained in his essay “Why I Write”, mentioned at the beginning of this paper. He states that every single piece of writing should have aesthetic elements to avoid being considered harsh in style. For this reason, descriptions using images and even smells are recurrent in *Homage to Catalonia*. This can be exemplified perfectly in the following quotations:

We were near the front line now, near enough to smell the characteristic smell of war—in my experience a smell of excrement and decaying food. (Orwell, 1938:10)

The days grew hotter and even the nights grew tolerably warm. On a bullet-chipped tree in front of our parapet thick clusters of cherries were forming. (Orwell, 1938:57)

These statements lead the reader to think that the narrator is just a soldier, naive, pragmatic and with common sense, which does not partake of his superiors' grandiloquence. The narrator tries to do the normal job. Orwell knew perfectly that many of the 30s target readers of *Homage to Catalonia* were influenced by the echoes of the First World War and its fighters. His heroic side can be felt in the narration of his

injury in a battle, the moment in which he cannot come back to the hotel and needs to sleep alfresco. Also, his relationship with his wife humanises him.

Analysing all of these different examples of the strategies used in the novel, Davison asserts that Orwell is highly conscious about what he is doing. All these strategies used to make the story aesthetically pleasant lead critics like Woodcock or Scott Lucas to consider *Homage to Catalonia* a novel.

The Spanish Civil War as portrayed in *Homage to Catalonia* influenced George Orwell in many subsequent books, such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948). In this book Winston Smith, the protagonist of the story, writes his diary as a sort of protest and resistance against the manipulation of the official press. There exists also a “Ministry of the Truth” which deals with the constant alteration of the past. These elements of the novel are clearly connected with *Homage to Catalonia*, since the principal reason why Orwell wrote it was the need to explain the truth of the struggle as British papers supported Stalinist ideas and the information was altered. Being aware of this, it is possible to state that Orwell continued his attempt to explain the truths of the Spanish Civil War till the end of his life. However it is necessary to take into account that, as has been explained in this paper, his truths are often biased (Orwell and Davison et al., 2003:18).

IV. Conclusion

Scott Lucas stated, “George Orwell might not have the truth of the war but his integrity and decency would ensure the supremacy of his account and analysis” (Lucas, 2003:49). Indeed, what Orwell was trying to create in *Homage to Catalonia* was a sort of criticism which he can conceive as valid in terms of both his conception of the nature of literature and the historical period in which he lived, since, as he explained, it is impossible and unfair to avoid political issues (Woodcock, 1996:208).

Homage to Catalonia achieved Orwell’s aim to relate the issues happening at the Spanish Civil War avoiding being manipulated by the interests of the foreign press. Orwell, using an inevitably biased mood, explains how the life at the front and at the city of Barcelona was, focusing on the working class and militiamen situation. Orwell even tries to explain out to the reader the political situation, providing the book with two chapters in which he interrupts the account of his personal experience, and encouraging the reader to avoid them if he or she is not interested. It is important to realise that the three aspects of George Orwell in which this dissertation has been divided, the militant, the journalist and the novelist, are mixed in this book. The lucid and plain style used in *Homage to Catalonia* as well as the apparent multiple factual data that he provides leads to a comparison with a journalistic style of writing, totally influenced by Orwell’s job as a journalist and analyst, performing here the role of a war correspondent. Nevertheless, as an experienced writer of novels, he is aware of the fact that stories should be pleasant and attractive to the general audience if a great success is expected. Hence, Orwell includes some narrative techniques that allow the book to be considered not only a piece of factual writing but also a work of literature, an issue explained by Lodge in his analysis of “A Hanging”. These strategies allow for a reading of the harsher moments of the war not only as a political or historical article but also as

a story with a structure that engages the reader. In spite of the literary aspect, what is obvious is Orwell's intention of writing an account, as objective as possible, that allows the audience and especially the foreign audience to be aware of the issues that occurred at that period of the Spanish Civil War. Thus, the personas of Orwell the militant and Orwell the journalist predominate throughout the whole book.

To sum up, *Homage to Catalonia* is important because of its quality as a novel but also for the political and literary merits that it contains (Lucas, 2003:46). This is the main reason why Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* can be considered on the one hand a piece of factual writing and, on the other hand, a piece of literature. The story narrated, although based on historical facts, follows the conventions of literary narration to secure its success among both an audience interested in historical facts and an audience expecting to read literature, clearly following the theories explained in Lodge's book.

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