

یک نمونه اورول گونه از دیگری: جورج اورول و شرق

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چکیده

در این مقاله آثار اورول، به ویژه روزهای یرمه، دار زدن، شکار فیل، مراکش و چهار جلد از مقالات، روزنامه نگاری و نامه هایش نقد و بررسی شده اند تا تضاد و نظرات وی مشخص گردد. در این مقاله مطرح شده است که بین آنچه که اورول در مقالاتش ابراز می کند و عقایدش نسبت به ملت های غیر اروپایی دوگانگی وجود دارد. از طریق تحلیل رمانهای دیگر و داستان های کوتاه و نیز مقالات پراکنده وی همچنین عنوان شده است که چگونه، وی خود آگاه یا ناخود آگاه حتی نظریات خود را نفی می کند و با غیر انگلیسی ها به عنوان دیگری برخورد می کند. نامه ها، مقالات و روزنامه نگاری وی مشخص می کند که وی انگلیسی میهن پرستی است که شدیداً به برتری معیارها و سنت های طبقه متوسط معتقد است. وی امپریالیسم قدیمی انگلیسی را به امپریالیسم های جدید ترجیح می دهد، زیرا معتقد است که امپریالیسم قدیمی، احساساتی و انسانی بوده است.

An Orwellian Case of *Otherness*: Orwell and the East

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ABSTRACT

In this paper Orwell's works, especially "*Burmese Days*", "A Hanging", "Shooting An Elephant", and "Marrakech" as well as four volumes of his essays, journalism and letters are critically studied to analyze the paradox in his views. It is argued that there is a contradiction between what Orwell writes in his essays and what he seems to espouse with regards to non-European nations. His other novels and short stories as well as his essays are referred to, whenever necessary, to elaborate how, consciously or unconsciously, he repudiates his own views and treats foreigners as "others." It is argued that Orwell's letters, essays and journalism reveal him to be an English patriot with a strong belief in the superiority of the norms and standards of his own middle class. He preferred the old English Imperialism to newer kinds of imperialism and colonialism because he believed that the old Imperialism was sentimental and humane.

Key words: 1.Orwell 2.Otherness 3.Burmese Day 4. Short Stories 5. Gandhi.

1. Introduction

In contrast to the popularity of George Orwell and his books, especially in the third world countries, as a rebel for a just cause and a freedom fighter, there exists a duality in the way he treats his subject matter. Due to his popularity, numerous articles and books have been published and dissertations written on George Orwell's works and life since he died in 1950. It is generally admitted that Orwell has had a great deal of influence on the English Language and Literature. Words and expressions (such as Doublethink, Big Brother, Newspeak, and Orwellian) from his novels are commonly used by people in fields as diverse as communications, linguistics, history, philosophy, and criminology, amongst others. The popularity of Orwell, which started first with the publication of *Animal Farm* (1977) and then *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), made the reading of his works almost inevitable in English-speaking countries and even the third world countries.

Orwell, as a man and as a writer, has been at the root of many controversies. Different factions, groups, parties and countries have greeted him favourably and unfavourably. At various times he has been given different labels; Rees (1961) has entitled his book on Orwell *Fugitive from the Camp of Victory*. Reilly's (1986) book is entitled *The Age's Adversary*. Orwell has been attributed with traits as different as saintliness (Pritchett, 1975), virtuousness (Thomas, 1965), and sometimes with a trace

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of humour as in the case of Muggeridge (1975) who compares him to Don Quixote. Patai (1984) refers to Orwell myth to show her distaste for exaggerated praise of Orwell.

According to Rodden (1989) reputations, whether literary or otherwise, are made; the controversial reputation of Orwell in the light of critical views of the latter part of the 20th century and in view of Colonial and Post-Colonial studies has undergone changes. Since *Animal Farm* (1977) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984) contributed much to his fame which was channeled and directed by his admiring critics largely after his death (Rodden, 1989), it is necessary to evaluate some of his views in the light of the materials which were allowed to be published recently.

It must be noted that Orwell was first and foremost a journalist and he used to contribute regular weekly essays to *the Tribune*. He used to take notes of his personal experiences and later on implement them in his novels or essays. His last two novels brought him fame and money, fame as an anti-socialist, which he had to reject to the end of his life. Yet, it is through his essays and letters that one can gain a comprehensive understanding of what his outlook was and the dichotomy present in his works as an intellectual. This study aims to tackle this area of Orwell studies; so Orwell's works, especially *Burmese Days* (1984), "A Hanging", "Shooting An Elephant", and "Marrakech" (all three in *Collected Essays, Letters and Journalism of George Orwell* 4 volumes, 1975) as well as his essays, journalism and letters are critically studied to elaborate on the paradox in his views. It is suggested that there is a contradiction between what Orwell writes in his essays and what he seems to espouse with regards to non-European nations. His other novels and short stories as well as his essays are referred to, whenever necessary, to show that consciously or unconsciously he repudiates his own views and treats foreigners as "others."

2. Discussion

One piece of writing of Orwell, which is commonly referred to, is his famous apologia for writing. Orwell explains that writers generally have one or more of four motives for writing: sheer egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, and/or political purpose. The last one seems of utmost importance to him:

What I have most wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, "I am going to produce a work of art". I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. (Orwell, 1975, I: 28)

As an intellectual in a critical period of world history encompassing two world wars, Orwell hopes to uncover some "injustice" or "lies". Yet a thorough examination of his works shows that, as a staunch British patriot, he neglects to apply this process of uncovering to other nations, especially if they do not belong to his class or race. In his essays there is a feeling of otherness, which surfaces first towards the lower classes in his own country, and later to people of other nations.

Orwell belongs to the British upper-middle-class. He is very much aware and proud of his own class and stature as witnessed in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1965), which is an account of his tour of a mining city, miners' houses and their living conditions. He writes, "I was born into what you might describe as the lower-upper-middle class" (123). This kind of accepted class-consciousness remains with him to the end of his life.

Orwell, in accordance with the views of his middle class, believes that the working people smell or stink, "That was what we were taught--the lower classes smell" (Orwell, 1965: 129). As a mature and responsible writer he believes that differences exist between different social classes and he, as a responsible writer, tries to conceal this feeling. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1965) he describes how he spent several months among miners living in their houses. Apparently Orwell tries very hard to come to terms with them and he appears to be successful; yet he feels the miners do not accept this equality. The working classes, according to his description, feel the difference more than he does, "I was not one of them, and they knew it even better than I did. However much you like them, however interesting you find their conversation there is always that accursed itch of class-difference. . . . It is not a question of dislike or distaste, only of difference. . ." (157). In this passage, he employs journalistic argument, using the pronoun "you" to include the reader; thus, encouraging the reader to agree with him. He further accomplishes this by comparing foreigners with the British:

It would be far better to take these miserable class-stigmata for granted and emphasize them as little as possible. They are comparable to a race-difference, and experience shows that one can co-operate with foreigners, even with foreigners whom one dislikes, when it is really necessary. (Orwell, 1965: 228)

It must be added here that many critics have emphasized Orwell's use of language to his own benefit. Robert Pearce (1997), for example, believes:

The first part of *The Road to Wigan Pier* is superbly written. It is also extremely candid: Orwell shares his doubts and uncertainties with us and is quite prepared to admit ignorance. By these means he tends to disarm our critical faculties and win our confidence in an extremely "honest voice".

As a young British man out of the best public school, Orwell goes to Asia to serve in the police force and, according to all accounts, performs well (Hollis, 1956; Stansky and Abrahams, 1972). His first novel, *Burmese Days*, is reminisciential and does much to demonstrate Orwell's attitude towards the Burmese people and their country. One of the first descriptions in this novel is that of Burmese children; there are plenty of naked native children who crawl about (Orwell, 1984: 5, 57, 82, 120, 150) performing any bodily function openly. As there are no British children present in the novel, the sheer number of native children produces a negative reaction towards the Burmese in the reader. It is as if they breed like rabbits. According to Flory, the British protagonist of the novel, U Po Kyin, the Burmese antagonist has a battalion of illegitimate children (43).

Orwell's portrayal of Burma and India is typical of the empire builders. Allen J. Greenberger (1969) believes that in order to rule India, the Victorians, with respect to the people they came into contact with, enacted the concept of "manliness", the opposite of childishness and femininity. Orwell's writing displays this concept well in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, written many years after he returned from Burma, describing his attitude towards the Burmese, "I felt towards a Burman almost as I felt towards a woman" (144).

The general picture of Burma depicted by Orwell is a very negative one; even the flowers and the weather seem to be abnormal and threatening (18). There is not one portrait of a native unmarred by some blemish in his/her character. U Po Kyin, the Burmese magistrate, is a thief, a rapist, a leader of thugs; he takes bribes from both sides and out-manuevers both the Burmese and the English in the war he has instigated. He is also physically so massive that two servants help him to his feet. Verasawami, the

Indian doctor, who is supposedly a good character, does not have any real dignity; he is a simple caricature of an Indian begging to be accepted in the British club. His love of anything British is presented in such a way that makes a simpleton out of him. Such character portrayal supports the views of many critics who have pointed out a Kiplingesque strain in Orwell's character (Cook 1961; Muggerridge 1975; Shamsul Islam 1982; Patai 1984).

Native women in *Burmese Days* are fully described and are usually compared with animals while the beauty of English women attracts Orwell's attention to the extent that he focuses only on their faces to suggest their beauty. He also follows the conservative middle class propriety by not describing the body of the British women, while he does not care for this code of conduct for the Burmese women. In this vein, MaHla May whom Flory has bought from her parents for 300 rupees, is most of the times compared to a kitten and a mare (passim). The third person narrator of *Burmese Days* elaborates on the hatefulness of the Burmese women by bringing the views of Elizabeth, a white woman, "The Burmese women repelled Elizabeth more than the men; she felt her kinship with them, and the hatefulness of being kin to creatures with Black faces" (113).

Kipling (quoted in Cook 1984) regards the Mem Sahibs, British women on the Indian subcontinent, as nuisances. Even so, his attitude towards the natives still carries a kind of kinship while Orwell does not have such feelings. Moreover, as Christopher Hollis (1956) who met Orwell in Rangoon in 1925 recalls Orwell was a particularly efficient and conservative police officer:

We had a long talk and argument. In the side of him which he revealed to me at that time there was no trace of liberal opinions. He was at pains to be the imperial police man, explaining that the theories of no punishment and no beating were all very well at public school, but that they did not work with the Burmese--in fact

Libbaty's a kind o'thing

Thet don't agree with niggers (27).

Shamsul Islam (1982) substantiates Hollis's portrait of the man and adds that Orwell defended the power of the Raj in India (344).

Beside *Burmese Days*, which is a supposedly fictitious work, Orwell's essay-stories reveal much about his attitude towards the East. For example, in "Shooting an Elephant" which is very much characteristic of this trend, Orwell is forced to kill the elephant to save face in front of the natives

And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. . . . A sahib has got to act like a sahib, he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. (Orwell, 1975, I: 269)

He places the blame, if not on the natives, on the system, which forces him to kill the animal to uphold his reputation.

In another story, "A Hanging", the narrator, supposedly a white man, is quite aggravated that the condemned prisoner is calling upon his God as if he should have accepted his hanging with a thankful heart. After the Hindu prisoner is hanged, Europeans and natives drink together. Thus, only in moments of catastrophe and death are the black and the white united, regardless of their differences in race and colour. This is also true of a scene in *Burmese Days*, wherein the British memsahib, Mrs. Lackersteen, is very kind to a Burmese man following an earthquake; this is the only time she is decent to a native.

In his treatment of Mahatma Gandhi, who was the leader of the Indian people in their struggle for independence against Britain, Orwell shows the most revealing attitude towards a foreigner, casting him as the "other". According to West (1985) Orwell was invited to write weekly series for the BBC which he started in 1941 and continued until 1943. According to West the BBC usually gave guidelines to the writers of propaganda programs and one such guideline was about the Indian situation and specifically Gandhi insisting that

The limelight should throughout be focused (still bearing in mind the need for discretion) on the figure of Mr Gandhi; the inconsistencies of whose policy should be exposed, and who should be gradually built up as a backward-looking pacifist and Petainist who has become a dangerous obstacle to the defence of India, and whose policies in fact if not in design play straight into Japanese hands. (West, 1985: 19)

West believes that Orwell did not follow the guidelines in the BBC but as it is shown in the following quotations taken from his books Orwell initiates a systematic program of defamation and abuse of Gandhi in public and in private. In a letter to the Reverend Jones in 1941 Orwell writes:

Gandhi has been regarded for twenty years by the government of India as one of its right-hand men. I know what I am talking about--I used to be an officer in the Indian police. It was always admitted in the most cynical way that Gandhi made it easier for the British to rule India because his influence was always against taking any action that would make any difference. (Orwell, 1975, II: 136)

He adds, "Gandhi is of course personally quite honest and unaware of the way in which he is made use of, and his personal integrity makes him all the more useful." According to Orwell, Gandhi's integrity has a negative effect by being useful to the British. Without this trait, Gandhi would be the common native. He continues his undermining of Gandhi's greatness by presenting the same view again in a letter published in *Partisan Review* in 1942:

As an ex-Indian civil servant, it always makes me shout with laughter to hear, for instance, Gandhi named as an example of the success of non-violence. As long as twenty years ago it was cynically admitted in Anglo-Indian circles that Gandhi was very useful to the British Government. So he will be to the Japanese if they get there (Orwell, 1975, II: 262).

In his private war-time diary in 1942, published posthumously, he is more honest about Gandhi and his reasons for gossipmongering become obvious. Orwell reveals his fear of Gandhi by portraying him as "the other" rather than the leader of a nation seeking independence. His claim about writing "because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention," becomes lame and senseless in this context. However, the second part of his claim seems more to the point; that is, his "initial concern is to get a hearing." He writes,

Gandhi is deliberately making trouble, sending telegrams of condolence to Bose's [Indian Nationalist leader and left-wing member of congress who was violently anti-British and whose death is still a mystery and unconfirmed.] family on the report of his death, then telegrams of congratulations when it turned out that the report was untrue. . . . Impossible to be quite sure what his game is. Those who are anti-Gandhi allege that he has the worst kind of (Indian) Capitalist

interests behind him, and it is a fact that he usually seems to be staying at the mansion of some kind of millionaire or other. . . . I do not know whether Gandhi or Buchman is the nearest equivalent to Rasputin in our time (Orwell, 1975, II: 470-471).

In a letter to H. J. Willmet in 1944, Orwell puts Gandhi in a category of dictators: "All the national movements everywhere . . . seem to take non-democratic forms, to group themselves round some superhuman fuehrer (Hitler, Stalin, Salazar, Franco, Gandhi, De Valera are all varying examples). . ." (Orwell, 1975, III: 177).

Furthering his agenda of defamation of Gandhi, in his essay, "Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool", published in 1947, Orwell writes, "A sort of doubt has always hung round the character of Tolstoy, as round the character of Gandhi" (Orwell, 1975, IV: 346). Again in a letter to his friend Julian Symons dated April 20th, 1948, he writes, "I thought the last number of *Politics* quite good, but I must say that in spite of all their elegies I retain dark suspicions about Gandhi, based only on gossip, but such a lot of gossip that I think there must be something in it" (Orwell, 1975, IV:473).

This gossip is first mentioned, and perhaps fabricated, in the pages of his diary and has become the cause of many controversies since the time when some pages were published after Orwell's death. As Crick (1980), the biographer of Orwell, believes, Orwell used his diary for expanding and developing on contemporary subjects. Initially only a few people had access to this notebook and as it caused uproar, it was locked away. Parts of this private notebook were recently published and contain names of different people with a negative adjective attached to each person, labels such as communist and leftist without any proof in hand. (Naftali,1998)

However, after Gandhi's death Orwell seems to have modified some of his views on him in an essay called "Reflections on Gandhi." Gandhi, sadly disposed of and in his grave, could no longer be bought; Orwell, with no hint of remorse or apology, describes how he now admires Gandhi's "natural physical courage". He declares that Gandhi's

character was an extraordinarily mixed one, but there was almost nothing in it that you can put your finger on and call bad, and I believe that even Gandhi's worst enemies would admit that he was an interesting and unusual man who enriched the world simply by being alive. (Orwell, 1975, IV: 525-6)

Orwell had no choice but to praise Gandhi; he admits in the same article, the leader's main political objective, "the peaceful ending of British rule, had after all been attained." (530) It must be added that all through this diary and right before the independence of India, Orwell's tone of writing regarding Nehru, Gandhi and many Indian intellectuals is very derogatory and snobbish; this attitude starts from the day an envoy is sent to India and Orwell's comments start from 27 March, 1942: "Anand [Indian writer] says the morale among the exiled Indians here is very low. . . . I said to him that the basic fact about nearly all Indian intellectuals is that they don't expect independence, can't imagine it and at heart don't want it." (Orwell, 1975, II: 471); "he continues Nehru is making provocative speeches to the effect that all the British are the same, of whatever party etc. etc., also trying to make trouble between Britain and the U.S.A" (473-4). In passing on these comments, like a true colonialist, he gives himself the right to think for somebody else and expects people to agree with what he has produced as other's opinions.

Based on his trip to Morocco in 1938 to recover his health, Orwell published an autobiographical article entitled "Marrakech." and reflected upon the natives, When you walk through a town like this--two hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom at least

twenty thousand own literally nothing except the rags they stand up in--when you see how the people live, and still more how easily they die, it is always difficult to believe that you are walking among human beings. . . . The people have brown faces--*besides, there are so many of them!*[italics are mine] Are they really the same flesh as yourself? Do they even have names? Or are they a kind of undifferentiated brown stuff, about as individual as bees or coral insects? (Orwell, 1975, I: 427)

The sentence in italics shows his fear of other people and their number very clearly. He also wrote many letters to his friends commenting on the situation of the country. In a letter to his friend Jack Common, he reveals his usual assumptions about Eastern people: "I like the Arabs, they're very friendly. . . . I doubt whether there's any real political movement among the Arabs. . ." (Orwell, 1975, I: 407).

He appears to favor them when they are benign; when they pose no threat to his country. He adds: "If a big Arab movement ever arises I think it's bound to be pro-Fascist." This kind of unsubstantiated preconception seems to be characteristic of Orwell's views concerning anyone who does not belong to his side.

"Marrakech" opens with a corpse being taken to the cemetery for the burial ceremony. Orwell is shocked to find that natives are living at all: "All people who work with their hands are partly invisible, and the more important the work they do, the less visible they are. Still a white skin is always fairly conspicuous" (Orwell, 1975, I: 429). Orwell goes on to say that he does not see the old women who carry firewood for several weeks, while five minutes after arriving on Moroccan soil he notices "the overloading of the donkeys and is infuriated by it. There is no question that the donkeys are damnably treated" (Orwell, 1975, I: 431). He insists that this is a statement of fact, not opinion. Later in the essay, when he sees a group of four or five thousand black soldiers marching, he is consumed by the kind of fear he believes every white man unconsciously has of the power of the black. First considering the number of the soldiers Orwell regards them as a potential threat to the whites; later on he reassures himself of their servility. According to this subjective view there is no need to talk to one of them and see if they agree with him. Orwell talks for, and thinks for, them. These soldiers whom Orwell compares to "a flock of cattle" are considered very servile because they have been taught "that the white race are their masters" (Orwell, 1975, I: 426-432).

Anglo-Indian writers have written many books, both fiction and non-fiction about the Indian subcontinent and about Africa. Graham Greene, E.M. Forster, Anthony Powell, and many other writers use their experiences of a foreign culture and country as inspiration for their fictional and non-fictional works and have their own interpretations of the East and Easterners. Yet, it should be noted that E.M. Forster's fictional Indian characters are presented more naturally and humanely than Orwell's real people. Orwell, being more of a journalist than a novelist, uses his experiences to influence his readers. Writing is a means to further his ends, which are avowedly political. A self-confessed political writer invariably has political motives. Orwell's fear of the black soldiers reveals that his motives are colonialist and xenophobic.

3. Conclusion

The paradox of Orwell, that is, Orwell the rebel versus Orwell the Tory, has been exploited by the Right and the Left. It can be argued that Orwell's letters, essays and journalism reveal him to be an English patriot with a strong belief in the superiority of the norms and standards of his own middle class. He preferred the old English Imperialism to newer kinds of imperialism and colonialism because he believed that the

old Imperialism was sentimental and humane. His only concession was to make life easier for "the coolies" so that they could be exploited to provide a high standard of living for the Europeans. This can be considered as the honesty of Orwell, the patriot, while other Anglo-Indian writers have demurred in presenting their real views of foreigners. Orwell's writing encompasses the duality and the paradox of a person at the same time a patriot and an intellectual.

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