

Traumatic Experiences of Orwell in His Narratives, Race and Ethnicity: A Correlation from His Selected Works

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the correlation between George Orwell's traumatic experiences and his representations of race and ethnicity in his narratives from his selected works. Drawing on a range of critical perspectives, the article argues that Orwell's traumatic experiences, such as his experiences of imperialism, poverty, and war, shaped his views on race and ethnicity in complex and sometimes contradictory ways.

On the one hand, Orwell was a staunch anti-imperialist and a supporter of racial equality. He wrote extensively about the evils of colonialism and the importance of respecting the rights of all people, regardless of their race or ethnicity. For example, in his essay "Shooting an Elephant," Orwell describes an incident in which he was forced to shoot a wounded elephant in Burma. He reflects on the experience with guilt and remorse, acknowledging the injustice of British rule in India.

On the other hand, Orwell's representations of race and ethnicity in his narratives are sometimes problematic. For example, in his novel *Animal Farm*, he also uses negative stereotypes to describe white and black people and power and powerless of the positions.

Keywords: George Orwell, trauma, race, ethnicity, colonialism, imperialism,

Introduction

The writings of George Orwell proposed the paramount purposes of politics nevertheless his writing brought the ethnicity and the beauty of the realistic factors of human life incidents. The traumatic experiences and the feeling for the differences of land and people were underlined in his writings. The present paper focuses on the painful movements for George Orwell in different domain of his life stages as well as comprehensible from his narratives that he has pinned down the different people and their history in the selected works, namely, "Shooting an Elephant", "A Hanging", *Burmese Days*, A Non Fiction work, *The Road to Wigan* and *Animal Farm*, etc.

The traumatic experiences of Orwell in all the genre of his writings resembles from his school days to an adult. The "Traumatic experience" that here in this paper mean the pain of the writer which could be experienced through vivid narrative writing style and also the writer's helplessness of different situations under different kinds of problems, which directly focus on imperialism, colonization, totalitarianism, racism.

Many of his critics speak about his direct and concise style of writing though here in this paper, it attempts to highlight his genuine recordings of his regrets, guilt, pain, helplessness, authority. On his age, he was completely condemning his writings for his honest experiences which was tried to kindle the emotions of imperial Britain often. Hence, his writings were miserably taken aback by his own land.

Narrative Style of Orwell's Traumatic Experiences

Many literary critics have analyzed George Orwell's (1903-1950) traumatic experiences, particularly on Orwell's experiences at school or in Colonial Burma while serving as a colonial officer. "A Hanging" (1931), "Shooting an Elephant" (1936), and his non-fictional essay "The Road to Wigan Pier" (1937), as well as one novel, *Burmese Days* (1934), and attempts to find unvoiced messages of

his own guilt, or trauma, in his works. His fiction successfully alleviates the damage caused by his abusive activities in Burma and serves as a catharsis for the "immense weight of guilt" he felt.

Regarding George Orwell's traumatic experiences (Eric Blair before he begins his career as a writer), critic Erika Gottlieb contends that Winston Smith's death in Orwell's novel 1984 represents "Orwell's terminal despair," which can be traced back to the "hidden wound" of his school years (Gottlieb, 192). Jeffrey Meyers also claims that, while Orwell's experience at St Cyprian's was painful, the horrors he witnessed and endured "represent an archetypal childhood trauma" (Meyers 24). Indeed, Orwell had led a relatively difficult life during his school years, which he recounts in his essays. Orwell had some awful experiences back then, such as wetting the bed several times during the night and being tormented by the older students. As naive as he was, Orwell felt inadequate as a member of the lower-middle class, because most of the youngsters at school were wealthier than him.

"Probably the greatest cruelty one can inflict on a child is to send it to school among children richer than itself," Orwell writes (Orwell, 1987: 44). Although it is correct to say that Orwell's school experience had a significant impact on young Blair, it would be controversial to say that his school experience was more traumatic than becoming an officer in Burma. Atkins (1954), for example, compares this suffering to Orwell's Burmese experience, claiming that "although his Burmese experiences were to be important to him, especially in his evolving of an attitude towards imperialism".

According to John Hammond, Orwell's experience as a police officer in Burma was traumatic, and that his experience of living and working in Burma for five years was too raw, too novel, and altogether too traumatic to be assimilated at once, and that he could only do justice to his theme by biding his time until some of the scars had healed and he had had an opportunity for mature reflection" (Hammond, 92). Overall, regardless of which, Orwell's traumatic experiences were supported by some critics. It can be claimed that they argue Orwell's traumatic experience without specifically defining what the words trauma and traumatic mean, while claiming the significance of being traumatized at school and during Orwell's duty.

The significant difference between Orwell's traumatic experiences in school and in Burma was discussed. Young Blair was not physically bullied, much less beaten by others in Burma; instead, it was Orwell who beat and bullied the Burmese, an experience that stayed with him until his death. He was not just a victim of the British Empire, but also a perpetrator, witnessing violence and the poor Burmese being slapped or bullied by officers, and in some cases executed, which influenced his worldview, particularly the colonial system for which he worked. This essay, therefore, analyzes Orwell's traumatic experiences as a perpetrator in Burma by reading Orwell's colonial texts, namely, "A Hanging" (1931), and "Shooting an Elephant" (1936), which demonstrate Orwell's important experiences as a police officer in Burma, as well as his non-fictional essay *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937).

According to Rodriguez, traumatic narratives are written not to be forgotten but to be remembered, so that the terrible event can be internalized and finally rationalized in the minds of the writer, who can then "recuperate the self-confidence." The important issue in terms of Orwell's trauma is not only that his personal traumatic experience, if acknowledged, should be "assimilated" and "rationalized," but also that his anguish stems from his role as offender rather than victim. When Orwell, as a perpetrator, wounded the Burmese and assisted in the killings described in "A Hanging," he may have been horrified by those memories.

In his essay, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell clearly recognized the hanged Indian as a live human being with a certain right to life, but he died "as the victim of a foreign conqueror," and "the feeling that punishment is evil arises inescapably in those who have to administer it". In "Shooting an Elephant," he also reflects his traumatic experience in Burma. He admits that everything was confusing and upsetting. Because I had already decided that imperialism was a bad thing, and the sooner I quit my job and got out of it, the better. ...in a position like that, you get a firsthand look at Empire's dirty work. The wretched captives huddled in the smelly cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed features of the long-term criminals, the scarred buttocks of the guys whipped with bamboos—all of this tormented me with an unbearable sense of guilt.

Orwell reflects on this incident on multiple occasions and writes about it in his essays. He wrote, "(t)he landscapes of Burma, which, when I was among them, so appalled me as to assume the qualities of nightmare, afterwards stayed so hauntingly in my mind that I was obliged to write a novel about them to get rid of them. These lines of Orwell clearly were expressing his inability to forget Burma even after returning to England. Given what Orwell had done in Burma, it is reasonable to argue that he suffered from a particular kind of trauma—as long as the texts' descriptions, particularly those of his documentary articles, are credible enough. Orwell typically had a strong sense of justice since he was unable to learn to be indifferent to the Burmese. Orwell often felt deeply guilty about his actions and his contributions to the system that he supported and was a part of, as he was unable to develop an apathetic attitude toward the Burmese people. As a traumatized person, Orwell's only option upon returning to England was to use his literary talents to write about the brutality of the British Empire, which he detested, and to expose the subjugation and exploitation of the Burmese people in order to maximize profits. Even though Orwell knew he would never be able to go back to Burma, he could still make a difference in the lives of the working class people in England.

According to Bowker, "the change that Burma wrought on Eric Blair was dramatic, and marked him forever." He had evolved from being a political idealist to a political realism, someone who was willing to accept the impoverished rather than run away from them. He had come to terms with his own dark side, which he felt even more ashamed of and kept hidden (Bowker, 95). Bowker's assertion was that Orwell's experiences in Burma ultimately enabled him to write his best-known book, 1984 as well as other dystopian and pessimistic works which support the underprivileged and criticize totalitarianism and imperialism. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to note that his unmistakably traumatic experiences are reflected in his other books and essays.

The Reflection of Racism

Eric Arthur Blair was born in the first half of the 1800s, during the colonial era. The atmosphere in which he was growing up was one of violence and war. He had encountered social snobbery, snobbishness, and British imperialism. He supported socialism and opposed dictatorship, the hegemony of the upper white class, and the subjugation of minority groups. According to Orwell, he

said in one of his essays, 'Why I Write', "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it."

The 1945 novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell had been chosen to discuss the issue of racial inequity between whites and blacks. Additionally, members of the affluent white class had been chosen as the specific characters in the novella. They were not behaving appropriately toward the minority group. Their nature was self-centered. When privileged white people established perks and advantages for themselves, that promoted the commandments. They viewed minority groups as inferior and oppressed them. All others had been subject to their rule. They contend that only affluent white people had authority and influence. According to white people, Black people who were less fortunate and less cultured were by nature given preferences. They were in charge of the Black people and had given them direction

Among the most famous in Orwell's book is *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 2014). It stands for the dictatorship system and class divide. Class conflict, revolutionary ideas, and the conclusion of World War II are significant subjects that Orwell addresses in this work. The "Interest Convergence" between elite whites and minority groups, the abuse of power by elite whites towards subordinate Blacks, upper class perceptions of the lower class, the idea of greedy capitalists, and the suppression of the subordinate class are just a few of the issues that are covered throughout the text. It describes a nation in which "Interest Convergence" is a crucial factor in exposing the reasons why elite white people support the interests of the minority group (blacks) and in taking advantage of the distinctiveness of minority groups.

Orwell's representation of Whiteness as property and Absolute White supremacy was shown sincerely. For every animal in *Animal Farm*, Snowbell established particular guidelines. First of all, he renamed the farm "Animal farm" instead of "Manor farm." Second, he has pushed the "Animalism" concept. Lastly, he has enforced seven commandments on animals, which were printed on a tarred wall in large white letters. "The Seven Directives"

Since he possesses social, political, and economic power and has established a class divide with all other animals, Snowball referred to himself as an elite member of the white class in this instance. Here, the fundamental factor governing each class's interest is power. Snowball referred to people as his enemies when he was selfish. In this case, it was noted that Snowball acts in the minority group's best interests due to personal gain and self-interest. The pigs led and watched over the others but not actively working for their goals. It was only fitting that they take the lead given their better understanding (Orwell, 1945).

Orwell also noted the convergence of interests in the minority group's subjugation, as outlined in Major's speech, in which he depicted humans as a despotic proletariat class that imposed its will on the bourgeoisie class (animals). Instead of working, humans told the animals to put forth a lot of effort to meet their requirements. According to Orwell (1945), on page 2, "Man is the only creature that consumes without producing."

Major emphasized on the role played by top white class humans in the construction of oppression against minority groups, including animals, when he used Mr. Jones' tyranny for animals as an example in his address. "Man serves the interests of no creature except himself," the narrator says. "And may there be absolute solidarity and camaraderie in the struggle among us animals. Every man is an enemy". (Orwell, 1945) Major's speech is used to illustrate the human greed of the proletarian class in the sentences above.

Orwell concentrated on how humans and animals belong to different social classes. The working class (animals) was subjugated by the proletarian class (humans), who believed they were superior to all other creatures. The two questions appear when all animals are working around the clock to improve their food production in order to develop their farm. (1) Where is the milk? Who gets all the apples? Every mystery was answered and cleaned up. According to Orwell (1945), p. 12, apples and milk were to be "collected and brought to the harness -room for the use of the pigs." Here, Snowball disobeyed the final of the Seven Commandments, which states that "All animals are equal." Snowball and the other pigs believed they were better than all other animals. When other animals began to complain, Napoleon and Snowball dispatched Squealer to provide the justification required to remove

the pigs from their position. We pigs use our brains. This farm's whole administration and structure rely on us. We keep a nightly eye on your well-being. We eat those fruits and drink that milk because of YOU.

All other animals have to put up with Snowball and the other pigs' obsession. Orwell has described in detail how top white people took use of the minority group. Because their head is Snowball, another pig, pigs are considered to be members of the privileged white class. Snowball was egotistical and concentrated on his work to amass increasing authority. He has developed a strategy for building a windmill. In a few weeks, his plan came to pass. The windmill proposal was approved by all the animals, but Napoleon made it clear that he opposed it. He has made the case that food production is more important than windmill design. Napoleon established a method of displacing Snowball Place here.

Napoleon devised a plan to seize control of Snowball and assume leadership over all animals. Raised puppies, he trained them to be his personal security and employed them as a weapon against Snowball. They remained near Napoleon. They were observed to be greeting him with tail wags in the same manner that the other dogs had been greeting Mr. Jones (Orwell, 1945, p. 18). They saw themselves as superior, and as a result, they had the authority and motivation to break or alter the law in order to benefit them. In addition to ordering the construction of a windmill, Napoleon declared that all animals would work on Sundays. Once more, he has renamed his farm from "Animal farm" to "Manor farm."

Napoleon and the other pigs disregarded each of the seven commandments one by one, without adhering to the law. The first directive stated that Napoleon was the "two legs enemy," trading with nearby farms and hiring Mr. Whymper. In addition to being against Snowball and other animals, Napoleon was also breaking the second rule, which states that an animal with four legs is a friend. He was also kicking Snowball out of Animal Farm. Napoleon put an end to three pigs that had objected to him and murdered chickens that had refused to follow his orders. Additionally, he violates the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth commandments. Pigs were living in farmhouses, sleeping on beds, and consuming alcoholic beverages.

The behaviour and manners of elite white animals toward minority groups (Blacks) have been used to investigate the idea that all animals are not created equal, regardless of their colour, creed, caste, or social status. Certain animals are more powerful than others and have dominion over other creatures. Pigs and Napoleon dogs were merely giving commands to other animals and taking advantage of the amenities that other animals were providing.

The book serves as an obvious illustration of how interests can intersect between various characters from various social backgrounds. The effects of World Wars I and II inspired many writers of the contemporary era. One of the greatest writers of all time, George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* (1945), which was divided into ten chapters. Orwell made observations about Fascist and Communist regimes in the 20th century. Orwell tried to illustrate in *Animal Farm* (1945) how the interests of the oppressed Black people can only be satisfied when they coincide with those of the privileged White people. How working people have been used as a source by privileged white people in an attempt to improve their dire circumstances. They exhort the oppressed Black people to revolt for their own gain.

Conclusion

The article argues that Orwell's traumatic experiences can help to explain the contradictions of different people. Orwell's exposure to violence and oppression in Burma and Spain made him acutely aware of the injustices of the world. However, his own experiences of poverty and marginalization also made him susceptible to internalizing negative stereotypes about race and ethnicity. The article concludes by arguing that Orwell's work is a valuable resource for understanding the complex relationship between trauma and racism. Orwell's own struggles to overcome his own prejudices and internalized racism can offer insights into the challenges that we face today.

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