

**ORWELL: THE TRANSFORMATION**

by Peter Stansky and William Abrahams  
Knopf, 1980  
302 pp. \$12.95

Eric Blair, a.k.a. George Orwell (1902–50), proffered readers his passionate humanism and prose as clear as any in English. In *The Unknown Orwell* (1972), critics Stansky and Abrahams recounted Blair's unhappy youth in British public schools and his stint (1922–27) as an assistant district superintendent of police in Burma. This second volume of their trail-blazing biography covers the period from Orwell's first book, the autobiographical *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), to his socialist conversion while a Loyalist soldier in the Spanish Civil War. It is fundamentally the story of a young man trying to unite his ambitions as a social critic with his desire to become a "serious" creative writer. The authors painstakingly recount the reconciliation of these callings that produced his first major work of nonfiction—*Homage to Catalonia* (1938), in which he eloquently described the undermining of the anti-Franco cause by the communists—and resulted, during the 1940s, in his best-known fiction, *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Yet, drawing on interviews with his friends, the authors also show Orwell as his contemporaries probably saw him—a man of deliberate eccentricities (e.g., his shabby clothes) and professional self-doubts.

—Frank McConnell ('78)

**PARTISAN JUSTICE**

by Marvin E. Frankel  
Farrar, 1980  
134 pp. \$9.95

The U.S. courts today are plagued by inequities. The criminal justice system, as it has evolved, has fostered "unduly elaborate and effective means of blocking the proof of guilt." So contends Frankel, a former federal judge. Among the defects Frankel cites is the old-fashioned ideal of the lawyer as a single-minded champion (the result: advocates too often obfuscate the truth on their client's behalf). Due-process rules have made it impractical to hold criminal trials in all but a small percentage of cases; most charges are now disposed of through plea bargaining, "the dispensation of justice by lawyers [acting] as traders." And today only big corporations, the very rich, and the very poor can retain