ISSN NO.2395-0692
IJAHMS International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies

At War With the Purple Passages: George Orwell and the Language of Crystal-Clear Prose

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George Orwell (1903-1950) has always been a source of inspiration for the budding writers and the literary enthusiasts. A public school socialist who lived as a tramp, fought in the Spanish Civil War, and penned arguably the most dystopian vision of a markedly dystopian century, Orwell wrote about the question of England's cultural identity, and the cohesive notion of 'Englishness' that is possible or, indeed, desirable, at the start of the twenty-first century. But we remember him because of his lifelong war against clichés, against a vague, foggy, ornamental style that impedes thought and obfuscates reason. He, in fact, espoused for a crystal clear language that stems from clarity of thought and believed that clarity in one's thought and expression is the consequence of clear thinking which again helps in simplifying one's language and style.

In my paper I intend to focus on George Orwell's writings on English language and style, as manifest in his essays "Why I Write" (1946) and "Politics and the English Language"(1946). Throughout his writing career Orwell had repeatedly insisted on a plain, firm language reflecting his confidence in the ordinary truth. Language in fact emerges as one of the major themes in the writings. In *Animal Farm* 1945), for example, the syntactic tidiness and verbal pithiness of the narrator is very much juxtaposed with the manipulative, unintelligible and circumlocutory discourse of the pigs. Language emerges in this tale as both a distorting mirror and a clear window pane. Orwell's idea of a good prose.

In his essay "Politics and the English Language", George Orwell comments on the current state of modern English, both its causes and its possible consequences. Orwell states that English prose, particularly political writings, is characterized by vagueness and incompetence. He believes that these things stem from a growing reliance on metaphors which have lost all meaning, and which are only used because they save the author the trouble of creating phrases for themselves. The use of such metaphors indicates that the author is either not interested in or does not know what he is saying, this makes it difficult for the reader to be interested in the text or to be able to comprehend its meaning. Many words, like fascism and democracy, have no agreed definition and are used in a dishonest way because authors that have their own definitions will use them knowing that readers will see them and think something else. The biggest problem with modern prose is that it has lost its meaning. Authors no longer think of a concrete object and choose words to describe it; they allow stale metaphors and words to choose their meanings for them. Political writings are often the worst, the contain so many euphemisms and have so much vagueness that the listener has no chance of discover the speaker's aims. Orwell believed that the best fix for the downfall of the English language was for each individual to be on guard against ready-made words and phrases, choosing instead to use the simplest words possible to get one's meaning across. In his essay George Orwell uses the rhetorical strategy of including himself, via pronoun, in the group he is criticizing, being that the nature of the essay is a criticism of the English language, without the pronouns, the reader might feel attacked and thus

alienated. He forms a sense of unity with the reader by using this rhetorical strategy and avoids making the reader feel attacked and/ or offended. . He uses an analogy of a man who drinks because he feels like a failure but then fails even more as a result of his drinking. Orwell includes himself when he explains this analogy- he doesn't go on to say anything to the effect of "and this is how you compare to that in your use of language". Instead, he says "It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts" (Orwell 1). Without the use of pronouns, the criticisms might have been taken personally by anyone who read it and it would likely have been discredited, as people became defensive, and chances are it wouldn't have gotten much circulation.

In order to unite himself with the reader, Orwell concludes his essay with an acknowledgement of the fact that the very essay he is writing probably includes some of the mistakes he finds in the work of other writers, which contribute to the decline of the English language.

"Politics and the English Language" expressed grave reservations about the way in which the language was being used in his time. Orwell noted particularly the "staleness of imagery and lack of precision" that he found rife in journalism, political writing and academic writing. (105) His conclusion was that "the whole tendency of modern prose is away from concreteness." (111).George Orwell bemoans standards of English, and suggesting rules for writing, emphasizing clarity. George Orwell presents a theory of the use of language that is supported not only by his career of work, but also by the historical use of language in order to manipulate an audience, and at times, an entire nation. As Orwell often did, he used language as a tool to combat the spreading of totalitarian and socialistic ideas around the world. The essay explains this theory:

"Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible...If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step toward political regeneration: so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers."

The essence of Orwell's essay is a criticism of the English language and an outline of its general decline, by identifying himself as part of the problem he includes himself in the" guilty party", rather than accusing the public of neglecting their duty to use language properly.

A perfect example of this lingual and political degeneration in Orwell's writing is the society of Oceania in his novel, *1984*. In Oceania, the language is that of Newspeak. Orwell displays the use of language to manipulate the general public of Oceania in order to accomplish a political goal. Newspeak reduced the intellect of the society of Oceania and closed its minds to the beauty of what language can become within a culture. Mirroring the language of the Russian Socialist Party, Newspeak was also used to catch the attention of the citizens with words like "Comrade"--

ISSN NO.2395-0692
IJAHMS International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies

making them feel accepted and as though they were actually part of something that was productive and world changing.

The language of Newspeak only furthers Orwell's objection to totalitarian governments. By creating a simple, almost obnoxious language for the novel, Orwell depicted his own opinions of socialist governments-- manipulative and deceptive, and never providing what they promised to provide, despite the government's own affluence.

This idea that language itself can alter or cloud the mind is also slightly reflected in Orwell's work, Animal Farm. By maintaining the illiteracy of the animals, the pigs were able to either maintain or change the three rules of Animal Farm as they wished. Much like the government of 1984, the pigs used the terms of the Russian Socialist Party to rally the animals to a common vision.

At the same time, though, Orwell also used language to manipulate his readers against Totalitarian governments. By creating absurd scenarios, Orwell was able to portray his own views regarding Socialism. The difference between the language of the socialist party and the words of Orwell, however, is made evident by the success of both.

In political writing, the use of unclear, euphemistic language is owed to the fact that the speaker is never willing to reveal his true aims; that's not how politics works. But this is dangerous: "The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aim, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms." (116)

What Orwell strove for, as is clear from reading his work, is clarity and straightforwardness. He wished to express truth without spin and obfuscation. Orwell's vision of what the language should be is set out in "Politics and the English Language":

"To begin with, it has nothing to do with archaism, with the salvaging of obsolete words and turns of speech, or with the setting-up of a 'standard English' which must never be departed from. On the contrary, it is especially concerned with the scrapping of every word or idiom which has outworn its usefulness. It has nothing to do with correct grammar and syntax, which are of no importance so long as one make's one's meaning clear… What is above all needed is to let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about." (118)

Orwell was not interested in style per se, rather it all revolved around clarity and simple truthfulness, and all his guidelines aimed to promote truthfulness in writing. In the closing paragraphs of "Politics and the English Language" Orwell provides 6 rules for writing in a clear, honest fashion:

a. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
b. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
c. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
d. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
e. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
f. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous. (119)

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Things haven't changed since 1946, and to write with the clarity of an Orwell is no more common now than then. For the use of a specialized, generally incomprehensible jargon cloaks the meaning of any statement: a stupid statement made using jargon is not so clearly stupid as a stupid statement using plain language, so the writer of jargon can get away with a lot.

As Orwell says, "You cannot speak any of the necessary dialects, and when you make a stupid remark its stupidity will be obvious, even to yourself." (120) But who wants their statements to be seen in such a clear light? For most, it is far easier to learn to hide behind language, rather than reveal oneself through it.

George Orwell writes about the traditional style of English, and the connection between language and action. Orwell discusses the problems of Modern English and the slow spread of vagueness in writing. In this essay the thesis was explicit; it stated that the English language is in a decline and that modern English of full of bad writing habits which are spread by imitation. Long before efforts to destabilize language became a cottage industry and then a staple of academic politics, Orwell worried about the social implications of wretched speech. "All issues are political issues," he declared with the same no-nonsense clarity that characterized nearly every paragraph, every sentence, indeed, every word he wrote. He then went on to finish the sentence by making it clear just how debased most political writing had become: "and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia." Orwell had recently completed *Animal Farm* and was hard at work on *1984* when he wrote these words. He had had a bellyful of the worst that wilful obfuscation could offer and set about cataloguing the sins of dying metaphors, verbal false limbs, and pretentious diction. Those who wrote on automatic pilot, which is to say most writers then and now, never had a chance. At its most benign, their ham-fisted efforts generated fog rather than light; at its worst, they produced the Newspeak that *1984* held up for scathing critique: "WAR IS PEACE FREEDOM IS SLAVERY IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH and 2 + 2 turns out to be any number the government says it is."

Political speech and writing, Orwell insisted, were largely "the defense of the indefensible." The result was cloudy constructions such as *transfer of population* or *elimination of unreliable elements* rather than the blunt sentence that says what it means: "I believe in killing off your opponents when you can get good results by doing so." Politicians across the political spectrum knew full well that blood-thirsty utterances of this sort would be, let us say, problematic, so they learned to cover their tracks with verbal grease. If it is true, as Eugene Genovese once observed, that all political movements include idealists, careerists, and thugs, it is equally true that it is the "thugs"—that is, the propagandists, professional obscurantists, and spin-doctors—who do most of the writing.

Looking back at Orwell's essay from the vantage point of a half century, one quickly realizes how it is possible to be simultaneously prescient and short-sighted, for Orwell could feel the intimations that would lead to our current conviction that "everything is political" without being able to fully imagine the pretentiousness and tin-eared jargon that such reductiveness would unleash.

What Orwell's essay championed was nothing more or less than writing committed to plain sense, a process he described as "picking words for their meaning and inventing images in order to make the meaning clearer."

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As they would have it, the "plain style" Orwell advocates is itself the problem. By insisting that words such as *fascist, democrat,* and *freedom* be used with precision, Orwell brands himself as something of a reactionary, partly because he imagines (erroneously) that words can convey clear, widely shared meanings, and partly because his preference for the concrete as opposed to the abstract puts ideologues into something of a pickle. George Orwell criticizes contemporary English prose for its disgusting and inaccurate use of language. He argues that language is not shaped by us for our own use like it should be but rather modern prose is ugly because the way we think is inaccurate. The effect can become the cause. Instead of "foolish thoughts" being a result of language, language has become a result of "foolish thoughts." He goes onto say that vagueness is the most evident characteristic of the English prose. There is a lack of imagery and the figurative language no longer gives a connection to images and concrete thoughts.

He argues that the political writers of modern English prose use vocabulary that are not precise and necessary and the result is a lack of precision. This in turn leads to a lack meaning and understanding. He implies that to have clear prose the political writer must be sincere in their writing otherwise the writing will be vague and pointless. Other than putting a lot o emphasis on the staleness of imagery and lack of precision, he also says that political writing consists of long passages where metaphors and unnecessary vocabulary is used without knowing their meanings and this gives the whole passage no meaning.

He supports his argument with a solution and says that the ugliness and inaccuracy of political writing and modern day English prose can be reversed. This can be done by just avoiding the lack of imagery and meaning of words. Orwell said we have to let the meaning choose the word and not the other way around. English prose can be set backwards by thinking clearly rather than thinking just to impress others and make the writing, especially political writing look presentable.

Similar to the "practical rules" delivered 40 years earlier in Henry Fowler's *The King's English,* Orwell's precepts, though simplistic, appear to be sensible enough. We can fix the language, he seems to be saying, if we'd just stop doing these bad things.

But it's Orwell's sixth and final rule that deserves special attention: *Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.*

It's this last point (one that never appeared in *The King's English*, by the way) that signals Orwell's deeper understanding of the power and the limits of language and prescriptions. "A writer," he once said, "can do very little with words in their primary

A handful of recent books on the politics and economics of language make it clear just how out of step with global realities this fear is. In McWhorter's *What Language Is (And What It Isn't and What It Could Be)* (Penguin Group USA, 2011); *You Are What You Speak: Grammar Grouches, Language Laws, and the Politics of Identity* (Random House, 2011), by Economist correspondent Robert Lane Greene; and *How Many Languages Do We Need? The Economics of Linguistic Diversity* (Princeton University Press, 2011), by economists Victor Ginsburgh and Shlomo Weber, a common thread is that contrary to fear-mongering nationalists or finger-wagging grammarians, the hold of English on the world's tongues has never been firmer. "Saying that English is 'under threat' is something like saying that gravity and the use of the fork are under threat," Greene writes. "Even an analogy with Microsoft can't do full justice to the

worldwide power of English. One can imagine Microsoft disappearing in fifty years. English is all but certain to be even more dominant then than it is today. There simply has never been a linguistic success story like it in world history."

Orwell's writing was a response to immediate issues of the age he lived in; and those issues, as he saw them, demanded writing that was clearly rhetorical. In his 1946 essay, 'Why I Write' Orwell commented 'Every line of serious work that I "have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitar-ianism and for democratic socialism ... '1 This commitment may seem to express an indifference to literary reputation, yet he also wrote that he wanted to 'make political writing into an art' *(Collected Essays,* I, p. 28). To judge from his subsequent reputation, he succeeded. In doing so, he faced and overcame two obstacles which all political non-fiction faces in achieving an enduring literary reputation.

First, political writing is usually written for immediate effect rather than long-term scrutiny. It political writers are to be effective with their immediate audiences, they must be topical. But if they are topical, interest in their writing is likely to fade with the issue's urgency. The writer who is to be remembered must find a way to overcome this dilemma. Second, the writer of non-fiction has to make his writing interesting without the mediation of a fictional world. Novels like *A Passage to India* or *Darkness at Noon* are certainly political and have kept their appeal beyond the time of the immediate topics they address. But such books have the advantage of fictional plots and characters to maintain an audience's interest even when their topicality has gone. The political essayist has only the subject matter and a perspective on it.

Orwell is a classic in his own writing. The style he adopts in unique. It is difficult to pin down him into a special category though he stylistically follow Dickens and H. G. Walls. His journalistic style seems to be frivolous. Specially his autobiographical works that we call non-fictional are stylistic one. The language he adopts is highly comprehensible and commanding one. He seems to be a simple, step forward, syntactic one. His Animal Farm and allegorical work on Russian myth, is very simple and pleasant one. The syntactic tidiness and verbal pithiness of his style are very much circumlocutory. It is very much conversational and convincing one. Language here seems to be distorting mirror or as a window pane.

In fact, Orwell was deeply in search of a definite pattern of literary style. The prevalent forms of writing did not suit his needs and genius. He tried his hand at one genre and another. In the beginning he wrote verse. Later in the thirties he moved on to realistic and documentary kind of works. During the forties he shifted to long essays and, then, to the allegory and the fantasy. Fie employed different tools and vehicles of expression and discarded them when he did not find them useful to his purpose.

However, Orwell did not want to dissociate himself from the literary tradition of some great masters such as Dickens, Zola, Tolstoy, Conrad and Gissing. While describing a dinner hour in *Down and Out,* he remembers Zola: 'I wish I could be Zola for a little while just to describe that dinner hour.' He loved Dickens but for his intense moral passion. But as he became socially and politically more conscious and experienced, he felt a conflict between his aims as a writer and the restrictions of the genre of the novel. This conflict is explicit in his identification with the characters of his novels. Hence in the later period of his life, Orwell took special care of the English language to make it lucid and powerful.

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Orwell's lucidity involves something more than his attitude to his subject. Moreover, it is a matter of tone, a sense of audience. Now it cannot be said that Orwell wrote for the working class. The magazines and periodicals with which he was first associated, *The Adelphi, The New English Weekly* and *The Horizon,* all formed part of what, for the purpose of making a distinction, we must call the 'intellectual' segment of English literary culture. Though from 1942 onwards he wrote a weekly column 'I Write as I Please' in *The Tribune,* a paper that had circulation among working-class socialists, his best essays did not appear there. Nevertheless, it can be said that Orwell wrote as one who felt himself in 'touch with the working class. Apart from it, the tone of his prose suggests a middle-class writer who is trying to write as and for the working man. One of the things that makes for the simplicity of Orwell's writing is a didacticism that reminds us of other socialist teachers such as Shaw and Wells. There are the verbal gestures of the -courteous school master, such as, 'Please notice and 'Here you observe.' The rhetorical question is often the means of moving from one stage of an argument to the next: "Do I mean by this that England is a genuine democracy? No, not even a reader of the Daily Telegraph could quite swallow that. "10 And the development of an argument is always explained to us: "It is therefore of the deepest importance to try and determine what England is before guessing what part England can play in the huge events that are happening.

Moreover, Orwell uses all the techniques of the text books- numbers, lists, italics for particularly significant passages, beadings in a variety of types, etc. In Orwell's writing we find something that is less prominent in Well's tutoring prose and scarcely at all in Shaw's. And that is some verbal sense of the working class. Or- well's style suggests that though he writes to teach the working class, he himself learned something from it. This one main reason that the didactic element in Orwell's writing never gives the impression of 'talking down.'

It is this impulse in Orwell which accounts for the immense and enduring popularity of his work. With the exception of Shakespeare and Dickens there is greater example of "creative force" in English literature. Everything the "creative finger" of Orwell touches comes alive.

It is now time to turn to Orwell's opus magnum *Animal Farm* which brought the writer high literary fame not only for the animal story, but more for an effective use of a simple and crystal prose which, he thought, was the first condition for founding a decent society. *Animal Farm* is a 'beast epic', like a fairy tale enjoyable both by children as well as by grown-ups. It is a fable; allegorical ill manner, with rich satirical veins. As in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* so in this novel too we come across a harmonious blending of fact and fancy. Recurrent references and allusions to the contemporary political situation provide the realistic and factual base to the story element which is quite fanciful and entertaining and which has rendered this satire into a children's book. 'The first striking quality of *Animal Farm* from the artistic point of view is the age-old form of the fable. There is a panoramic scene of animals here, as there is 'God's plenty' in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.* The book can well be enjoyed purely as an animal fiction which partly relieves the tension in the novel. The animal characters are important from the thematic point of view in as much as they express the symbols of significance of his political satire. They represent a social and political history of man. The stock objection that they are mostly static and "stock" characters following a predetermined pattern of behaviour is very well answered by George Woodcock: : the problems of character are magnificently evaded by the stylization which becomes possible through the substitution of animals for human beings,

and the simplified personalities that result are nearer to Johnsonian humours than to characters in the modern sense of the word.

Orwell's style is basically the hard-hitting plain-spoken style of the satirist. His plain and colloquial language and his flair for humble but compelling image create a distinctive style more prominently in his satirical novels which express a vigour and immediacy in style. Sentences are simple and short rather than complex and long.

Orwell bas deliberately avoided the use of clumsy and archaic words and preferred instead shorter and more common words such as "dismayed" in place of the obscure word "appalled", "troubled" instead of "perturbed". The use of words like 'forelock' and 'marshal' is apt and functional. Orwell's language is extremely serviceable and unconventional like that of Defoe. The use of familiar images with admirable good humour raises his satire to the level of a classic. The writer has achieved his literary ideal in this novel, the ideal that 'a good prose is like a window pane'. Conciseness of form and simplicity of language are its most striking qualities. It is so well-knit that anything taken out of it would destroy its meticulous design and artistic purpose of the writer are happily fused into one whole for the first time in this novel.

Anybody would prefer *Animal Farm to Nineteen Eighty –Four* as the former is superior as a work of art though the latter, in Orwell year particularly, is more talked about. But both have gone deep into the psyche of the thinking people throughout the world. They have enriched the English language, giving it new words and telling phrases, with noun or pronoun turning into adjectives which go to make what has come to be known as the Orwellian situation. The perusals of Orwell's Essays reveal the fact that his vocabulary lacks in the terminology fashionable in the thirties and forties. A essay in self-analysis 'such, such were the joys' with obvious Freudian touch, employs no Freudian terms. It is remarkable that Orwell rarely uses any of the Marxian vocabulary while interpreting his experience in socio-politico context. He dismissed the] as "the pea and thimble trick."

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George Orwell's 1946 essay "Why I Write" is a masterful mix of autobiography, politics, and writing instruction. Aspiring writers would get from this article at the least an inspirational gem and possibly a modus operandi. In this 2,700-word, highly readable reflection, Orwell implies

that the nature of a writer and the drive to write reveal themselves at an early age: "I knew that I had a facility with words and a power of facing unpleasant facts." He writes that he began writing poetry at age four or five and published in a local newspaper his first poem at eleven. An overarching theme in the childhood segment of this piece is the value of modeling one's style after admired writers.

George Orwell barely saw his father in his first eight years of life, his two siblings were each five years distant in age, and he was unpopular among his schoolmates because of "disagreeable mannerisms." His was a lonely childhood, and his early knowledge, from the age of five or six, that he was to be a writer, was linked to his feelings of being isolated and undervalued. He knew he had a facility with words, and "a power of facing unpleasant facts" that marked him out from his fellows.

For fifteen years or more, he was engaged in narrating his own life. As he opened a door, he would be thinking to himself: "He pushed the door open and entered the room." Orwell suggests this is common among children and adolescents, and he did it until he was about twenty-five, during which time he made few efforts to actually write seriously, though he always knew he was going to be a writer.

In the essay Orwell has given a full fledged genesis of his writing career. From very early stage at the age of five or six he had a strong determination to grow as a Writer. But at the age of twenty four he abandoned his idea. But later his will power grew more and decided to settle down writing books.

As he confesses that he was a middle child of the three. The age gap was of five years in either side. Sometimes he felt lonely and unpopular son of his father. His writing skill was source from that sitting in loneliness talking with an imaginary person. As he says, "I was the middle child of three, but there was a gap of five years on either side, and I barely saw my father before I was eight. For this and other reasons I was somewhat lonely, and I soon developed disagreeable mannerisms which made me unpopular throughout my schooldays. I had the lonely child habit of making up stories and holding conversations with imaginary persons."

At the age of eleven in the time of 1st World War (1914-18) he wrote a patriotic poem and was given scope of publication in local newspaper. And then he gradually tried his best to write story about himself or story of Diary. He thought that writing diary regularly can help him more to make him a writer of books.

George Orwell did not choose the path to publication to which most aspire. Much of his life was spent in near poverty, sometimes chosen and often not, taking life by the throat and then writing about the experience. In many ways, he felt the path chose him.

In his essay, *Why I Write*, Orwell said he believed there were only four reasons why writers write: 1. Sheer egoism, 2. Aesthetic enthusiasm, perception of beauty in the world, or the beauty of the word, 3. Historical impulse: to see things as they are, and to set it down for those who have not seen, or who come after, and 4. Political purpose: desire to change the world, to change people. Orwell believed by nature he was motivated by the first three, but because of various circumstances of his life: working at a job he disliked (Burmese policeman), undergoing poverty and a sense of failure, becoming acquainted with working-class life, and finally the

ISSN NO.2395-0692
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political situation of the 1930s: Hitler in power in Germany, the Spanish Civil War, he was driven towards the fourth motivation: political purpose.

As Orwell put it, many write from a ***"****desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death, to get your own back on the grown-ups who snubbed you in childhood, etc., etc. It is humbug to pretend this is not a motive, and a strong one.****"*** Writers are artists just like painters, musicians, and creators of handmade furniture. Sometimes we record the ideas and words we see with our mind's eye because of a ***"****desire to share an experience which one feels is valuable and ought not to be missed."* Orwell defined this as, *the "desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity.****"*** This is the point where I suspect many writers will begin to disagree. They quickly say that fiction, in particular, is mostly the desire to entertain with a really good story. For some that is true but even they often don't realize how much of their worldview has stowed away between the lines of their novel. Even in pure entertainment a writer's worldview colors the characters, dialogue and outcome of his or her stories. The author means political purpose in a broad sense. He called it the *desire to push the world in a certain direction.* Orwell was adamant that denying this impulse in writing is being dishonest with one's self. As a result there is a real struggle between producing entertaining and well crafted stories that avoids being a sort of black-ops sermon while also saying things that writers who are not believers would probably never think to say.

This is why Orwell said *writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle.* He felt an author had to deal with the reasons he or she writes with absolute transparency. He didn't consider any of the four reasons for writing as right or wrong but rather a reality. The exhausting part is being true to who you are and the journey God has brought you on.

There is nothing wrong with writing for pure entertainment's sake nor is there anything wrong with attempting to seek to push others in a different direction through my words and ideas. The important thing is to take a hard look at myself and be honest. Do I want a book with my name on it at Barnes and Nobles? Am I sometimes so in love with an idea or phrase I have to write it down and then share it with some hapless soul (i.e. usually my wife)? Would I like to think something I write makes enough difference for someone else to notice it? Am I driven by worldview I embrace? Guilty to all.

So why do I write? Why do you? Orwell said, *"****Good prose is like a windowpane. I cannot say with certainty which of my motives are the strongest, but I know which of them deserve to be followed.****"* For him, the strongest impulse was political change. The important thing is that he was honest with himself and others about that. The question for me is, how true am I to what I say I want to do with the ideas and words God has allowed me to have?

Despite dying at age 46, Orwell wrote voluminously on causes of social justice, and he did so with great style to boot, most famously with *Animal Farm* and *1984* the well-known quote from the essay comes in the final paragraph: "One can write nothing readable unless one constantly struggles to efface one's own personality. Good prose is like a windowpane."

As Orwell wrote "Why I Write", aged 43, he was shortly to begin *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, one of the century's key novels. That is the work he refers to when he writes: "I hope to write another [novel] fairly soon. It is bound to be a failure, every book is a failure, but I know with some clarity what kind of book I want to write." And *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was to be the most

ISSN NO.2395-0692
IJAHMS International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies

powerful and resonant statement of Orwell's politics, his hatred of tyranny and his sympathy with the common man.

Orwell ends "Why I Write" with a reminder that, for all he has said: "All writers are vain, selfish and lazy, and at the very bottom of their motives there lies a mystery. Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand." But though it is so, Orwell insists that the only writing of his that is worthwhile is that actuated by political concerns. where this lacked, lifeless writing resulted, florid and ostentatious but empty and meaningless – "humbug", he calls it. Good writing involves effacing one's own personality, and that is what Orwell always tried to do in his mature work.

"Why I Write" is a short essay, only some ten pages, but a fascinating and immensely clear-sighted exploration of the psychology of writing. Orwell had only one more novel to write, and only four years to live, but this is the testament of a man who understood his profession completely, who had a rare gift for honesty, and who writes as if he has nothing to prove and nothing to hide

Unlike many, Orwell doesn't squirm while discussing egoism, or try to pass judgment on this driving force. Instead, he regards it as largely inherent to "the minority of gifted, wilful people who are determined to live their own lives to the end," as opposed to some who "abandon the sense of being individuals at all" by the age of thirty or "are simply smothered by drudgery." Aesthetic enthusiasm, especially Orwell's acknowledgment of its influence on his own drive to write, surprised me because of the nature of his fiction, but if by "perception of beauty in the external world" he means also an appreciation of it through its negation, it makes sense–as does his avowed interest in the "pleasure in the impact of one sound on another…in words and their right arrangement," given the precision of his prose. We can appreciate his recognition that "in a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books," because it conjures up an Orwell as sublime as Proust or Nabokov–and an alternate history that tantalizes with possibility. But Orwell lived in the times he lived in and had his particular political passions, and thus is famous for a certain kind of book. "Good prose is like a window pane," he writes, even as there is a kind of longing for another kind, and even as he admits that "where I lacked a political purpose…I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally."

Orwell's various experiences with totalitarian political regimes had a direct impact on his prose. "Why I Write" Orwell would explain:

"Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism...Animal Farm was the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole." Throughout his lifetime, the great English author continually questioned all "official" or "accepted" versions of history. At the conclusion of the war in Europe, Orwell expressed doubt about the Allied account of events and posed the question in his essay *Notes on Nationalism* liberty and the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

Orwell ends "Why I Write" with a reminder that, for all he has said: "All writers are vain, selfish and lazy, and at the very bottom of their motives there lies a mystery." Writing a book is a

horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand." But though it is so, Orwell insists that the only writing of his that is worthwhile is that actuated by political concerns. where this lacked, lifeless writing resulted, florid and ostentatious but empty and meaningless – "humbug", he calls it. Good writing involves effacing one's own personality, and that is what Orwell always tried to do in his mature work.

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