Orwell: Did he produce what he professed?

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ORWELL: DID HE PRODUCE WHAT HE PROFESSED?

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
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in
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by
Russell Dove Eyre
June 1991
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ABSTRACT

Using as vehicles for analysis five excerpts from Orwell's informal "As I Please" columns written from December, 1943, to February, 1945 for the London Tribune where he was employed as literary editor, this analysis reveals that certain aspects of Orwell's writing support his reputation for integrity and honesty.

In other areas, however, his manipulative rhetorical techniques cause his integrity to be questioned. On the other hand, Orwell's prose style conforms to a great degree to the effective writing guidelines he proposes in his essay, "Politics and the English Language."

To achieve credibility, Orwell describes familiar and personal scenes and circumstances to which readers readily relate, thus establishing believability. But by using specific examples to suggest truth in questionable conclusions, by assuming an equally questionable voice-of-the-people tone and by excerpting from sources only the remarks that support his thesis Orwell is less than honest.

In these excerpts Orwell does commit many of the writing sins listed in "Politics and the English Language, but these do not compromise the qualities that make his prose so effective: well-balanced, rhythmic, euphonically pleasing sentences, vivid, precise imagery, and, most important, crystal-like clarity.
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INTRODUCTION

Around 500 A.D. Liu Shieh (c. 465-522 A.D.), preeminent Chinese philosopher and scholar of that age, accomplished his most notable work: The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons (Wan hsiu tiao lung). In China today this work, having survived through the years as the ultimate model for didactic writing, is assigned reading for students taking advanced degrees in Chinese literature. One segment of the book deals with governmental [political] writing; in it Liu Shieh says this about writers:

His [the writer's] ability to use language should appear in the lucidity and purity of his style, and he should not aim at artifice through excessive ornament. If a writer ignorant in the art of government wields his brush and plays with literary composition, piling random phrase upon phrase, fabricating and concocting to show his cleverness, not only is his rhetoric refuted in the face of facts but even the little reason he may have is buried under the pile of his own rhetoric (194).

The ancient Chinese sage's advice made good sense at the time it was written and still does today. But it remains largely unheeded, in political writing especially, despite efforts by many notable advocates of effective prose to
educate writers in the problems prevented by and precision produced through clear, concise writing. Among the strongest of those advocates was George Orwell, one of the 20th century’s most prominent political writers.

Reams are written about Orwell and his work, particularly about his propensity for telling the truth in everything he wrote, and for telling it in pure plain prose. In his introduction to Orwell’s novel, Homage To Catalonia, a politically factual account of selected Spanish Civil War happenings, Lionel Trilling writes:

He told the truth and he told it in an exemplary way, quietly, simply, with due warning to the reader that it was only one man’s truth. He used no political jargon, and he made no recriminations. He made no effort to show that his heart was in the right place, or in the left place. He was not interested in where his heart might be thought to be since he knew where it was. He was interested only in telling the truth (42-43).

Trilling emphasizes Orwell’s honesty, but doesn’t overlook his style: "exemplary," "quiet," "simple." Richard Wallheim, in his essay, "Orwell Reconsidered," gets a bit more technical about that style:
Orwell picks out from the material at his disposal a number of details as shocking, as arresting as possible and then sets them down in a style that is very deliberately none of these things. The method is undoubtedly effective (63).

Continuing, he adds this about Orwell's honesty:

He addresses himself primarily to the eyes and the nerves. It is this that makes him out as a journalist, and good or honest journalists are distinguished from bad or dishonest journalists by the fact that they would not pretend to be appealing elsewhere (66).

In his book, *The Crystal Spirit*, George Woodcock, at first Orwell's political enemy, then later one of his closest friends, says this about the man, his honesty, and his prose:

More than any other writer of his time, perhaps more than any other writer of English, he learned to let the meaning choose the word, which meant to let every meaning choose its word and the tone of its
word. The ultimate point in such a search comes when language and meaning are so close that the blade of a metaphorical knife cannot be driven between them. The style grows so near to the subject that one no longer thinks of it as a style. But the style, it is said rightly, is the man. And in that crystalline prose which Orwell developed so that reality could always show through its transparency, lies perhaps the greatest and certainly the most durable achievement of a good and angry man who sought for the truth because he knew that only in its air would freedom and justice survive (312-313).

Comments similar to these could fill a good-sized book. They even crop up in criticism questioning Orwell’s socialist politics, labeling him a living-in-the-past dreamer, regarding him an intellectual flyweight. But regardless of the tone of the comments, good or bad, for or against, somewhere or other mention is almost always made of his overall honesty and the unmatched quality of his clear prose.
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This thesis will address, and try to answer, three general questions about George Orwell’s vaunted honesty in what he writes, and about his style in the way he writes. First, how exactly does Orwell convince readers that his writing is honest, that he is speaking the plain, unadorned truth? Second, is this impression of honesty at least in part a product of manipulative rhetoric; is the truth of his writing in fact as true as it seems? And third, how closely does he follow the advice he gives about effective writing in his essay, "Politics and the English Language"? My strategy for judging his work involves comparing his own writing with the advice about effective writing outlined in his essay.

George Orwell was greatly concerned with what he saw as the degradation of the English language, in political writing particularly. He summed up his concerns in the essay, "Politics and the English Language," which was first published in Horizon in April, 1946. Like Liu Shieh’s great work, this essay rose to prominence as a study of and guide to effective writing; it is used extensively in English composition courses throughout the world.

In the essay Orwell catalogues what he considers the most commonly practiced writing abuses; to eliminate them he suggests this six-step solution:
1. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech that you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut out a word always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive when you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules rather than say anything outright barbarous.

Stemming from vastly different cultural influences and from opposite ends of a 1400-hundred year time span, Liu Shieh and George Orwell are nevertheless saying pretty much the same things about effective political prose. But no matter where, when, or by whom offered, straight common sense applied to effective writing is invaluable, and Orwell’s essay is loaded with exactly that. From beginning to ending it courses its way through the work.

Each time I read the essay, however, trying to absorb how Orwell tells us to write and how not to write, a pesky little thought pecks away at my mind. It has to do with the habit, found in a lot of us, of preaching one thing and
practicing another. Could Orwell perhaps be guilty of this fault? That, along with the acclaimed honesty of his writing, is what I plan to explore.

The exploration will involve excerpts from the "As I Please" columns Orwell wrote weekly from December, 1943 to February, 1945 for the London Tribune, where he was employed as literary editor. Selecting specific excerpts from these columns, I will first look at their content and attempt to determine how Orwell convinces readers that he is telling the truth. Next I will judge if this truth might be just illusory, a product of manipulative rhetoric. Finally, I will examine his style to see how closely it follows the guidelines of "Politics and the English Language."
CHAPTER 1

ACHIEVEMENT OF CREDIBILITY

To achieve credibility and convey a tone of truth in his "As I Please" pieces, Orwell introduces scenes which are familiar to his readers and circumstances to which they can easily relate. Additionally, he involves himself and/or the reader in what is taking place, thereby managing to develop a voice-of-the-people tone. This voice invariably represents the common working class, of which he considers himself a member. The tone succeeds in projecting an "us," the victims, against "them," the villains, confrontation. This combination of techniques, used when, where, and how Orwell uses it, is extremely convincing; it is exemplified distinctly in the five excerpts to be analyzed.

In the first excerpt (Appendix 1), his "flagship" for the initial "As I Please" column written for Tribune on December 3, 1943, Orwell takes the British government to task for what he considers its "soft-soap" policy of being uncritical of its allies, in this case the Americans, and faults the British press for echoing the policy. He aims to convince readers that the placatory policy of the government and of the patronizing press can bring great harm to England.

Striving for credibility chiefly by depicting events to which readers can readily and closely relate, Orwell selects
his first example wisely. For this initial attention getter he sets the scene at a small tobacco shop in London, a setting familiar to almost everyone. He paints a vivid picture: Two American soldiers, disgustingly drunk and abusive, two defenseless shop girls, somewhat apprehensive, yet somewhat annoyed, and a lone innocent customer, Orwell himself, who enters the shop and is immediately placed on the defensive by the repugnant action and talk of the one drunken soldier. Conceivably, upon reading something like this, readers can hastily resurrect from their own memories similar scenes that they have witnessed or have been involved in. Thus an acute sense of personal association, and, more importantly, of validity is established.

Orwell next mentions American Negro soldiers, saying that most Britishers feel that their manners are more courteous than those of the white American servicemen. Following this, he tells of how the American troops complain about British children who follow them day and night through the streets of London begging for sweets. These two observations are constructed in line with Orwell’s formula for relating familiar scenes and circumstances.

Moving from this familiar scene to consider policy, Orwell next relates four examples that play heavily upon vital social issues: justice, self esteem, patriotism and individual worth. First he tells of an agreement between
governments of the two countries wherein American servicemen are not held responsible in the British legal system for offenses against British citizens. Next he says that through careful government editing of films Britishers are kept from knowing how Americans truly feel about them.

Following this, he tells of how Americans lie about their World War I casualty rates, claiming they suffered more than did the British, when the opposite is true. Finally, he brings up the five-to-one military pay disparity between servicemen of the two countries. Each case shows the British to be at a disadvantage.

Generally, then, this is how Orwell produces credibility in his writing. He presents familiar scenes and circumstances in order to criticize governmental policies that, in Orwell's view, can harm the country, especially if the British press continues to support them. He justifies this warning by giving examples of situations that show the Americans in a bad light; for the most part these examples can all be verified.

Orwell was bombarded with letters from his readers that criticized him severely for the anti-American cast to his first excerpt. He felt compelled to defend his views in a following piece (Appendix 2) two weeks later on December 17, 1943; once more it is the "As I Please" column's lead-in excerpt. In this answer to his readers Orwell's familiar
rhetorical tactics are clearly evident; his narrative again covers scenes and circumstances, both personal and specific, involving familiar people, places and particulars. As an added ingredient he refers to examples in the first excerpt and embellishes each with stronger and more persuasive support.

To justify his previously ill-received views, he talks quite specifically about sources of the anti-American feeling in Britain:

Before the war, anti-Americans feeling in Britain was a middle class, and perhaps upper-class thing, resulting from imperialistic and business jealousy and disguising itself as a dislike for the American accent etc. The working class, so far from being anti-American, were rapidly becoming Americanised in speech by means of films and jazz songs.

These observations point out that anti-American feeling before the war was one thing for the middle and probably the upper class and quite another for the working class. Also, they explain why the different classes felt as they did. Although there is a generalized nature to the remarks, on the whole, terms like "before the war," "upper, middle and
working class," "imperialistic and business jealousy," "films and jazz songs," while not too sharply honed, do deal with specifics. Here again Orwell invites readers to identify with what he says. They can visualize how things were before the war, place themselves in one of the three classes, and can almost certainly come up with something from their own personal experiences to relate to what they are reading.

From discussing the period before the war Orwell moves next to the present, December, 1943, and laments that he now hears very little good said about the Americans. This all stems from the arrival two years earlier of American troops in the country to train and prepare for the forthcoming European invasion that ultimately takes place in June, 1944. "Anti-American feeling is worsened." Orwell says, "...because for various reasons the Mediterranean campaign had to be presented as an American show while most of the casualties had to be suffered by the British." This is the first case of his purposefully leading the readers back to the first excerpt. It is closely associated with his previous remarks about World War I casualty rates; once again America is claiming the credit and getting the glory, wrongfully, while Britain does most of the suffering.

Having replanted this thought firmly in the readers’ minds, Orwell now leaves the subject and turns to anti-British
feeling in America, by far the most forceful segment of the excerpt.

In this segment, designed primarily to take him off the anti-American hook upon which his readers have left him hanging, Orwell’s opening statement impacts with force: "We ought to face the fact that large numbers of Americans are brought up to dislike and despise us." To fortify this assertion he gives his first example which, through contrast, reminds the readers of the weak-kneed British press, loath to criticize America or Americans—a prime target for Orwell’s wrath. He says the following about newspapers in America: "There is a large section of the press whose main accent is anti-British, and countless other papers which attack Britain in a sporadic way." He tells how Americans visualize the typical Englishman, a ludicrous characterization, and how England is in part to blame for this as it exports only its worst specimens. Orwell ends the excerpt by saying that, because of the five-to-one pay disparity, it is next to impossible for troops of the two countries to fraternize socially; he admits that neither of his solutions for the problem--paying the English troops more or making American soldiers bank their surplus pay back in America--is likely to be adopted. So in this excerpt traces of Orwell’s familiar rhetorical tactics are also seen.
On a completely different topic, Orwell's piece about Dr. Richards' book (Appendix 3) on art and literary criticism, is just one of many in the "As I Please" series in which he attacks an area of art and literary criticism, in this case the insubstantial nature of certain selected criticism and critics. He also finds fault with much of the language found in art and literary criticism, stating in "Politics and the English Language":

In certain kinds of writing, particularly in art criticism and literary criticism, it is normal to come across long passages which are almost completely lacking in meaning.

In a footnote he gives an example from Poetry Quarterly of what he is talking about:

Comfort's catholicity of perception and image, almost the exact opposite in aesthetic perception, continues to evoke that trembling atmospheric accumulation hinting at a cruel, at an inexorably serene timeliness..."

This rambler serves nicely as an introduction to the excerpt, which is a neat little piece, not too polemic
overall, and, for Orwell, unusually comic in tone. His honesty is apparent as he stays with specifics, all of which can be verified if one wants to read the book; and he involves himself in what is taking place.

Beginning, Orwell recommends a book for anyone wanting a good laugh: *Practical Criticism*, by Dr. I.A. Richards, a noted English professor at Cambridge University, whose book is one of the most influential works of 20th century literary criticism. Orwell touches briefly on what the book is mostly about, general principles of literary criticism, then focuses specifically upon what this excerpt involves, a certain experiment described in the book, some of the results of which are sources for the "good Laugh" that Orwell promises.

Dr. Richards conducts the experiment on some of his English students at the university and some non-student volunteers who are interested in English literature; they are required to evaluate thirteen unsigned poems not readily recognizable to the average reader. Dr. Richards provides an in-depth analysis of both the results, and the participants’ motivations for giving them. Injecting himself into the proceedings, Orwell elects to take the test; he does, and along with the rest of the participants, fails it. These are Orwell’s specifics, and once more his
rhetorical formula shows up: a fairly familiar scene, students taking a test, Orwell present and joining in.

Concluding the excerpt, Orwell asks readers not to judge the test takers, including himself, too harshly for their less-than-perfect results, reminding them of Gosse, the exalted House of Lords librarian and noted critic, who was fooled completely by the not-very-good fake of a classic 18th century diary, and the school of prestigious French art critics who went into rhapsodies over a picture painted, unknown to them, by a donkey with a brush tied to its tail. Many of his readers would enjoy a bit of sniping at critical snobbery.

Orwell takes big publishers, newspapers and book reviewers to task in his fourth excerpt (Appendix 4), accusing them of conducting a "book racket" wherein big publishers spending big advertising dollars with big newspapers literally buy favorable reviews for their books. In contrast, he tells of how a small publisher with little money to spend for advertising gets anemic reviews for his book, and also reveals how he, himself, gets rave reviews for one of his novels which is not even read by reviewers, simply because the publisher with his big advertising influence is able to dictate what will be said about the book. Once more, by revealing the connection between money and power, Orwell encourages reader identification.
The final excerpt (Appendix 5) is included to provide some clues as to why Orwell writes the way he does. It concerns the work of Samuel Butler, which very probably influenced Orwell’s writing to a measurable extent. Nevertheless, Orwell takes it upon himself to question aspects of Butler’s philosophy and to criticize the work of Meredith and Stevenson. His views will be considered in Chapter Two where the manipulative quality of his writing will be examined.

This has been a general look at the primary methods Orwell uses to instill a sense of truth in his writing. Shunning any kinds of statistical information, facts and figures that vanish rapidly from readers’ minds once they are read, he deals instead with intimately familiar scenes and circumstances involving specific people, places and particulars, all of which promote relationship, reaction and response. Thus he establishes and maintains a strong feeling of believability, his ultimate objective and one he successfully achieves.
CHAPTER 2

MANIPULATION OF LANGUAGE

Orwell's language in these excerpts is as manipulative as is possible for language to be; this manipulative effect is gained through his expert use of certain rhetorical techniques designed to bring readers around to his way of thinking. He directs readers' minds down paths leading to "mind sets" necessary to support the argument he happens to be making. This is abundantly clear in the first excerpt where, if he is to convince readers that the government policy of not criticizing the Americans and that the press supporting the policy can bring great harm to England, he must make the readers themselves critical of America and Americans. And toward that end his opening scene is a blockbuster, especially because of the anti-British blasphemy that spews from the drunken soldier's mouth as he confronts Orwell:

Wharrishay is, perfijious Albion. You heard that? Perfijious Albion. Never trust a Britisher. You can't trust the b------s. Wharrishay is, down with Britain. Down with the British. You wanna do anything 'bout that? Then you can ------- well do it. Wharrishay is down with Britain.
Rhetorically, to create a feeling of anti-Americanism, Orwell’s language here is remarkable. Twice, for impact, he teams together the two words, "perfijious" [perfidious] and "Albion," taking the former, connoting treachery of the worst kind, and applying it to Albion, the ancient and hallowed name for England. This phrase, and Orwell is assuredly aware of the fact, has a reasonably well-carved niche in English history. It goes back to the 17th century, where it was first used in an attack on the Anglican church by Bousset, a noted French Catholic theologian. Remaining dormant for nearly a century, the phrase re-emerged during the Napoleonic Wars, when it was used very effectively in French recruiting drives to strengthen its armies for war against England. This is an excellent bit of rhetorical manipulation by Orwell. The phrase, a particularly vile piece of social blasphemy, is spat out twice by the drunken soldier. Readers, very likely familiar with the phrase and its history, are quick to conjure up an association with the abusive lout and England’s on-again off-again, long-standing arch enemy, France. This is precisely the effect Orwell strives for and achieves. Continuing his diatribe, the soldier accuses Englishmen of being untrustworthy illegitimates, who, if they don’t like what he’s accusing them of and want to do something about it, can "------ well do it." This familiar, grossly obscene phrase caps the
case, and English readers are certain to be offended if not thoroughly disgusted with the oaf’s vituperative barrage. Orwell is involved in the proceedings, aligning himself with the two nervous shop girls, thus successfully setting up an "us" against "them" confrontation, with Britain and Britons the victims, America and Americans the villains. With this opening scene, then, ill-feeling for Americans in general and the soldier in particular is firmly planted in the readers’ minds, and it continues to be nourished.

Orwell proceeds to ladle out this nourishment with his next comment about American Negro soldiers. He says: "The consensus of opinion is that the only American soldiers with decent manners are the Negroes." It’s a favorable remark and the average reader, wanting to be included in the majority forming the consensus of opinion, is quick to associate and agree with it. And, too, this comment about the Negro soldiers and their superior manners immediately reminds readers of the hateful racial segregation practiced in the American armed forces, which is undoubtedly why Orwell brings up the subject.

Racial segregation is anathematic stuff for Britons. Orwell points this out very dramatically in a subsequent "As I Please" column on August 12, 1944. He tells of a letter written to Tribune by a dance hall owner heatedly complaining because American servicemen threaten to stop
patronizing his establishment unless he erects a "color bar" for Negroes. Orwell goes on to explain very convincingly that there is no racial segregation, no "color line," in England. So bringing up the racial subject, even in the offhanded way he does neatly positions the Negro soldiers into an alliance with the common British citizen as victims of Americans like the drunken boor in the tobacco shop. Rhetorical manipulation is pointedly evident here, as it is in Orwell's next telling of British kids cadging candy.

Londoners dearly cherish their kids; they were the first to be evacuated from the cities in preparation for the devastating air raids flown by the Germans against England earlier in the war. Now, once the children are back home again, their parents hear of Americans complaining because the kids cadge candy. The soldiers' reluctance to share a luxury item scarce to come by for the British but plentiful for the Americans does not sit in the least bit well with the average Britisher, another reason to dislike the Americans.

Orwell goes on to mention that events like the shop scene can happen anywhere, not just in Picadilly where drunks, whores and rowdies are commonplace, but anywhere in Britain, which, because of the influx of American troops, has been converted to "Occupied Territory." This metaphor, with all the grimness it connotes--the conquered country,
the conquerors in control, the citizens subjugated, etc.—does much to push the anti-American feeling along.

In a revelation, at least for the "...nine out of ten Englishmen..." who according to Orwell don’t know about it, he tells next of a British-American government agreement wherein American troops are not held liable in British courts for offenses against English citizens. He adds that the agreement practically gives these troops "extra-territorial rights," which means that they are not subject to the laws of the land, actually better treatment than Britishers themselves receive; the agreement must seem totally unfair to the people, just one more grievance to be held against the Americans.

To conclude, Orwell touches on three subjects that also grate on readers’ nerves. First he says that Britons are kept from knowing how Americans truly feel about them because American movies destined for England are carefully edited to cast a favorable but false impression. Then he says the average American thinks, erroneously, that the United States suffered more casualties in World War I than did the British. Adding a bit of zest to this remark, he says that this fact comes as a shock to most Englishmen, the kind of a shock that can cause a violent quarrel. Finally he reminds the reader that the British soldier gets paid only one-fifth of what his American counterpart receives.
Implicit in Orwell’s anti-American attack is another of his effective rhetorical tactics in the manipulation of language: credible specific examples illustrate, stand for, and suggest the truth of greater and grander general ideas, which, however, may or may not be true. The technique is clearly evident in this first excerpt where he says that things like the tobacco-shop scene, American Negro soldiers’ manners and British children begging candy from American servicemen could matter greatly if relations between the two countries were in the balance and "...the still-powerful forces in this country which want an understanding with Japan were able to show their faces again because they could point to such behavior to support their position."

Additionally, he goes on to say that the "tacit agreement" between the two countries, the careful editing by the government of American films to delete any anti-British flavor, the lying about World War I casualty rates and the five-to-one military pay disparity between troops of the two countries, "...can cause the worst kind of trouble sooner or later." With this analogous device Orwell relies upon the validity of the specifics to carry over to the generalizations, in which validity is at least questionable. The primary manipulative task for Orwell’s language in this first excerpt, then, is to establish and maintain in the reader’s mind an anti-American feeling, and that is
precisely what it attempts to do. With the hard hitting rhetoric of the opening scene vividly setting the tone, that tone and the feeling it promotes is maintained throughout the piece.

Whether Orwell is completely successful at instilling this anti-Americanism is doubtful, as his following excerpt, written two weeks later on December 17, 1944, reveals: "So many letters have arrived attacking me for my remarks about the American soldiers that I must return to the subject."
And return to the subject he does, but not without first making a final comment on the government's soft-soap policy:

I say, and what I repeat, is that our policy of not criticizing our allies and not answering their criticism of us (we don't answer the Russians either, nor even the Chinese), is a mistake, and is likely to defeat its own object in the long run.

This passage, dismissing the policy with finality and loaded with Orwell's determination to push his point across--"I say, and what I repeat"--exemplifies rhetorical manipulation in at least three distinct ways. First it is yet another generalization that may or may not be valid, but, as Patai, who is not one of Orwell's champions, says: "His writings are littered with sweeping assertions, a rhetorical
technique that brushes aside reservations and challenges by
the sheer force and confidence with which these declarations
are made (9)"; and, finally, it admonishes Orwell's readers
for disagreeing with him. He is telling them that although
truth is a bitter pill to swallow ultimately it is a healer
and that actually they have less quarrel with what he is
saying than with the prudence of saying it. With this he
puts the subject to rest and sets to the task of
manipulating his readers into agreement with his earlier
views. Essentially, he does this by harking back to those
earlier views and embellishing them with additional tidbits;
his comments here are more pointed, more personal, more
persuasive. Opting to bring up patriotism first, which
pulls the reader back to the subject of World War I casualty
rates, he says:

For various reasons the [recent] Mediterranean
campaign had to be presented as an American show
while most of the casualties had to be suffered by
the British.

The remark is more specific and current, a campaign of the
present war, and America again gets the honor and glory
while Britain suffers the most. As a matter of fact, in
World War I the British suffered almost ten times more
casualties, three million versus 300,000, than did the Americans. A disclosure such as this, especially written when it is, in the middle of a dreadful war in which the British have suffered heavily, will predictably instill deep resentment for Americans.

Orwell performs his most expert rhetorical manipulation when he writes about anti-British feeling in America; he wants to extricate himself from the anti-American hook on which his readers have left him dangling. Tactically, it is his expert use of personal pronouns that works so well to help pull the reader over to his way of thinking; three pertinent qualities result. First, in contrast to proper nouns, pronouns tend to reduce what is being said to a personal level, which is, second, integral in developing a voice-of-the-people tone; and third, it enables Orwell's own opinions to appear as if they were shared by everyone. In the segment's opening statement, a stunner, all three qualities are clearly manifested. "We ought to face the fact that large numbers of Americans are brought up to dislike and despise us." When speaking of English folks invariably he uses the personal pronouns "we" or "us," as he does here; certainly this achieves a more personal effect than would, possibly, "Englishmen," "Britishers," or even "we English," each, with use of the proper noun, injects a dose of formality into the thought. Additionally, the two
plural pronouns collectively bring Orwell and the readers together—the voice-of-the-people; and finally, this has to be Orwell's own opinion, but in the way he introduces it ownership is transferred over to "we" and remains with "us" in the end. In contrast, it's almost always "America" or "Americans" when the antagonists are addressed. This suggests to readers that they are somehow pitted against an entire country. In this case the suggestion is made even more potent by the phrase "large numbers of" that modifies "Americans." Orwell avoids words like "some," "various," or even "many," and specifically uses "large numbers." To make certain this opening remark stabs deeply, he also selects well-balanced, repetitive sounding phrases to get and retain the readers' attention: "face the fact," dislike and despise." What's more, he reinforces the latter by joining the two words with "and," thus prohibiting readers from opting for "or." Writing this powerful opening statement the way he does drives home the fact that he is justified in saying what he does about Americans; for in fact they despise not Englishmen in general, but "us," you and me.

Orwell's next revelation returns to his constant enemy, the British press. But his remarks are an exercise in contrast as he writes about American newspapers, vastly different from the weak-kneed British press which is loath to criticize America or Americans:
There is a large section of the [American] press whose accent is anti-British and countless other papers which attack Britain in a more sporadic way. Again, the implication is quite profound: "...a large section...", and, "...countless others...", and, too, Orwell doesn’t mince words: their press doesn’t just chide or chastise, criticise or castigate; specifically, it "attacks," which serves very well to identify the perpetrator as an enemy.

This identity is reinforced in readers’ minds as Orwell brings up his next subject: "There is a systematic guying of what are supposed to be British habits and manners on the stage and in comic strips and cheap magazines." "Guying" is a common British colloquialism for making fun of, belittling, or even ridiculing characteristics--speech, behavior, appearance etc. This is the way Americans see us "...on the stage...". and, appropriately offensive, "...in comic strips and cheap magazines," says Orwell. He then hones the characterization to a finer perception: "The typical Englishman is represented as a "...chinless ass with a title, a monocle and a habit of saying Haw Haw." Does this description endear Americans in the hearts of Britishers? Not by a long shot, it doesn’t, especially when
Orwell aggrandizes the characterization into a "...legend..." and says that it is believed by relatively responsible Americans, the noted author Theodore Dreiser, for one, who says in a public speech that "...the British are horse-riding, aristocratic snobs." In case readers might miss the point, Orwell enlightens them by exclaiming with vehemence, "Forty-six million horse-riding snobs"! He is making certain that readers absorb the fact that the remark refers to the entire population of England. He wants to emphasize that these uncomplimentary characterizations describe exactly how Americans see the "typical Englishman." His final remarks on the subject deal with who is to blame for the American misconception, and in laying out at least part of the fault on England, he says: "We partly bring it on ourselves by exporting only our worst specimens." This sentence, along with displaying a collective togetherness through the use of personal pronouns, also implies that the "worst specimens" who can afford to travel abroad are very likely "twits" in the upper class—a constant target for Orwell.

Negroes, who in America and its armed forces are victims of racial prejudice and segregation, are mentioned again; and from the way Orwell presents his comments, a kind of compatible alliance between Negroes and the British people is suggested. Furthermore, the alliance that Orwell
hints at seems to relegate both Negro and Briton to a social status lower than the Japanese, with whom they are fighting a bloody war:

It is commonplace on the American stage that the Englishman is almost never allowed to play a favourable role, any more than the Negro is allowed to appear as anything more than a comic. Yet right up to Pearl Harbor the American movie industry had an agreement with the Japanese government never to present a Japanese character in an unfavourable light!

Ending the excerpt on the subject of soldier's pay, Orwell says that the whole American army is financially in the middle class and that you can't have really close and friendly relations with someone whose income is five times your own. Such a statement does an excellent job of segregating American soldiers from the working class that Orwell ostensibly belongs to and speaks for. In these first two excerpts, then, tied closely together in subject matter, Orwell injects into the first a dose of anti-Americanism that does not get the expected results, despite the derogatory picture he paints of Americans and their doings. Elaborating on his original views in the second excerpt, he
sharpens his perspective in trying to bring the readers around to his way of thinking.

At this point, having analyzed these first two excerpts, to determine both the quality and scope of Orwell's language manipulation, two salient factors are clearly evident. First, very few flaws are found regarding the validity of the specific examples he illustrates. Some American soldiers, like some soldiers of any army, do get drunk and abusive at times. And Negro soldiers, assigned largely to subordinate duties in the armed forces, coupled with the subservient level they were reduced to in civilian life prior to their military duty, are practically bound to a display of courteous manners. London children undoubtedly cadge candy from the soldiers and the so-called justice agreement also undoubtedly exists--its official title is "Status of Forces Agreement"; and British soldiers do receive pay that is five times less than that of the Americans. In relating these observations, then, Orwell's integrity, his honesty, if you will, appears to be largely unblemished.

Forming questionable conclusions--the "still-powerful" pro-Japanese forces itching to re-emerge, the "worst kind of trouble" likely to occur and the "dangerous resentments" festering to erupt--are all purely speculation on Orwell's part, however, and they may or may not be completely honest
assessments. Also, the ludicrous characterization he describes of how Americans see the typical Englishman, his claiming to know that great numbers of Americans are raised to "dislike" and "despise" Englishmen and that most Americans lie about their war casualties all stretch the complete truth a bit too far. Therefore, it's plain to see that through this rhetorical manipulation Orwell is really not the paragon of honesty that so many have claimed him to be. Like all good polemicists he shapes his language to suit his own purposes, to achieve his own objectives. Whether he succeeds in these first two excerpts is unanswerable; the subject of anti-Americanism does not appear again to any great extent in any of the "As I Please" columns.

One might have reason to wonder just why Orwell elects to drop this subject so abruptly in that it was so important to him—the vehicle for launching his "As I Please" columns. His views on America and Americans in these first two excerpts reveal an ambitious display of demagoguery; he targets and fires away at the senses—"Orwell addresses himself primarily to the eyes and the nerves (Wallheim, 66).—relying on readers' reactions and responses to push his points across. It's a maneuver that works well. Why, then, does he drop the subject so abruptly? Some reasonable conclusions might be that, although highly unlikely, he was
thoroughly discouraged with the unfavorable reception his views received from readers, or he felt his polemic too strong for the criticality of the time—an impending invasion, probable costly and considerable losses for both countries, who were, after all, allies; finally, due to the vast and valuable resources—manpower and materiel—represented by the Americans, pursuing the point further might have been, even for Orwell, politically unwise. But whatever were his reasons for doing so, he dropped the subject.

A good bit of rhetorical manipulation emerges in Orwell's piece about Dr. Richards' book. He wants to convince readers that some so-called critics and much of art and literary criticism are at best farcical. Establishing quickly yet another "us" against "them" situation, the bogus experts representing "them," he quickly divorces himself from this bunch and identifies once again with the common herd—English students and volunteers interested in English literature who offer "...specimens of literary criticism not complicated by snobbishness of the ordinary kind, "—by joining in with these test takers to take the test. Once having set up station with the novices, he is quick to denounce the antagonists by first relating Gosse's gaffe, then that of the prestigious French art critics who were thrilled by the work of the talented donkey. These
indictments accomplish two distinct ends: they support Orwell's topic, farcical critics and criticism, and also have a tendency to console the students, volunteers, and other budding critics, by proving that at any given time the so-called experts may be no better than the novices—Orwell included, in this case. All this is at best a sham, however, for he very authoritatively criticizes various poems included in the experiment: Donne's "magnificent sonnet," Noyes' "completely spurious bombast," Woodbine Willie's "sentimental ballad," etc. His evaluations are undoubtedly knowledgeable ones, but he tarnishes his image as just one of the common bunch, the "us" side of the equation, with these expert assessments of the various works—this slight slip will escape his readers.

In his attack on big spending publishers (Appendix 4), Orwell puts a lot of manipulation into his rhetoric, designed to get and hold the reader's attention from beginning to end. Beginning, he gets the attention he seeks, as well as a sufficient amount of curiosity, by labeling what he is about to expose as "the book racket." Next, to encourage agreement and create believability, he presents the reasonable side of a contrasting rhetorical construction, one that a reader could hardly disagree with or fail to believe: "Publishers have got to live, like anyone else, and you can't blame them for advertising their
wares...." But reverting to the opposite side of the construction, he presents a startler: What they are doing is "...a shameful feature of literary life...." The reader now needs to know what this feature is that is so shameful. Orwell supplies the answer, as well as the equally shameful consequences: the publishers are using their advertising dollars literally to buy favorable reviews for their books; therefore, honest literary criticism is severely compromised. All that is left, then, is to detail as convincingly as possible how all this dirty work is done, which is Orwell’s next step, one that he takes with great determination and expertise.

Orwell’s narrative as he tells the story of the publishers’ various undertakings is directly to the point, there are no grey-shaded ambiguities; the reader knows precisely who does what. His descriptions of the events are laced with arresting concrete language that paints vivid images and leaves strong impressions. Labeling many of the book reviewers, especially the best-known ones, as "so-called" reviewers, an unqualified opinion, he says they are simply "blurb writers" who ultimately turn into "wretches" churning out their false praise. Several well-known newspapers seeking the large advertising dollars practically sell their literary pages to a handful of big publishers who, with Nazi-like implication, have their "quislings"
planted in all the important jobs. With this masterful but
demagogic description Orwell has planted in the reader's
mind the pawn-like roles played by the reviewers and
newspapers: puppets on the publishers' strings, dancing
dutifully, responding to every tug. Along with the
description is Orwell's familiar condemnation of "them":
big publishers, big newspapers, big business etc. On the
"us" side of the team is the small theological publisher,
who not being a source of big and constant advertising
dollars, gets paltry return for both his money and his book;
the unfortunate reviewers who, because they must make
certain the landlord gets paid each month, are forced to
review books according to the publishers' dictates; and
Orwell himself, whose novel is not even glanced at, much
less read by, hack reviewers, but, ironically, is
"...praised to the skies." Orwell is honest enough to
report that as disreputable as the book racket is, he
benefits from it. On the other hand, as an author with
seven successful novels published, to pass himself off as a
common, working class fellow seems a bit deceptive to say
the least.

The final excerpt (Appendix 5), contains very little
rhetoric that can be termed manipulative in the truest
sense. Orwell does expose some of his own deliberate biases
about Butler's philosophical views on society's treatment of
class separation and the theory of evolution. In the latter he employs the familiar rhetorical tactic of using the personal pronoun "we" to make his own opinion appear to be everyone's: "...unlike the Victorians we do not feel that to be descended from animals is degrading to human dignity."

This is one of his favorite ploys, and a very effective one. The opinion is never offered as a personal one, but rather as an absolute assertion, made by the collective group "we," Orwell and the sane, commonsensical, everyday reader. He offers some further opinions, these strictly on his own without assistance from the "we," about the writing of Stevenson and Meredith and the disappointing conclusion of Butler's most famous novel, The Way of All Flesh. Whether the reader agrees with these observations is impossible to tell; Orwell makes little concerted effort to sway readers one way or the other; he simply tells them what he thinks about Samuel Butler, his philosophy and his prose.

So much for the manipulative quality of Orwell's rhetoric. It is present in all five excerpts, from large doses in the first two, reasonable amounts in the third and fourth, to practically none in the fifth. Basically it involves a voice-of-the-people tone that represents the underdog in an "us" against "them," victim against villain scenario. Rhetorically, the tone is produced through Orwell's involving himself and/or the reader in what is
taking place, the liberal use of personal pronouns rather than formal proper nouns, vivid and impressionistic words, terms and phrases relating to familiar scenes and circumstances; and straight-forward, unpretentious prose that is best understood by the average man-on-the-street reader for whom he primarily writes.
CHAPTER 3

CONFORMITY OF STYLE

Following the two introductory paragraphs of "Politics and the English Language," Orwell gives examples from five different writers. He says that each of these examples is ugly. But he adds that each also has two common faults: the first is "staleness of imagery," and the second is "lack of precision." Elaborating upon these two faults he says that this

...mixture of vagueness and sheer incompetence is the most marked characteristic of modern English prose, and especially of any kind of political writing. As soon as certain topics are raised, the concrete melts into the abstract and no one seems able to think of terms of speech that are not hackneyed....I list below with notes and examples, various tricks by which the work of prose construction is habitually dodged.

He then goes on to catalogue, with sub-sets, what he considers to be the most common writing abuses. They are the overuse of dying metaphors, "operators," or "verbal false limbs," pretentious diction, and meaningless words. From these four primary abuses he branches off into various
sub-sets—added faults of which writers are consistently guilty.

There is meager evidence of either staleness of imagery or lack of precision in any of these "As I Please" excerpts; vivid imagery and exact precision, however, are plentiful. In the first excerpt, for example, Orwell accomplishes two distinct goals with his tobacco-shop scene; the first, to capture the reader's total attention, the second, to strongly criticize Americans and America—an action the British press, the Tribune obviously excepted, is unwilling to take. The scene he sets does the job admirably, painting a vivid picture for the reader to absorb. Focusing on the two drunken soldiers sprawling across the counter, one revoltingly aggressive and abusive, the scene's most forceful blow is struck with the hateful blasphemy [analyzed earlier in Chapter 2 for manipulative quality] that erupts from the lout's mouth, as he rises from the counter, "...sticks his face out like a tomcat on a garden wall," and verbally blasts away at Orwell:

Wharrishay is perfijious [perfidious] Albion
[England]. You heard that? Perfijious Albion. Never trust a Britisher. You can't trust the b______s. Wharrishay is, down with Britain. Down with the British You wanna do anything 'bout that?
Then you can ______ well do it.

There is nothing stale or vague about the opening scene Orwell paints, or any sign of imprecision, as it very successfully achieves its objectives, getting the reader’s full attention and criticizing the Americans.

Continuing, Orwell relates how the American troops are treated better than British citizens by not having to answer to British courts for offenses against British subjects. The Americans take credit, erroneously, for suffering more casualties than the British in World War I, when just the opposite is true. And finally, their troops are paid five times more than their British counterparts. These examples, all presented in straightforward, directly-to-the-point language, very neatly accomplish three ends that Orwell seeks. They are all in one way or another highly critical of the Americans; they provide support for his three general conclusions, and in spite of his protests to the contrary [in the second excerpt], they do attempt to inject a dose of anti-Americanism into the mind of the reader.

Taken to task by his readers for his anti-American comments, Orwell devotes the second excerpt to defending his views, and his imagery is at its most vivid when he discusses anti-British feeling in America in an effort to justify his earlier remarks. The highlight is his
description of the typical character role Britons are limited to playing on the American stage: "...a chinless ass wearing a monocle who goes around saying Haw Haw." And just as lively and impressive is his recounting Dreiser's remarks that label all Englishmen as aristocratic, horse-riding snobs. The third excerpt reveals some of the absurdities associated with art and literary criticism, and, although Orwell borrows material—Dr. Johnson's analogy about so-called poetry lovers and arithmetic-knowledgeable dogs and Dr. Richards' comments about the results of the poetry experiment--to support his thesis, he does a remarkable job of proving that in some cases criticism can be meaningless. The two final comments about the prestigious House of Lords librarian missing the mark completely by failing to identify a fake eighteenth-century diary, and the esteemed French art critics who rave ecstatically over the picture painted by the donkey with the talented tail, end the excerpt on an impressive high note.

The clarity and color of Orwell's language continues in the fourth excerpt as he exposes the "book racket." He tells of newspaper advertising that "screams," publishers who plant their "quislings" in the right places, and the "wretches" who "...churn out their praise like mechanical pianos." The wretches review as they are instructed so the landlord can get paid. The small publisher who can't afford
big advertising dollars gets short changed. And in spite of the racket's overall crookedness, Orwell benefits from it, ironically, when the robot reviewers, who never even read his novel, praise it to the skies. All of these foregoing examples are adequate indications that Orwell's imagery, far from being stale or vague, is instead lively, colorful, and impressive; what's more, it is always employed precisely when and where it is required for the utmost effectiveness.

One point of interest that should be mentioned before continuing to the individual writing faults that Orwell catalogues in "Politics and the English Language," are the remarks he makes, also in the essay, about these faults--and himself. "Look back through this essay, and for certain you will find that I have again and again committed the very faults I am protesting against." The question arises, then, to what extent is this so?

Orwell first contends that bad writers overuse dying metaphors, which he defines as: "...a huge dump of worn-out metaphors which have lost all evocative power and are merely used to save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves." Along with mixed metaphors he sandwiches these dying metaphors in between newly invented ones and those which are technically dead, defining the latter as those that revert to ordinary words that can generally be used without loss of vividness.
Metaphors and metaphorically slanted language are sprinkled liberally throughout Orwell's "As I Please" excerpts. In the first, for example, due to the large number of troops in the country, he transforms England into "Occupied Territory." Because of the seemingly unfair judicial agreement between the two countries, these troops are all but given "extra-territorial rights"; and the hated placatory policy that denies criticism of them is labeled "soft soap." These three are effective metaphors, but they fall a bit outside of the categories that Orwell favors for effective usage. Chiefly, they are not newly invented, all three having been around for some time. So he is certainly breaking the first step of his six-step solution: "Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech that you are used to seeing in print." The three are decidedly not "mixed", have no internal incongruity; but they could be construed, possibly, as "technically dead," wherein they can be reduced to ordinary words without loss of vividness.

Metaphor continues to appear throughout the rest of the excerpts, involving, to a great extent the same rhetoric that figured so essentially in the vivid imagery mentioned above. In the second excerpt, Americans' concept of the typical Englishman, a chinless ass wearing a monocle who goes around saying "haw haw," and the aristocratic horse-riding snobs, is a case in point. Orwell converts this
characterization into a "legend," and adds that England is partly to blame for this as it exports to America only its "worst specimens." This metaphorical imagery—implying the American concept is the ludicrous characterization, which, in turn, is implied to be a legend, and the final implication that Englishmen in America are England’s worst specimens—is highly successful; it helps markedly to bring out very clearly the point Orwell is making: Americans have a badly warped view of Englishmen, and part of the blame is England’s own fault.

In his piece about Dr. Richards’ book Orwell refers to his two errors in the experiment as "bad bloomers," a metaphor the exact meaning of which is best known only to Britishers—their slang interpretation of a mistake. He tells of Woodbine Willie’s sentimental ballad getting "quite a good press," and Donne’s magnificent sonnet receiving a "distinctly chilling reception" by critics who would have "fallen on their faces" at the mention of his [Donne’s] name. And of course there is his final observation about the French art critics who went into "rhapsodies" over the picture painted by the donkey. All of the metaphorical leanings put to use in this excerpt evoke clear and effective images of the views he is expressing.

Orwell is at his best, though, when he exposes the insidious book racket in his fourth excerpt. Newspaper
advertisements "screamed"; publishers had their "quislings" in the important jobs; the best-known reviewers, "blurb writers," who were nothing more than "wretches" churning forth their praise "...like mechanical pianos." And Orwell's own novel, which the reviewers never even read, was nevertheless "praised to the skies." These, then, are examples of the metaphorical language that Orwell uses, with the following few added comments about his motives for and methods of using it.

In all cases his metaphorical language is the core from which his particular argument gains its greatest strength. Decidedly figurative in nature, it is limited to common, down-to-earth language most easily recognizable to the audience that he primarily writes for. The hated policy in the first excerpt, for instance, is labeled in plain everyday language as just so much soft-soap, denoting, with no ambiguity whatever, weakness and even cowardliness. Anti-Americanism, prevalent since the arrival of the American troops, has turned England into "Occupied Territory," with all its grim connotation. These troops are given preferential treatment in the judicial system—practically, "extra-territorial rights." His argument, in both cases, is fortified by these phrases, which is precisely what Orwell intends. The tactic extends into the second excerpt where the ludicrous "typical Englishman"
characterization, as well as Dreiser's supposed remarks, are certain to penetrate deeply into the "gut" of any English citizen; again, that is Orwell's intention. Dr. Richards' work analyzes not only the participants' criticism of the poetry but also why they criticize as they do. Furthermore, their comments that Orwell so energetically and colorfully expounds upon quite often are more extensive, more analytical, and contain more depth than is indicated by the somewhat comical comments that Orwell excerpts and uses here: one student thinks Donne's sonnet "...would make a good hymn," another can "...find no other reaction except disgust..." regarding it; yet another student thinks Hopkins' poem is "...the worst poem I ever read." and one simply shrugs it off as "pish posh." Dr. Richards' analyses contain the full extent of the participants' comments, explaining in depth what is said and why (41-48). Orwell fails to mention this, relating only the comments that help support his thesis of farcical critics and criticism. This tactic, along with his ending the excerpt by telling of Gosse's gaffe and that of the French art critics, does the job nicely. But it also adds a bit more tarnish to his image of integrity.

Orwell's metaphorical method heatedly livens up the attack against publishers, newspapers and book reviewers, to a greater extent than is absolutely necessary perhaps; but a
possible argument can be constructed to show that this entire excerpt might just amount to sour grapes on Orwell's part. At the time this column was written, for example, he was experiencing extreme difficulty in getting his book, Animal Farm, published. He had completed it six months earlier, and, in fact, had been turned down by at least four different publishing houses; it was only later, in October, 1944, that Frederic Warburg accepted the book for publishing. Another consideration for the argument is the absence of specific names of publishers, newspapers and reviewers. The "As I Please" columns are loaded with Orwell's attacks against specific individuals and businesses. In one column dated December 31, 1943, he says that George Bernard Shaw is "ridiculous" in wanting to rewrite the national anthem. In another, dated April 21, 1944 regarding the British Broadcasting Company, he says: "Of course, untrue statements are constantly being broadcast and anyone can tell you of instances." And in a third, on June 23, 1944, Orwell indicted the London News Chronicle for allowing "...the professional Roman Catholic "Timothy Shy" (D.B. Wyndham Lewis) to do daily sabotage in his comic column." Continuing, and on the same subject, he says: "In Lord Beaverbrook's Express his fellow-Catholic "Beachcomber" (J.B. Morton) is, of course, more at home." One would think, then, that with his propensity for naming specific
names when he feels compelled to, Orwell might have been more specific in naming the perpetrators of the "book racket"—if he had specific evidence, that is. This, coupled with his frustration at not getting Animal Farm published, supports the consideration that his views may not be altogether valid and that his expose' is nothing more than sour grapes. Be that as it may, it is the metaphorical images he paints that make this piece so effective. For the most part, then, where metaphor is concerned, Orwell pretty much conforms to the guidelines he lays out in "Politics and the English Language." He strays now and then—"blurb writers" is surely a mixed metaphor, and also, "pianos" that "churn." But by far his usage is fresh and vivid and does an excellent job of imaging exactly what he wants the reader to see.

From metaphors Orwell moves on to "operators," or "verbal false limbs," the next writing fault that he finds objectionable. "These," he says, "save the trouble of picking out appropriate verbs and nouns, and at the same time pad each sentence with an appearance of symmetry." He gives a few examples: "render inoperative," "militate against," "prove unacceptable," "take effect," etc. As to how they are formed he explains: "The keynote is the elimination of single verbs." "Instead of being a single word such as break, stop, spoil, mend, kill a verb becomes a
phrase made up of a noun or adjective tacked on to some
general-purpose verb such as prove, serve, form, play,
render," Does Orwell thus adorn his sentences? Yes, he
does. But not to a great extent, and certainly not to the
point of producing superfluous wordiness or shows of
symmetry. Instead there is a distinct purpose, in many
cases, for his substitutions of verb phrases for single
verbs.

That purpose is threefold. First, anyone reading his
writing would quickly notice a sense of both structural and
euphonic balance to Orwell's sentences; second, he has a
propensity for effective alliteration; third, and vitally
important, he strives for a colloquial tone, an ingredient
essential for enhancing his voice-of-the-people image. In
the first excerpt, for instance, both structural and
euphonic balance appear in his sentence about Picadilly,
with "...its seething swarms of drunks and whores," as well
as effective alliteration in his verb phrases, "can count,
"might matter," "which want," all of which could be replaced
with single verbs such as "count," "could," and the gerund
"wanting," none of which, however, comes close to being as
effective as his verb phrases; and, too, the alliteration
vanishes. Also, when cautioning the reader to "steer clear"
of Picadilly, the repetitive-sound phrase, although perhaps
a bit stale, is also a bit less "uppity" than possible
single-verb alternatives like "exclude," "avoid," to name just two.

Orwell continues to use these "operators," or "verbal false limbs," in the second excerpt, ostensibly for the same reasons that were argued earlier: balance, rhythm, repetitive sounds, and, most importantly, colloquialism. And even though this tendency holds true for the most part, in some instances it doesn't. In denying that he is anti-American, for example, he says: "...nor am I consumed by hatred for the United States." Perhaps with this remark he is saying in so many words, I hate the U.S. but not too much, a way to identify with moderate Americaphobes. Whatever his reasons for stating it as he does, extra padding, as well as a reasonably high degree of formality, are plopped into this remark. He could just as well say: "nor do I hate the United States." or, if he's a moderate Americaphobe "nor do I dislike the United States." His statement is more formal, less colloquial, somewhat fancier and decidedly "wordier" than either of the two latter, in which the single verbs "hate" and "dislike" work nicely. But this example is an anomaly; by and large, colloquialism, balance, and rhythm are the influencing factors as Orwell constructs his sentences.

In writing about Dr. Richards' book, when Orwell tells of the volunteers' role in the experiment, he chooses the
verb phrase, "took part," rather than, possibly, "participated." The latter is a bit stuffy; he feels the former sounds more down-to-earth; it does indeed, so he uses it. And when telling of the experiment's results, Orwell could very well say that they "reveal," an entirely appropriate single verb, but also one that is slightly toney. He elects instead to use "...they go to show..." which, keeping in mind his first priority, helps develop the colloquial tone he seeks. It is also a wise choice: much more informal, loaded with pleasing balance, rhythm and assonance; it wears well on the ears. These are but two more places where single verbs could be used but are not, and for good reasons.

While exposing the book racket Orwell continues to use phrases instead of single verbs. He says this habit stems from a number of reasons, one being laziness. "These save the trouble of picking out appropriate verbs and nouns...." But that is the furthest thing from his mind as he puts one or two to play in this excerpt. The wretched book reviewers for example, very easily could have "produced" their pappy praise; but "produced" sniffs of formality and stuffiness; "...churned forth their praise...". Orwell's choice, however, sounds like it comes from just down the block, especially when he ties "...like so many mechanical pianos..." on to its tail end. Here, the somewhat mixed
metaphor works for Orwell. Also, the poor theologian who reaped the dismal harvest might have, at the start, simply "decided" to publish a book: granted, "decided" is not overly formal or stuffy; nor is it colorful and alive. But "took it into his head..." certainly is: it sings a nice song and spurs the common folks' lingo along. That's why Orwell does this type of thing; he's not lazy, just exceptionally good at what he does best, which is write effectively for his audience. However, for someone who is so dead set against the overuse of these verbal false limbs, he is not against using them when they suit his purpose—perhaps, arguably, more than he should. But two things are important to remember: he constructs his sentences with precision, balance, rhythm, euphony, and colloquialism in mind, and, giving him his due, he admits to committing all the writing sins he protests against.

From the overuse of "operators" Orwell turns next to the first of his sub-sets—additional writing faults that cause him concern. The first of these faults has to do with the passive voice, about which he says: [with bad writers] "...the passive voice is wherever possible used in preference to the active...", a fault of which he is completely innocent. There are thirty-three sentences in the first excerpt, containing forty-six subject/verb formations. Forty-one are in the active voice, five in the
passive. The second excerpt is made up of thirty-two rather long sentences, and of the seventy-one subject/verb formations, fifty-eight are active and thirteen passive. This predominantly active usage is upheld throughout the remaining excerpts. One thing is noteworthy about Orwell’s use of the passive; in each case it is precisely called for; emphasis is placed upon the action taken or received, not on the actor. Equally noteworthy is his use of the active; in each case it strengthens the point he is trying to get across. The last sentence of the first excerpt, for example, is one designed to leave strong, lasting, and troubling thoughts with the reader: "Our official soft-soap policy does us no good in America, while in this country it allows dangerous resentments to fester just below the surface." A remarkable final sentence, it does exactly the job Orwell intends it to—leaves the reader apprehensive and troubled. If it were attempted in the passive it might turn out something like this: Our official soft-soap policy is considered to be doing us no good in America, while in this country it is believed to be allowing dangerous resentments that are felt to be festering just below the surface. What a sorry excuse for a sentence this is; Orwell would be revolted by it, as would any good writer. Concerning active and passive voice, then, Orwell both prefers and uses the former over the latter.
The next three sub-sets on Orwell's list of writing faults are easy to deal with, simply because they do not make their appearance in these excerpts. First he says that with bad writers "...noun constructions are used instead of gerunds (by examination of instead of by examining)." And he adds: "The range of verbs is further cut down by means of the -ise and de- formations, and banal statements are given an appearance of profundity by means of the not unformation." In only one case can one of these faults be found: it is in the second excerpt where Orwell tells of the working class who were rapidly becoming "Americanised" through films and jazz songs, which is sufficient evidence that he is not seriously guilty of this type of practice.

Orwell is, however, at least somewhat guilty of the next fault he mentions: the replacement of simple conjunctions and prepositions with "wordy" and otherwise useless phrases; he gives these examples: "with respect to," "having regard to," "the fact that," "by dint of," "in view of," "in the interest of," "on the hypothesis of." There is a sentence that has some extra wordiness that could be eliminated and the sentence made better by substituting one single conjunction. The sentence reads, "Not one English person in ten knows of the existence of the agreement." Perhaps Orwell hears a pleasing euphonic rhythm in the two prepositional phrases, and perhaps there is one
of sorts; but the sentence seems wordy. By using the conjunction "that" to separate the two clauses, he might instead write: Not one English person in ten knows that the agreement exists. It's a good sentence, much less wordy, and to the point. He is also fond of the two prepositional phrases, "on the contrary" and "on the other hand," both of which come in mighty handy when contrasting. But they are used too much. And it is very seldom that the simple conjunction "but" won't do the job just as well, as it will here where Orwell chooses the other two phrases. In the second excerpt one of Orwell's stigmatic phrases crops up: he says about the anti-American feeling in Britain, "...it has been made worse by the fact that for various reasons..."; "because" could be substituted for "by the fact that." He goes on to relate that the working class were becoming Americanised "...by means of..." films and jazz songs: "through" would appear to work as well here. And where he writes "contrary to" what his correspondents seem to think, "despite" could also fit in nicely. These are three cases that not only almost directly repeat the kind of wordiness Orwell is against: "by the fact that," and "by means of," in each a simple preposition can be substituted. Although he does not do this excessively, he does generally avoid using single conjunctions and prepositions where they
would be perfectly in order. This practice persists throughout these five excerpts. 

In the last sub-set Orwell says that some writers are out of order when they hang "resounding commonplaces" on their sentence endings to save them from anti-climax. The endings of some of Orwell's sentences do seem to contain such commonplaces. The second excerpt opens by mentioning the attack he receives from readers for his anti-American remarks and ends with, "...I must return to the subject." Does this inject a strong climax into the subject? Not really. Why not simply, "I must respond?" Frankly, that's what his entire second excerpt does; it responds to his displeased readers. And he mentions that "...our policy is likely to defeat its own object in the long run." But just how grand a climax does "in the long run" build? It isn't that the prepositional phrase tied on the end is especially weak, but there isn't any significance introduced by its inclusion. Realistically, he could say, simply, "our policy is likely to defeat its own purpose," and leave it at that. "In the long run" adds next to nothing to the sentence, it's a bit commonplace; the sentence ending would be just as strong if it were chopped off at "purpose." Another sentence that addresses three subjects ends by saying they "...don't get mentioned in the British press." Are they kept better hidden simply because they don't get
"published"? Where anti-British currents are concerned, he says the British press has consistently failed "...to draw attention to them." Is a simple "failed to report them" anti-climatic? No it isn't. None of these sentences endings contribute greatly to the sentences' strengths, meanings, or endings. Whether or not they are commonplace is a matter of judgment. One way of looking at it is that Orwell sees these sentence endings as necessary to maintain his common, everyday language format, to enhance his voice-of-the-people tone—an another case of furthering his own ends; also, they introduce a sense of balance or rhythm to what is being said. But that aside, they do add unnecessary words to the sentences, words that would not be missed if the substitutions were made; this is quite clear.

Pretentious diction is Orwell's next target. He lists certain words that he says are used to "...dress up simple statements to give an air of scientific impartiality to biased judgments...", "...to dignify the sordid process of international politics...", and "...to glorify war." The pretentious words that give airs of scientific impartiality to biased judgments can be cast aside; none appear in any of these excerpts, which goes to show that Orwell does, in this case at least, write to his principles. In the first and second excerpts, however, politics and war are both addressed, and some of Orwell's words about them seem to fit
in his pretentious-diction category--explicitly or implicitly making claim to some distinction or importance. "Anti-American" and "anti-British" are politically powerful and pretty pretentious. So are "still-powerful forces," "extra-territorial rights," and "dangerous resentments." An additional criterion for pretentiousness is being affectedly grand or superior, and a couple of Orwell's passages seem to lean in this direction: "...nor am I consumed with hatred for the United States." is much grander than, for example, "nor do I hate the United States": both say, while not exactly, pretty much the same thing. Also, his characterization of the typical Englishman becomes a "legend," which is somewhat lofty. These examples are merely matters of judgment, which to some readers may seem far removed from any signs of pretentiousness. They seem to be, however, at least as representative of that quality as some of the examples Orwell offers in "Politics and the English Language," particularly those seen as being use to "...dress up simple statements and give an air of impartiality to biased judgments": effective, virtual, basic, primary, promote, etc. Whatever the case, there is a marked scarcity of showiness in Orwell's writing throughout all five excerpts, and for good reason.

That reason stems from the nature of both the tone and context of the "As I Please" pieces. Where tone is
concerned, Orwell strives for and attains a combined personal and familiar tone of camaraderie aimed at the common working class, man-on-the-street reader. To be most effective his rhetoric has to conform to the kind of language best understood by this specific audience. And to that end it is perfectly reasonable that the rhetoric has to be plain and pointedly clear, and as free as possible of any glitzy showiness—in a word, pretentiousness. Furthermore, in the content of these pieces a type of conspiratorial scenario emerges, an "us" against "them" situation. There is the average British citizen against the boorish American servicemen, the government with its soft-soap policy, the press with its big business interests, all coming up in the first excerpt and elaborated on in the second. In the third excerpt, the lowly students and Orwell himself are in a way pitted against the highly esteemed librarian and the prestigious French are critics. And in the fourth the small theological publisher and Orwell, to a certain extent, are taken advantage of by the big and powerful publishers and newspapers. So in championing this position of the underdog, to give credibility to and receive agreement with what he says, he has to keep his language pure and simple, which he does; thus, once again, the almost total absence of showiness.
Two sub-sets that branch off from Orwell’s dislike for pretentious diction are foreign phrases and foreign words. He says about the first: "Except for the useful abbreviations i.e., e.g., and etc., there is no real need for any of the hundreds of foreign phrases now current in English." And once again conforming to his standards, he uses no foreign phrases in these excerpts. Foreign words, or foreign-root words, however, are a problem. He has quite a lot to say about them:

Bad writers, and especially scientific, political and sociological writers are always haunted by the notion that Latin and Greek words are grander than Saxon ones and unnecessary words like expedite, ameliorate, predict, deracinated, clandestine, subaqueous, and hundreds of others always gain ground from their Anglo-Saxon opposite numbers.

The problem lies with these foreign, or foreign-root words; Orwell’s excerpts are inundated with them. What is puzzling is what exactly he means when he says "Anglo-Saxon opposite numbers"; he seems to be referring to "equivalents," but gives nothing to explain what precisely he means by "Anglo-Saxon." In the footnote he remarks that the English name for a flower, Forget-Me-Not, is being replaced by writers
with the Greek "Myosotis," and the Snapdragon with "Antirrhinium." The words "forget-me-not" are all purely Old and Middle English, having no foreign roots. But Snapdragon stems from the Middle Dutch "Snappen," and the Greek "Draken." There is an inconsistency in the footnote if one is attempting to determine for certain what Orwell means by the term "Anglo Saxon." Further on in "Politics and the English Language" he provides a clue as to what he might mean by the term. The clue crops up when he contrasts two passages, the first of which he considers excellent English and the second, "...modern English of the worst kind." Here is the first, a well known verse from Ecclesiastes:

I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to the men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Orwell writes the second, his version of how the passage would appear in modern English:

Objective consideration of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in
competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

He argues that if his passage is a parody, it is not a gross one. When contrasting the two he points out: "The first contains 49 words but only 60 syllables, and all its words are those of everyday life...The second contains 38 words of 90 syllables: 18 of its words are from Latin roots and one from Greek." The latter statement, directed at the second passage, seems to place a pox on foreign-root words, so a reasonable conclusion concerning Orwell's reference to "Anglo-Saxon" words would be that he means, first, words that are devoid of foreign roots, and, second, words that, for the most part, shy away from polysyllabics and are used mostly in common everyday discourse; finding words such as these spurred the research that follows.

In the first excerpt 133 of the most critical words were selected and researched for origins; thirty-five originated in Old, Middle or Modern English. The same holds true in the second, where of the 165 most essential words fifty-six stemmed from pure English sources; and in the third only seven of seventy. Of the rest by far the majority had Latin roots, with French and Greek falling next
into line. This trend, a decided preponderance of foreign-root words, sustains itself throughout the two final excerpts. So while the precise meaning of Orwell's "Anglo Saxon" may not be perfectly clear, what is abundantly clear is that he is not the least bit hesitant to use foreign-root words. One might wonder why, in that he seems so dead set against them.

In an attempt to find out, synonyms were researched for some of his words to see if there were, in fact, Old, Middle or Modern English "opposite numbers"--or equivalents if you will. "Pugnacious," for example, stems from Latin; a thesaurus lists for synonyms: "aggressive," "bellicose," "belligerent," "hostile" and "offensive"; all have Latin or French roots. "Prejudice" comes from Latin, through Middle French to Middle English; its synonyms are "favoritism," "grievance," "inequality" and "injustice"; these too have Latin or French roots. "Casualties" originated in Middle Latin and branched through Old French to Middle English; it has no listed synonyms. "Resentments," with French, and "fester," with Latin roots also list no synonyms. This trend of foreign-root synonyms is fairly representative of all integral words in all five excerpts.

From the remaining four excerpts twenty-five additional foreign-root words were picked for further analysis, and, from an extensive array of listed synonyms, just two or
three for each word were considered as candidates that might serve as equivalents for Orwell's word choices. Sixty-seven possibilities resulted, but among these only fifteen originated in English. Furthermore, in each substitution made, a simple replacement adversely altered Orwell's original sentence. The substitutions included all the alternatives, not just the "pure" English ones; some integral factor, clarity, tone, balance, rhythm, precise meaning, etc., disappeared along with his word. Some examples bear this out. Regarding the word "popular," for instance, in his term "popular English prejudices," one might be tempted to use "widespread" in place of "popular." The former stems from Old English "wid" and "spraeden," is related to the German "weit" and "spreiten." but did not, however, originate in German. "Widespread" is not a suitable substitute: alliteration is sacrificed and a sense of balance and rhythm, although not perfect, is thrown out of kilter. What's more, "widespread" comes close but does not have precisely the same meaning as "popular." Two other choices are available, "average" and "common"; but "average" comes from Arabic and "common" from Latin. In another case, where Orwell refers to "comic strips," one might use in the place of "comic" the Middle English word "funny"; but it's highly unlikely; and certainly the Latin word "humorous" is out of the question. Basically these experiments prove
rather conclusively that by far most of substitutions for Orwell's foreign-root words stem from foreign-roots themselves. Additionally, those that do not fail to fit as well, if at all, into his sentences as they are constructed.

The final fault that Orwell addresses is the overuse of meaningless words. Singling out art and literary criticism as an example, he provides this explanation:

Words like romantic, plastic, human, dead, sentimental, natural, vitality, as used in art criticism are strictly meaningless, in the sense that they not only do not point to any discoverable object, but are hardly expected to do so by the reader.

Orwell feels that to use words without precise meaning is misleading. In the case of much political writing, it can be even dishonest, wherein the writer has his own definite opinion of what his word means but allows his reader to think he means something quite different. Imprecision in this case is dishonest. A thorough study of these five excerpts reveals nothing whatever to suggest Orwell uses words with this purpose in mind. The reigning quality of his work lies in its clarity, in its absence of ambiguity. Honed to precision, his words are direct products of the
exact meaning of what he has to say, and nothing else. And, although he is expert at manipulating his readers, his expertise is not accomplished through the use of multiple-meaning, meaningless words. This brings to an end the analysis of Orwell's style to determine if he writes as he says good writers should in "Politics and the English Language." Following are the various conclusions drawn regarding how he produces credibility in his writing, if and how this writing is manipulative, and if it follows the guidelines of "Politics and the English Language."
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

Determining beyond any doubt that what Orwell writes in these "As I Please" excerpts is the unadorned truth has been difficult and largely inconclusive. Presumably, as he has many readers who disagree with his views, he would be reluctant to present as the truth something that could be quite easily proven otherwise. He mentions things such as World War I casualty rates, the Mediterranean campaign, the America/British justice pact, Dr. Richards' poetry experiment etc.; things that can be verified beyond a doubt. There are many other statements and examples, however, that do not fall into this category. Assertions like the drunken American soldiers' antics, how Americans truly feel about the British, the magnificence of Donne's sonnet, the publishers' perverse book racket, the disappointing ending of Butler's The Way of All Flesh, cannot be verified unequivocally by researching some document. They are subjective views, Orwell's observations and opinions, which in his eyes are completely valid ones, made believable to his readers in large part by the way he presents them. In this respect Orwell's writing does not convert untruths into truths; it simply makes the truth, as he sees it, more believable. He accomplishes this through his manner of telling about specifically familiar scenes and circumstances.
involving people, places, and particulars that are personal in nature and written in forceful and arresting yet plain and uncluttered down-to-earth language. Credibility is achieved by the reader's being able to relate closely to what he reads, either having been involved in or having witnessed similar happenings. Through this a sense of association, of belonging, and hence, of belief, takes shape. This is essentially how Orwell produces credibility in his writing. Where his specific examples are regarded, then, his vaunted reputation for integrity holds true. His statements that cannot be validated conclusively through research of applicable source data or other positive means, are undoubtedly opinions which he believes to be completely honest. I too believe he is sincere.

When Orwell pulls from his bag of rhetorical-manipulation strategies, however, to seduce readers into his way of thinking, to agree with ideas he is conveying, his integrity and reputation for complete honesty becomes suspect. With liberal use of personal pronouns like "we," "us," "you," and "I," he involves himself and/or the reader in the events taking place and creates an "us" against "them" situation in which he and his group are the underdogs. He joins the shop girls in the tobacco shop pitted against the two drunken soldiers; he and the average citizen are victims of the unjust justice agreement and the
editing of American films. He flunks Dr. Richards' experiment, along with the rest of the novice critics and sides with the small publisher who is penalized in the big publishers' disreputable "book racket," which, ironically, benefits Orwell.

This combination of manipulative tactics is designed to establish a voice-of-the-people tone which Orwell strives for. He wants to be identified as a member of the working class, the common, everyday type of reader for whom he primarily writes. As literary editor of a large and influential London newspaper, the Tribune, and, at the time of these "As I Please" columns, author of seven published novels and innumerable widely read political essays, this self identification as a member of the common working class has to be at best an illusion.

Another of Orwell's manipulative tactics compromising his reputation for honesty is his use of specific examples, in which validity is established, to support and suggest the truth of general conclusions which may or may not be either sound or valid. The impression of truth is conveyed, however, through the above-mentioned tactics of involving himself and/or the reader and the expert use of personal pronouns to make it appear as if the conclusions are drawn by the collective group, Orwell and the class he ostensibly

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speaks for; in reality, the conclusions are his own opinions, and his alone.

When writing about the poetry experiment Orwell turns to the manipulative tactic of excerpting from Dr. Richards' comments only the remarks made by the students which help support his thesis of farcical critics and criticism; and though he sways readers into feeling that he is numbered with these novice critics, he does give brief but very expert analyses of some of the experiment's assigned poetry. Rhetorical manipulation such as all the aforementioned is present and potent in the five excerpts; it substantially compromises Orwell's reputation for complete honesty and goes to show that like all effective polemicists he bends his language to further his own ends and achieve his own objectives. So much for the manipulative aspects of Orwell's language; they are both evident and effective in his style of writing. Next to consider, then, is if that style conforms to the guidelines he proposes in "Politics and the English Language."

To begin I will consider Orwell's six-step solution that, if followed, will solve most of the problems. He tells us never to use a metaphor that we are used to seeing in print. "Used to seeing in print" is a bit arbitrary, and at least three of his metaphors, "occupied territory," "extra-territorial rights," and "soft soap," have seen some
extended use. However, one does not see them in print too often. So what's the judgment? The way I see it, who cares? These three do a splendid job of imaging the views that Orwell is conveying: the multitude of American troops in England, the preferential treatment they receive in the judicial system, and the weak and patronizing government policy.

Next Orwell advocates short words over long ones, if they will work just as well, and he sticks to his rule quite diligently. But long or short, his words are selected to reflect a precise meaning; and they do, in all cases. Also, one should cut out a word, or words, if at all possible. But Orwell uses a few here and there that do not seem to be absolutely necessary, and not a great deal is lost when they are omitted from the particular sentences where they show up. The active voice reigns in his writing, the passive being subordinated to just those places where it is most effective. He follows the rule religiously.

The use of foreign phrases, scientific language and jargon is discouraged, if one can come up with everyday English equivalents; none of these offenders appear in the excerpts. Also missing is any type of barbarous language, which, to avoid using, Orwell says, any or all of the previous rules should be broken. So, no, he does not break any of the rules to an extent to cause concern.
Dying metaphors, Orwell's first-listed writing fault, are simply not an issue in these five pieces; none show up. And having read all the "As I Please" pieces—well over one-hundred—I might add that there are none to be found anywhere. There are among the five excerpts, however, examples of operators," or "verbal false limbs," that Orwell frowns upon. He uses verb phrases in a number of cases where single verbs could be used. But by using single verbs some of the qualities he strives for— colloquialism, rhythm, balance, clarity, euphonys—disappear. Once more, he prefers and uses the active voice over the passive and does not use the stigmatic affixes: "ise," "de," "not un-," that he claims lazy writers do. Some unnecessary words end various sentences. Whether or not these words can be interpreted as "commonplaces" tacked on to sentence endings to save them from anti-climax, the next fault that Orwell mentions, is a matter of judgment. I think they can be. Most of his sentences, however, end on good strong notes, just as they should.

Near the end of Orwell's list of writing faults is the overuse of pretentious diction, which tends to produce a sense of "showiness," ostentatiousness," etc. I have stressed that this practice is anathema to Orwell; there are no signs of it anywhere. Instead his writing seems to be governed by a Spartan discipline—very few wasted words,
those words expressing precisely the meaning he is conveying; to revert to a cliche': every thing in its place and a place for everything. That’s the way Orwell writes. It is in this area of pretentious diction, however, where he does bring up the subject of bad writers being "...haunted by the notion that Latin or Greek words are grander than Saxon ones," and that many of these foreign-roots words, however unnecessary, "...constantly gain ground from their Anglo-Saxon opposite numbers." This remark along with his illustration in "Politics and the English Language" of the Biblical verse versus its counterpart in Modern English, in which he identifies and denounces foreign-root words, led to by numerous searches for word origins. And it is in the use of foreign-root words where Orwell’s major shortcoming crops up: his excerpts are loaded with them. However, substitutions would compromise clarity, precision, balance etc., and more to the point, pure English equivalents are just too difficult to come up with. To anyone doubting this I suggest he or she try writing a few meaningful passages and afterwards researching the words for origins. Foreign-root words, for any practical purposes, are unavoidable. I have not come across any meaningless words, the final fault Orwell addresses; specific meaning, I have stressed and am convinced, is his top priority.
These are my final conclusions, then, regarding the five excerpts and how Orwell handles them. Where he writes of personal, specific examples his honesty is for the most part unimpeachable. That honesty is blemished, however, when he manipulates his rhetoric to suit his own purposes, manipulation that is clearly evident in all of the five pieces. And his style is just about as close as a style could be to what he advocates in "Politics and the English Language"; he strays a bit here and there and is honest enough to admit it. Regardless of the manipulative maneuvers that it displays I greatly admire Orwell’s writing, primarily because it is so direct and to the point, devoid of what I think of as "excessive baggage." Although certainly not enough, I have learned a great deal about effective writing from Orwell’s essay and will continue to learn from it for as long as I am inclined to write.
Scene in a tobacconist’s shop. Two American soldiers sprawling across the counter, one of them just sober enough to make unwanted love to the two young women who run the shop, the other at the stage known as fighting drunk. Enter Orwell in search of matches. The pugnacious one makes an effort and stands upright.

**Soldier**: "Wharrishay is, perfijious Albion. You heard that? Perfijious Albion. Never trust a Britisher. You can’t trust the b-------."  

**Orwell**: "Can’t trust them with what?"

**Soldier**: "Wharrishay is, down with Britain. Down with the British. You wanna do anything ‘bout that? Then you can ------- well do it." (Sticks his face out like a tomcat on a garden wall.)

**Tobacconist**: "He’ll knock your block off if you don’t shut up."

**Soldier**: "Wharrishay is, down with Britain."

(Subsides across the counter again. The tobacconist lifts his head delicately out of the scales)

This kind of thing is not exceptional. Even if you steer clear of Picadilly with its seething swarms of drunks and whores, it’s difficult to go anywhere in London without having the feeling that Britain is now Occupied Territory.
The general consensus of opinion is that the only American soldiers with decent manners are the Negroes. On the other hand the Americans have their own justifiable complaints—in particular, they complain of the children who follow them night and day cadging sweets.

Does this sort of thing matter? The answer is that it might matter at some moment when Anglo-American relations were in the balance, and the still-powerful forces in this country which want an understanding with Japan were able to show their faces again. At such moments popular prejudice can count for a great deal. Before the war there was no popular anti-American feeling in this country. It all dates from the arrival of the American troops, and it is made vastly worse by a tacit agreement never to discuss it in print.

Seemingly it is our fixed policy in this war not to criticize our allies, nor to answer their criticism of us. As a result things have happened which are capable of causing the worst kind of trouble sooner or later. An example is the agreement by which the American troops in this country are not liable to British courts for offences against British subjects—practically "extra-territorial rights." Not one English person in ten knows of the existence of this agreement, the newspapers barely reported it and refrained from commenting on it. Nor have people
been made to realize the extent of anti-British feeling in the United States. Drawing their picture of America from films carefully edited for the British market, they have no notion of the kind of thing that Americans are brought up to believe about us. Suddenly to discover, for instance, that the average American thinks the USA had more casualties than British in the last war comes as a shock, and the kind of a shock that can cause a violent quarrel. Even such a fundamental difficulty as the fact that an American soldier’s pay is five times that of a British soldier has never been properly ventilated. No sensible person wants to whip up Anglo-American jealousy. On the contrary, it is just because one does want a good relationship between the two countries that one wants plain speaking. Our official soft-soap policy does us no good in America, while in this country it allows dangerous resentments to fester just below the surface.
APPENDIX 2

"AS I PLEASE," TRIBUNE, 17 DECEMBER 1943.

So many letters have arrived attacking me for my remarks about the American soldiers that I must return to the subject.

Contrary to what most of my correspondents seem to think, I was not trying to make trouble between ourselves and our allies, nor am I consumed by hatred for the United States. I am much less anti-American than most English people are at this moment. What I say, and what I repeat, is that our policy of not criticizing our allies, and not answering their criticism of us (we don't answer the Russians either, nor even the Chinese) is a mistake, and is likely to defeat its own purpose in the long run. And so far as Anglo-American relations go, there are three difficulties which badly need dragging into the open and which simply don't get mentioned in the British press.

1. Anti-American feeling in Britain. Before the war, anti-American feeling was a middle-class, and perhaps upper-class thing, resulting from imperialist and business jealousy and disguising itself as dislike of the American accent etc. The working class, so far from being anti-American, were becoming rapidly Americanised in speech by means of the films and jazz songs. Now, in spite of what my correspondents may say, I can hear few good words for the
Americans anywhere. This obviously results from the arrival of the American troops. It has been made worse by the fact that, for various reasons, the Mediterranean campaign had to be represented as an American show while most of the casualties had to be suffered by the British. (See Philip Jordan's remarks in his Tunis Diary.) I am not saying that popular English prejudices are always justified; I am saying that they exist.

2. Anti-British feeling in America. We ought to face the fact that large numbers of Americans are brought up to dislike and despise us. There is a large section of the press whose main accent is anti-British, and countless other papers which attack Britain in a more sporadic way. In addition there is a systematic guying of what are supposed to be British habits and manners on the stage and in comic strips and cheap magazines. The typical Englishman is represented as a chinless ass with a title, a monocle and a habit of saying "haw, haw." This legend is believed by relatively responsible Americans, for example by the veteran novelist Theodore Dreiser, who remarks in a public speech that "the British are horse-riding aristocratic snobs." (Forty-six million horse-riding snobs!) It is a commonplace on the American stage that the Englishman is almost never allowed to play a favourable role, any more than the Negro is allowed to appear as anything more than a comic. Yet
right up to Pearl Harbor the American movie industry had an agreement with the Japanese government never to present a Japanese character in an unfavourable light!

I am not blaming the Americans for all this. The anti-British press has powerful business forces behind it, besides ancient quarrels in many of which Britain was in the wrong. As for popular anti-British feeling, we partly bring it on ourselves by exporting our worst specimens. But what I do want to emphasize is that these anti-British currents in the USA are very strong, and that the British press has consistently failed to draw attention to them. There has never been in England anything that one could call an anti-American press: and since the war there has been a steady refusal to answer criticism and a careful censorship of the radio to cut anything that the Americans might object to. As a result, many English people don’t realise how they are regarded, and get a shock when they find out.

3. Soldiers’ Pay. It is now nearly two years since the first American troops reached this country, and I rarely see American and British soldiers together. Quite obviously the major cause of this is the difference of pay. You can’t have really close and friendly relations with somebody whose income is five times your own. Financially, the whole American army is in the middle class. In the field this might not matter, but in the training period it makes it
almost impossible for British and American soldiers to fraternise. If you don’t want friendly relations between the British army and the American army, well and good. But if you do, you must either pay the British soldier ten shillings a day or make the American soldier bank the surplus of his pay in America. I don’t profess to know which of these alternatives is the right one.

Philip Jordan, a well-known war-time correspondent for the News Chronicle, had been covering the North African campaign.
"AS I PLEASE," TRIBUNE, 5 MAY 1944

For anyone who wants a good laugh I recommend a book which was published about a dozen years ago, but which I only recently succeeded in getting hold of. This is I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism.

Although mostly concerned with the general principles of literary criticism, it also describes an experiment that Mr. Richards made with, or should one perhaps say on, his English students at Cambridge. Various volunteers, not actually students but presumably interested in English literature, also took part. Thirteen poems were presented to them, and they were asked to criticize them. The authorship of the poems was not revealed, and none of them was well enough known to be recognized at sight by the average reader. You are getting, therefore, specimens of literary criticism not complicated by snobbishness of the ordinary kind.

One ought not to be too superior, and there is no used to be, because the book is so arranged that you can try the experiment on yourself. The poems, unsigned, are all together at the end, and the authors' names are on a fold-over page which you need not look at till afterwards. I will say at once that I only spotted the authorship of two, one of which I knew already, and though I could date most of
the others within a few decades, I made two bad bloomers, in one case attributing to Shelley a poem written in the nineteen-twenties. But still, some of the comments recorded by Dr. Richards are startling. They go to show that many people who would describe themselves as lovers of poetry have no more notion of distinguishing between a good poem and a bad one than a dog had of arithmetic.

For example, a piece of completely spurious bombast by Alfred Noyes gets quite a lot of praise. One critic compares it to Keats. A sentimental ballad from Rough Rhymes of a Padre, by "Woodbine Willie," also gets quite a good press. On the other hand, a magnificent sonnet by John Donne gets a distinctly chilling reception. Dr. Richards records only three favourable criticisms and about a dozen cold or hostile ones. One writer says contemptuously that the poem "would make a good hymn," while another remarks, "I can find no other reaction except disgust." Donne was at the time at the top of his reputation and no doubt most of the people taking part in the experiment would have fallen on their faces at his name. D.H. Lawrence's poem "The piano" gets many sneers, though it is praised by a minority. So also with a short poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins. "The worst poem I have ever read," declares one writer, while another's criticism is simply "Pish-posh."
However, before blaming these youthful students for their bad judgement, let it be remembered that when some time ago somebody published a not very convincing fake of an eighteenth-century diary, the aged critic, Sir Edmund Gosse, librarian of the House of Lords, fell for it immediately. And there was also the case of the Parisian art critics, of I forget which "school," who went into rhapsodies over a picture which was afterwards discovered to have been painted by a donkey with a paint-brush tied to its tail.
"AS I PLEASE," TRIBUNE, 9 JUNE, 1944.

Arthur Koestler's recent article in Tribune,\(^1\) set me wondering whether the book racket will start up again in its old vigour after the war, when paper is plentiful and there are other things to spend your money on.

Publishers have got to live, like anyone else, and you cannot blame them for advertising their wares, but the truly shameful feature of literary life before the war was the blurring of the distinction between advertisement and criticism. A number of the so-called reviewers, and especially the best-known ones, were simply blurb writers. The "screaming" advertisement started sometime in the nineteen-twenties, and as the competition to take up as much space and use as many superlatives as possible became fiercer, publishers' advertisements grew to be an important source of revenue to a number of papers. The literary pages of several well-known newspapers were practically owned by a handful of publishers, who had their quislings planted in all the important jobs. These wretches churned forth praise—"masterpiece," "brilliant," "unforgettable" and so forth—like so many mechanical pianos. A book coming from the right publishers could be absolutely certain not only of favourable reviews, but of being placed on the "recommended"
list which industrious book borrowers would cut out and take to the library the next day.

If you published books at several different houses you soon learned how strong the pressure of advertisement was. A book coming from a big publisher, who habitually spent large sums of advertisement, might get fifty or seventy-five reviews: a book from a small publisher might get only twenty. I knew of one case where a theological publisher, for some reason, took it in his head to publish a novel. He spent a great deal of money on advertising it. It got exactly four reviews in the whole of England, and the only full-length one was in a motoring paper, which seized the opportunity to point out that the part of the country described in the novel would be a good place for a motoring tour. This man was not in the racket, his advertisements were not likely to become a regular source of income to the literary papers, and so they just ignored him.

Even reputable literary papers could not afford to disregard their advertisers altogether. It was quite usual to send a book to a reviewer with some such formula as "Review this book if it seems any good. If not, send it back. We don’t think it’s worth while to print simply damning reviews." Naturally a person to whom the guinea or so that he gets for the review means next week’s rent is not going to send the book back. He can be counted on to find
something to praise, whatever his private opinion of the book may be. In America even the pretence that hack reviewers read the books they are paid to criticize has been partially abandoned. Publishers, or some publishers, send out with review copies a short synopsis telling the reviewer what to say. Once, in the case of a novel of my own, they mis-spelt the name of one of the characters. The same mis-spelling turned up in review after review. The so-called critics had not even glanced at the book—which, nevertheless, most of them boosted to the skies.

\[1\text{In} \text{Tribune, 28 April, 1944, Koestler had written an article in the form of a letter to a young Corporal who had written to ask for advice as to which book reviewers could be taken as reliable guides. Koestler pointed out the dismal standards of criticism prevailing in most of the press.}\]
I have just found my copy of Samuel Butler's *Note Books*. The full edition of the first series, published by Jonathan Cape in 1912. It is twenty years old and none the better for having gone through several rainy seasons in Burma, but at any rate it exists, which is all to the good, for this is another of those well-known books which have now ceased to be procurable. Cape's later produced an abridged version in the Traveller's Library, but it is an unsatisfactory, abridgement, and the second series which was published about 1934 does not contain much that is of value. It is in the first series that you will find the story of Butler's interview with a Turkish official at the Dardanelles, the description of his method of buying new-laid eggs and his endeavors to photograph a seasick bishop, and other similar trifles which in a way are worth more than his major works.

Butler's main ideas now seem to be either unimportant, or to suffer from wrong emphasis. Biologists apart, who now cares whether the Darwinian theory of evolution, or the Lamarckian version which Butler supported, is the correct one? The whole question of evolution seems less momentous than it did, because, unlike the Victorians, we do not feel that to be descended from animals is degrading to human
dignity. On the other hand, Butler often makes a mere joke out of something that now seems to us vitally important. For example:

The principle varieties and sub-varieties of the human race are not now to be looked for among the Negroes, the Circassions, the Malays or the American aborigines, but among the rich and the poor. The difference in physical organization between these two species of man is far greater than that between the so-called types of humanity. The rich man can go from (New Zealand) to England whenever he feels inclined. The legs of the other are by an invisible fatality prevented from carrying him beyond certain limits. Neither rich nor poor can yet see the philosophy of the thing, or admit that he who can tack a portion of one of the P & O boats on to his identity is a much more highly organised being than he who cannot.

There are innumerable similar passages in Butler's work. You could easily interpret them in a Marxist sense, but the point is that Butler himself does not do so. Finally his outlook is that of a Conservative, in spite of his successful assaults on Christian belief and the institution
of the family. Poverty is degrading: therefore, take care not to be poor—that is his reaction. Hence the improbable and unsatisfying ending of The Way of All Flesh, which contrasts so strongly with the realism of the earlier parts.

Yet Butler's books have worn well, far better than those of more earnest contemporaries like Meredith and Carlyle, partly because he never lost the power to use his eyes and to be pleased by small things, partly because in the narrow technical sense he wrote so well. When one compares Butler's prose with the contortions of Meredith or the affectations of Stevenson, one sees what a tremendous advantage is gained simply by not trying to be clever.

Butler's own ideas on the subject are worth quoting:

I never knew a writer yet who took the smallest pains with his style and was at the same time readable. Plato's having had seventy shies at one sentence is quite enough to explain to me why I dislike him. A man may, and ought to, take a great deal of pains to write clearly, tersely and euphoniously: he will write many a sentence three or four times over—to do much more than that is worse than not rewriting at all: he will be at great pains to see that he does not repeat himself, to arrange his matter in such a way that will best
enable the reader to cut out superfluous words and, even more, to eschew irrelevant matter: but in each case he will be thinking not of his own style but of his reader's convenience...I should like to put it on record that I never took the smallest pains with my style, have never thought about it, and do not know or want to know whether it is a style at all or whether it is not, as I believe and hope, just common, simple straightforwardness. I cannot conceive how any man can take thought for his style without loss to himself and his readers.

Butler adds characteristically, however, that he has made considerable efforts to improve his handwriting.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


