



George Orwell (1903-1950) maintained his entire life great personal independence from ideologies. A Fabian socialist with Trotskyist and anarchist influences, he was never been proud of the most conservative British traditions, and although Catholic Evelyn Waugh thought he had never had a religious conception of the world and life, he praised his high concept of morality. His skeptical stance on religion was consistent with his Anglican weddings and the funeral he asked for was held upon his death, according to the rites of the Church of England.

Three devastating anti-communist works

Because of this freedom of judgment, and while most progressive intellectuals were undone in praise of Stalin, a left-wing man like him was able to write three of the works that did the most to communism in the twentieth century:

Homage to Catalonia (1938), where he describes the annihilation of the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification) at the hands of the Stalinists in the area of the Popular Front;

Rebellion on the farm (Animal Farm) (1945), a fable against the hypocritical power dynamic that hides collectivism, where he consecrated the phrase "we are all equal, but some of us are more equal than others";

And 1984 (1949), a hard novel that denounces the totalitarianism of the soul as sustenance of political totalitarianism, whose Big Brother and his manipulations of the past and language are no less present in contemporary democracies.

"Political language has been created to make lies look like truths and murder respectable," Orwell argued, in a phrase that also seems intended for abortion campaigns.

- The aspidistra, a symbol

Because before these three masterpieces and his disenchantment with communism (the Spanish Civil War was the turning point), Orwell wrote in 1936 a satire against the petty-bourgeois life: Let the aspidistra not die [Keep the Aspidistra flying].

It includes a forceful argument against abortion at a time (half a century before the 1960s degradation) in which, although legalized by Lenin in the USSR since 1920, it

still produced horror in most of the left militants.

The aspidistra, a plant of Chinese origin, was fashionable at that time in British middle-class homes, and in it, the author sees the symbol of pleasant and mediocre home life against which the protagonist of the story, Gordon, revolts. he craves a bohemian existence as a poet.

In the final part, he faces a problem that is going to decide his destiny: he has made his girlfriend, Rosemary, pregnant, at a time when the wedding is economically impossible if he wants to continue his free but poor artist's life. (Below, Richard E. Grant as Gordon and Helena Bonham Carter as Rosemary in *A merry war*, a film version directed by Robert Bierman in 1997.)

Gordon and Rosemary consider what to do before the horizon of the social stigma that implied being a single mother.

- An indecent proposition

And the possibility of abortion arises, which she comments without conviction because she has a co-worker who knows a doctor who would do it for five pounds. (Abortionists were not yet the powerful industry that enriches the slay field and subsidizes abortion politicians.)

"-Don't be afraid! He said. Whatever happens, we're not going to do that. It's indecent!

"I know it is. But we can't have the child without being married.

-No! If that's the alternative, I'll marry you. I'd rather cut off my right hand than do something like that."

Dialogue is Orwell's first argument against abortion: personal responsibility, and in particular the father., For Gordon to get married involves looking for a normal job like the one he abandoned, from advertising, to dedicate himself writing, giving up all his dreams. But he's willing to do it if the price is to kill a human being who is also his son.

"Disgusting doctors"

After a small conversation about the future ahead, Gordon (who, Orwell explains, hugging Rosemary by the chest already "liked to think that a little further down, as a well-kept seed, his son grew"), sums up the situation:

"It all comes down to this: either I marry you and go back to New Albion [the advertising company where I worked for a good salary and from which you had said goodbye to dedicate yourself to literature and not earn a hard, n.n.], or you go to one of those disgusting doctors to whom arrange it for five pounds."

- Mother above all else

But she doesn't like such a summary, because she gives the impression that, by

telling her she was pregnant, she wanted to force her into a marriage that he didn't plan. So Rosemary clarifies things: "I'm not going to drop that decision on you. It's too much. Marry me if you want, and if you don't want to, don't. But in any case, I'm going to have the child."

Orwell's second argument: behind the responsibility of the father, that of the mother. If Gordon is willing to give up his dreams rather than kill his son, Rosemary is willing to face social rejection rather than commit that crime.

- Nine weeks

The following paragraphs of *Don't Die aspidistra* continue Gordon's elocutions about the new crossroads that arise in his life once they have decided that, above all, they will respect their son's life.

Until, just as he passed a public library, he repairs that he knows very little "about what was going on in Rosemary's body at the time": "I only had vague and general ideas of what pregnancy means."

So go in and check out some books looking for photos of the embryo of calculated "between six and nine weeks" that his future wife has been in his head: "He looked at an image of a nine-week-old fetus. He was shocked by what he saw because he couldn't imagine the slightest appearance that he looked like. It was a deformed thing, like a gnome, a kind of bad caricature of a human being, with an egg-shaped head as big as the rest of his body. During the great empty mass of the head was an ear-like button. The thing was on profile. His boneless arm was bent, and one hand, as hard as a fish's fin, covered his face, fortunately, perhaps. Underneath, two thin legs, twisted like those of a monkey, with their feet inwards. It was something monstrous, and yet strangely human. He was surprised that he started to look human so soon. He had imagined something more rudimentary, a mere mounds of cells, a kind of bubble-shaped spawn. Of course, it must have been very small. He looked at the dimensions he put underneath. Length, 30 millimeters. The size of a large gooseberry".

Then Gordon thinks he may not be 9, but 6 weeks old, and he looks a little earlier in the book, to find himself something "really dreadful, that he could hardly bear to look": "How strange that our principles and our end are as ugly, the unborn as ugly as the dead!" Orwell describes this fetus twenty-one days younger than the previous one, "this time without any human appearance," and of a size "not greater than a hazelnut".

- It's up to me, and it's human: how to get away from it?

Orwell concludes with a third reason his anti-abortion argument by reflecting Gordon's thoughts: "He studied the two images carefully. Their ugliness made them more believable and therefore more poignant. Her son had seemed real to her from the moment Rosemary spoke of abortion; but it had been a reality with no visible contour, something that happened in the dark and was only important after it happened. But here's the actual process that was taking place. Here was that

poor ugly thing, no bigger than a current, that he had created with his reckless act. His future [of the fetus], even the continuity of his existence, now depended on him [on Gordon]. Besides, he was a little bit of himself, he was himself. Who could evade a responsibility like that?"

No, of course, the protagonist of not dying the aspidistra, who as a conclusion to his ponderings and bookish consultations phone Rosemary to tell him that he will return to his old job and marry her. That ugly thing that he carries in his breast will live because, ugly and everything, he is not just a living being, he is a human being.