

## Postmodernist Prose and George Orwell

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The essential notion of English style since the 1920s has been that clarity and simplicity are the essence of good writing. Orwell in England, Strunk & White in America,<sup>1</sup> have been the main proponents. We might call this, for the sake of argument, the modern style.

There is a new challenge to this in contemporary academics. Judith Butler is the spokesperson. She has been charged with bad writing, along with such scholars as Gayatri Spivak.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, she won the annual “Bad Writing Award” from the journal *Philosophy and Literature*. Butler responded, in a letter to the *London Review of Books* and in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, that clarity and simplicity are impossible if one is discussing a topic deeply. She claims for her side such writers as Adorno and Marcuse. This might be called, for the sake of argument, the postmodern claim.

Are Butler and the postmodernists right? Have editors been holding back academic and social progress? Have we been dumbing the culture down?

First, let’s note Orwell’s argument for simplicity and clarity, presented in his essay “Politics and the English Language.”<sup>3</sup>

- a) Pretentious diction and technical sounding words “give an air of scientific impartiality to biased judgements.” Hence, it is a rhetorical trick; a way for bad ideas to hide. As such, it retards the discourse, on whatever subject.
- b) “Orthodoxy, of whatever colour, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style. . . . This reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favourable to political conformity. . . . Every such phrase anaesthetizes a portion of one’s brain.” I.e., clear thinking is only made possible by clear writing and the avoidance of stock phrases.
- c) “The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. . . . Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.” That is, it promotes plays for power over the search for truth and the effort to express truth.

Now, let’s summarize Butler’s implied counter-argument for the style favored by postmodernists such as herself, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha,<sup>4</sup> as given in the *London Review of Books* and *New York Times*:

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- a) Difficult ideas, she implies, must necessarily be expressed in difficult language. “Surely. . . theorists should [not] confine themselves to writing introductory primers.”<sup>5</sup> “Language plays an important role in shaping and attuning our common or ‘natural’ understanding of social and political realities.”<sup>6</sup> “[T]he difficulty of. . . [Spivak’s] work is fresh air when read against the truisms which, now fully commodified as ‘radical theory,’ pass as critical thinking.”<sup>7</sup>

This first claim seems directly to contradict Orwell’s second: he argues, or asserts, that difficult ideas require the plainest language possible, while simple or foolish ideas are more likely to be expressed in complex terms.

- b) Language conditions thought. Therefore, fitting discourse into any one prescribed style proscribes what can be thought or said. “Only what they [the critics of postmodern style] do not need first to understand, they consider understandable; only the word coined by commerce,” she argues, suggesting that the current style has something to do with capitalism and the rule of the bourgeoisie, “and really alienated, touches them as familiar.”<sup>8</sup> Butler quotes Marcuse’s Marxist analysis approvingly on this point: “If what [the intellectual] says could be said in terms of ordinary language he would probably have done so in the first place. [Understanding] presupposes the collapse and invalidation of precisely that universe of discourse and behaviour into which you want to translate it.”<sup>9</sup> And she speaks disparagingly of “truisms which, now fully commodified as ‘radical theory,’ pass as critical thinking”<sup>10</sup>—the use of the term “commodified” suggests again a claim that modern style is capitalist style.

Her second point, therefore, seems to be in opposition to Orwell’s third point: he saw the plain style as the one way to ensure that ideology did not dictate style. This political manipulation of language was, of course, something he feared above all else; it is the “Newspeak” of his novel *1984*. Yet, to Butler, apparently, if you want to express an opinion that does not fit the opinions of those who formed the language, you must be obscure. You cannot follow the rules of style.

- c) Obscurity is the proper medium to represent the obscure. “Luckily for us, Spivak’s new book gives us the political landscape of culture in all its obscurity and proximity.”<sup>11</sup>

This seems to be a separate, third point: if you are describing something obscure, your language should be obscure (“nuanced,” in the current postmodern jargon) to reflect this accurately.

- d) Finally, Butler appeals to authority. She has not invented this trend in language, she notes; the Frankfurt School did. She might also have mentioned Kant; other postmodernists have. She quotes not only Marcuse, but Adorno: “Man is the ideology of dehumanization.”<sup>12</sup> Adorno, she argues, here objects to the use of the word “man” as itself ideological.

For the most part, then, Butler and Orwell seem to be making opposite assumptions about the nature of language. Is there any objective stance from which we can judge whether the one or the other has got it right?

Let’s look more closely at Butler’s points, one by one.

### **Difficult ideas require difficult language**

We find this in the hard sciences. A newly-discovered thing requires a coined word, and these can be impenetrable to a newcomer: “charm” (on the subatomic level), “quark,” “quantum leap,” or, for that matter, “ROM,” or “DOS.”

Scientific or academic precision may require a special term even for familiar things. If you ask a Korean, for example, whether ducks can fly, he will tell you they cannot; but the average Canadian is equally certain that they can. The problem is that the Korean language classifies “duck” and “wild duck” as quite different things, while English sees them as essentially the same. Latin names for animal species avoid such problems. Similar semantic issues are common in philosophy. Specialized terminology may, accordingly, be needed to ensure we are talking about the same thing.

However, to ensure that we are talking about the same thing, note that this need for specialized terms is not quite the same issue as that of clarity of style generally. The use of unfamiliar words is only one element; scientists can write well or badly by Orwell’s rules, apart from using jargon terms. Einstein, for example, wrote with great clarity. It is worth noting that Butler’s academic writing, and that of other postmodernists like Spivak and Bhabha, do not conform to Orwell’s rules on other points; yet this argument apparently addresses only this one aspect of style.

For his part, Orwell stressed he was talking of political language; this is apparent in the very title of his essay, “Politics and the English Language.” From his point of view, the issue would presumably be whether Butler, and the other postmodernists, were using obscure or uncommon terminology for the sake of scientific precision, or for political aims.

In fact, Butler is explicit in asserting that her goals are political, not scientific. Butler does not, indeed, believe in science or in the possibility of scientific precision. When a participant at a seminar protested to Butler that it is necessary to believe there is right and wrong, truth and error, Butler’s response was: “for political reasons, it’s extremely important to use those terms, and not to know what their future and final form will take.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the word

she chooses to illustrate her point about technical terms is clearly an example of political terminology: “hegemony.”

Butler defines “hegemony,” illustrating the need for such technical terms, as “a dominance so entrenched that we take it for granted, and even appear to consent to it.”<sup>14</sup>

This is, of course, not the dictionary definition of “hegemony.” The OED gives the common English meaning of the word as “Leadership, predominance, preponderance; esp. the leadership or predominant authority of one state of a confederacy or union over the others.” There is nothing here about it being unconscious or hidden.

Butler’s use, on the other hand, implies and requires acceptance of a postmodern concept, essentially the Marxist one of “ideology,” perhaps here combined with Freud’s idea of unconscious motivation. Neither of these theories, Marx’s or Freud’s, has ever been established scientifically or philosophically to the general satisfaction of thinkers; they are very much open to debate, and, in the case of Marxism, specifically political debate. Butler’s use is accordingly, at the least, rhetorical, and open to the Orwellian charge that she is giving to airy nothing a name and a habitation, “giving an appearance of solidity to pure wind.”<sup>15</sup> Is there any reason, without accepting Marxist/Freudian/postmodernist theory, to suppose there is such a thing as “hegemony” in this sense? Does not Butler’s usage—is it not indeed designed to—disguise that fact? Does it not do so for essentially political reasons?

More generally, against Butler’s claim that difficult subjects require difficult or specialized language, there is the obvious truth that many—indeed, most—generally recognized “great thinkers” have been clear and lucid in their writing. This is especially true in Butler’s field, the humanities. Freud won the Goethe Prize for Literature. Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Henri Bergson won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Hume, Descartes, Plato, Darwin, Berkeley, Pascal, Rousseau, Augustine, and Marx are all models of literary style of the Orwellian sort, plain, elegant, clear of expression.

Is Butler claiming to be deeper than all of them? Can she be rejecting the greatness of all as a social construct? How can she, when her own admitted starting points are Marx and Freud?

Nor is it enough, for the present point, to show that it is *possible* to express difficult ideas in difficult language. For Butler’s thesis to hold, it must be *necessary* to do so. For Butler, no syntactically simple sentence can express other than a “truism,” a thing too obviously true to be worth saying.

Let’s look at a few counter-examples:

- “Let the dead bury their own dead.” (New Testament)
- “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” (Zen koan)
- “I think, therefore I am.” (Descartes)
- “Know thyself.” (Oracle at Delphi; quoted approvingly by Plato, attributed to Socrates)

- “He who knows, does not speak; he who speaks, does not know.” (Tao Te Ching)
- “Whoever eats me will draw life from me.” (New Testament)
- “The word was made flesh; he lived among us.” (New Testament)

All of these are expressed in the simplest language. Yet they are taken by various cultures to be expressions of some of the profoundest thoughts those cultures have produced. For most of them, although expressed simply, the true and complete meaning is not immediately apparent. All are quite probably true; none could, I submit, fairly be characterized as a “truism.”

Conversely, it does not seem to follow that a phrase that is difficult to parse grammatically, or language that is unfamiliar to the average person, is difficult to conceive. There seems no necessary relationship between a complex sentence and a complex thought. As if to illustrate the point, a wag at Monash University has set up a web page called “The Post-Modernism Generator.” Its software generates mechanically an example of Butlerish prose, with the caveat at the end of the page that “The essay you have probably just seen is completely meaningless and was randomly generated. . . . More detailed technical information may be found in Monash University Department of Computer Science Technical Report 96/264: ‘On the Simulation of Postmodernism and Mental Debility Using Recursive Transition Networks.’”<sup>16</sup>

A second counter-example of sorts is the celebrated Alan Sokal essay in *Social Text*.<sup>17</sup> Sokal, a physicist at NYU, submitted and successfully published a paper in this postmodernist journal arguing that the physical world of science was a social construct. He later declared the piece a deliberate hoax, a “compilation of pomo [postmodern] gibberish” and “an annotated bibliography of charlatanism and nonsense.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Language radically conditions thought; our present language enforces capitalist hegemony.**

There are, properly, two points here. That language conditions thought is, in fact, an unpopular claim among modern linguists, generally dismissed as the “Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis.” Nevertheless, in the present debate, it is Orwell’s premise, too. Orwell proposed the rules of modern English usage, just after the Second World War, in the belief that language and style have political causes and consequences. The same claim, as noted, figures in *1984*.

It is also clear, at least to the present author, that there is a relationship between language and politics in various cultures: hierarchical societies tend to have elaborate honorifics, while honorific forms have generally disappeared from languages like English and French. We no longer use the intimate “thee,” for example; everybody now is “monsieur.”

However, there is a limit to how far this point will push. If language fully conditioned thought, it would follow that we would not be able to express or grasp the claim that language conditions thought. Our own thought would be

conditioned by the words in which we stated the proposition, to the extent that we could have no clear view of any linguistic order but our own. We could say nothing objective about another language, and nothing about language generally. The claim disproves the claim; it is on a par with the paradox, "Everything I say is a lie."

The example given, differences in honorifics, can be equally explained by changing circumstances' altering language, making some grammar and vocabulary practically obsolete, rather than by language altering thought. The buggy whip, in turn, probably did not disappear because people stopped saying "buggy whip."

The test case is gender. French, Italian, and Spanish have a universal gender distinction; Chinese and Korean have none, even for people. English is in the middle, with gender for people but not for objects.

It should follow, from the Butlerian thesis, that sexual discrimination would be greatest in France and least in China and Korea.

Most observers do not find this so.

Nevertheless, this is not germane to the choice between Butler and Orwell; both accept the premise that language conditions thought, at least to some extent. However, if the possibility of conditioning is not great, as the above examples suggest, Orwell's position seems the more plausible one: the solution is to keep things simple and general. For no one system could then plausibly be so overwhelmingly powerful as to condition our thought so completely that we "take it for granted, and even appear to consent to it." Yet this is what Butler assumes.

We can be more definite, on historical grounds, in examining the second part of Butler's claim here, that the English tongue and style we know is "coined by commerce." Does it indeed enforce capitalist assumptions?

For the modern style per se, Butler is certainly wrong. If it was meant to impose any particular ideology, it is that of socialism, not capitalism. Orwell, its main proponent, was a socialist, a leftist, a Marxist,<sup>19</sup> who sought to encourage social progress and equality. He advised sticking to short, Anglo-Saxon words largely as it was the language of the common man—of the oppressed proletariat, if you prefer.

Nor does Orwellian style seem in any way to inform the actual practice of commerce, of large corporations, today. Is corporate writing generally a model of plain speech and clarity? Just the reverse, if the test case is the internal memo: corporations and MBAs love jargon and indeterminate speech. Contracts, too, are rarely models of simplicity or of clarity; but contracts are the essence of all trade or exchange. Advertising may be; but that is only one form of "corporate speech." And its plainness may better be explained by the need to communicate effectively to as broad a group as possible as by any ideological content. Nor is advertising that uses novel terms or ambiguous phrasing most to be trusted; which tends to illustrate Orwell's point.

In terms of the history of the language, the question can be quickly settled by etymological research. Choose a handful of Anglo-Saxon terms, the sort Orwell advocates; look them up in the Oxford English Dictionary. Find the date they were first observed in print. If this was before the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century, they are not the creations of capitalism, invented to impose capitalist power structures. The power structures, on the Marxist model, changed from feudal to capitalist only at that time.

None of them were. These, rather, are the oldest words in English. The same is probably equally true of simple, daily terms in French, Korean, or any other language you might name. These are precisely, as Orwell argues, the terms least likely to be influenced by any particular historical regime.

Does Butler, then, really choose to go far beyond (and away from) Marx and argue that all of past history has been radically conditioned by capitalist oppression?

Besides its apparent logical impossibility, such a general premise that any culture is so radically conditioned, by language, by economics, or by its structure of power, leads us down paths we may not want to go. If culture circumscribes thought, it of course follows that different cultures and languages will produce different thoughts, different ideologies. This would imply a correspondingly radical difference among the different cultures and nations—the different “races,” if you will—of mankind.

Moreover, if it is possible significantly to improve any one language for purposes of either political advancement or profundity of thought, as Butler implicitly claims, it follows that one existing language may and quite probably will be superior to another for purposes of political liberty, or indeed for thinking *per se*.

The plausible assertion of radical cultural superiority and inferiority is enshrined in this thesis.

It may be so, but it is not a pleasant or a politically progressive thought.

### **The obscure is best described by the obscure.**

This, Butler’s apparent third point, sounds satisfyingly McLuhanesque: if you are describing something obscure, your language should be obscure to reflect this accurately.

This makes some seeming sense. Overly-precise language can, postmodernists argue, enforce distinctions that do not really exist. Giving two distinct names to two types of bird can be scientifically misleading if the two actually interbreed, and there is a continuum of individuals with distinct features between the two supposed species. This charge of unnecessary over-classification has recently been argued in the case of the human “races,” for example; albeit perhaps for political, more than scientific, reasons. It is perhaps a real issue, as well, in the case of classifying human individuals by supposed disability.

There is a difference, however, between demonstrating that terminology is too precise in any given case—that there has been, in effect, an error in classification—and demonstrating that terminological accuracy is wrong for an entire area of human endeavor, such as the humanities or culture studies; or, indeed, to postmodernism, for all discourse. As a possibly illustrative parallel, the fact that many first graders make errors in arithmetic does not make two and two any more probably five. That oversimplification is a legitimate concern does not mean all simplification is oversimplification.

For Butler's thesis to hold, then, oversimplification must first be shown to be a pervasive problem. And she must also establish that it is not, by comparison, in whatever other language or style she proposes.

Orwell would agree, as would any modernist, that there is a time for obscurity in language. To express the muddle of emotion in his *Wasteland*, for example, T.S. Eliot ends his verse lines with the weak gerund form, a violation of Strunk & White's rules for "vigorous" speech—to show precisely this lack of vigor. Politeness also commonly requires a certain indirection.

But this, surely, is exceptional, and gains its force from its exceptionality. Orwell simply believes that the opposite, in practice, is more often true. More often, the greater the initial obscurity, the greater the need for clarity in expression, even to understand that the object is obscure—leaving aside any intent to dispel that obscurity.

Otherwise, by the same postmodern logic, if you are visiting a dangerous place, your approach to it should be made or kept dangerous. If you write a technical manual on a difficult operation, say safety measures for a nuclear reactor, you should ensure that the writing is as difficult as possible to understand, to represent the task fairly. If you teach a difficult subject, you should choose your teaching style to ensure it stays difficult. This becomes Wonderland logic; this becomes a caucus race, where everyone ends precisely where they began, and all must have prizes.

Explaining the obscure by the obscure, in other words, seems an only occasionally valuable technique, and only to the ultimate goal of making the obscure, finally, less obscure. If your general goal is to keep the obscure obscure, one wonders, why is one speaking, or writing, or teaching, in the first place?

### **The appeal to authority. The Frankfurt School.**

If we disagree with Butler, Butler points out, we may also have to throw out other thinkers. While we have cited philosophers who were great literary stylists, there are counter-examples: Adorno, Marcuse. Kant's writing is impenetrable and full of specialized terminology; a random fog index produces a reading level, in translation, of grade 26.<sup>20</sup> Is Kant also to be dismissed?

It should be noted, first, that an appeal to authority is not a rational argument. The authority must itself be tested. We have no obligation to assume the correctness of either Kant or the Frankfurt School.

Moreover, Butler's argument once again not only requires that it be possible to be a good thinker and still a "bad" stylist; it must be *necessary* to use bad style to be a good thinker.

I, for one, while I would not choose to dismiss Kant, am certainly prepared to dismiss his writing style. It was, indeed, in his own day, profitably parodied by Fichte.

Nor am I ready to dismiss Adorno.

The quote Butler chooses from Adorno to illustrate her point is "Man is the ideology of dehumanization." It is certainly obscure enough, on the face of it. It has a fog index of grade 20. Butler helpfully explains what Adorno had in mind. He refers, apparently, to a special circumstance at the time in which "man" was used by some thinkers to refer to humanity divorced from social context. Adorno, Butler explains, found this dehumanizing.

If this were true, Adorno would be guilty only of not making his referent clear—of bad writing. There would be no justification for making the claimed assertion in such a gnomic way. That Butler can explain it actually to mean something so mundane would demonstrate in itself that the obscurity was unnecessary and an error. Point to Orwell.

But, for my part, I cannot see this interpretation of Adorno as plausible. It seems plain enough to me from much else that he wrote that Adorno's true position is the reverse of what Butler claims here for him. Elsewhere, Adorno finds social context itself, not its absence, dehumanizing. "Society," he writes, "is integral even before it undergoes totalitarian rule. Its organization also embraces those at war with it by co-ordinating their consciousness to its own."<sup>21</sup> In other words, for him, social context is totalitarian per se.

More probably, therefore, as I read it, Adorno means in the quoted adage to say that one must never speak of "man" as of a thing detached from you; that to do so, to suppose one can be a detached observer of "mankind," is necessarily dehumanizing.

This, true or false, is a very different point. And, whether I am ultimately right in my reading or not, the presumed fact that Butler and I can reasonably interpret Adorno's position to be so different, in this passage, rather reinforces Orwell's point that an obscure style is always a hindrance. It is more so if your thinking happens to be good.

For now, and for my part, I believe I have established that Butler's challenge to Orwell cannot be justified on the grounds she has stated. Obscurity of style is still, it seems, and necessarily, a bad thing in itself. As for the true significance of the obscurity characteristic of postmodernism, I would only suggest that it is a symptom, not of a progressive or enlightened position, but of a vested interest seeking to secure its privileges.<sup>22</sup>

But perhaps Butler's own chosen authority, Adorno, makes this point for me: "The conversion of all questions of truth into questions of power. . . not only suppresses truth . . . but has attacked the very heart of the distinction

between true and false, which the hirelings of logic were in any case diligently working to abolish."<sup>23</sup>

Butler, and postmodernist colleagues like Spivak and Bhabha, are in a literal sense "hirelings of logic": they are professional philosophers, paid to philosophize. Without seeking to stigmatize philosophers as a group, the problem of philosophy becoming a specious exercise in head-butting for pay, or a rationalization of whatever the client wants, is an old game, as old as philosophy itself. Plato called the tendency "sophistry." It is just this tendency Orwell, with his call for plain language, seeks to inhibit; and it is just this tendency Butler and her like seem to be engaged in. At the very least, the burden of proof is with them that this is not so.

## Notes

1. William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th edition (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000). First published 1919.
2. Here is a characteristic passage from Spivak, chosen almost at random:

The Subaltern Studies group seems to me to be revising this general definition and its theorization by proposing at least two things: first, that the moment(s) of change be pluralized and plotted as confrontations rather than transition (they would thus be seen in relation to histories of domination and exploitation rather than within the great modes-of-production narrative) and, secondly, that such changes are signalled or marked by a functional change in sign-systems. The most important functional change is from the religious to the militant. There are, however, many other functional changes in sign-systems indicated in these collections: from crime to insurgency, from bondsman to worker, and so on. (Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* [NY: Routledge, 1988], 197).

3. George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," originally published in *Horizon* 76, April 1946. Also in, among other collections, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1957/1962), and *A Collection of Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich [Harvest Books], 1981).
4. Bhabha was runner up for *Philosophy and Literature's* 1998 Bad Writing Award. Here is his winning passage:

If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate efforts to "normalize" formally the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality. (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* [London: Routledge, 1994])

5. Judith Butler, "Exacting Solidarities," *The London Review of Books*, 21, 13, 1 July 1999.
6. Judith Butler, "A 'Bad' Writer Bites Back," *The New York Times*, 20 March 1999.
7. Judith Butler, "Exacting Solidarities."
8. Butler, "Exacting Solidarities."
9. Butler, "A 'Bad' Writer Bites Back."
10. Butler, "Exacting Solidarities."
11. Butler, "Exacting Solidarities."
12. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. Trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974). Original German edition, 1951.

13. Kristina Zarlengo, "J'accuse," *Lingua Franca* 4, April 1998.
14. Butler, "A 'Bad' Writer Bites Back."
15. Orwell, "Politics and the English Language."
16. Andrew C. Bulhak, and Pope Dubious Provenance XI, *The Postmodernism Generator* (Communications from Elsewhere, n.d.). <http://www.elsewhere.org/cgi-bin/postmodern/>.
17. Alan Sokal, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," *Social Text* 46/47 (Spring/Summer 1996).
18. Alan Sokal, "Sokal's Reply to *Social Text* Editorial," *Dissent* (Winter 1997).
19. It is possible to doubt Orwell's Marxism. Nothing mattered more to him than freedom of thought. This being so, he was no doctrinaire or dogmatic Marxist, or anything else. If, however, this is a critical objection to the use of the term "Marxist," neither were Engels, or Lenin, or Mao Marxists. Orwell was no Stalinist; but many Marxists deny Stalin had much to do with Marx. Orwell fought in Spain, by choice, for the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) (Michael Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorized Biography* [London: Heinemann, 1991], 276). He did so on letters of introduction from the Independent Labour Party, which Orwell himself describes as Trotskyite in the broad sense (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* [San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1952], 176). On his return from Spain, he continued to write for ILP publications, although he apparently never joined this, or any, party. In his 1941 book, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, he called for a "specifically English Socialist movement. . . not tainted by Marxism" (Shelden, *op. cit.*, 368). But note the date: at this time England was at war for its life with Germany, and Russia was Germany's ally. Orwell's stated reason for rejecting Marxism is that it is essentially a German and Russian doctrine. It is therefore possible to see his opposition as tactical, a matter of rejecting Marx to save socialism in the public estimation. In "Politics and the English Language," he writes, "Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes" (Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," 143). This, surely, is clear only to one who assumes the Marxist doctrine of dialectical materialism, that economic and political conditions are the foundation of all else in society.
20. The fog index is a technique commonly used by editors, especially in educational publishing. Based on such factors as sentence length and word length, indexing rates examples of writing by presumed grade level of reader. A fog index of 26, which Kant manages, implies that one would need 26 years of formal education in order to read it comfortably. For comparison, the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine have a fog index of 11.
21. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*.
22. In a longer essay, I might also test Orwell's assumptions, one by one. I might examine Butler's writing, and that of other postmodernists, to see if they are really committing the verbal crimes Orwell warns against. I believe they are.
23. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*.