THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

General Editor: N. F. Blake

Professor of English Language and Linguistics

University of Sheffield

THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

General Editor: N. F. Blake

Professor of English Language and Linguistics

University of Sheffield

Published titles

<i>An Introduction to the Language of Literature</i>	N. F. Blake
<i>The Language of Shakespeare</i>	N. F. Blake
<i>The Language of Chaucer</i>	David Burnley
<i>The Language of Wordsworth and Coleridge</i>	Frances Austin
<i>The Language of Irish Literature</i>	Loreto Todd
<i>The Language of D. H. Lawrence</i>	Allan Ingram
<i>The Language of Thomas Hardy</i>	Raymond Chapman
<i>The Language of James Joyce</i>	Katie Wales
<i>The Language of Drama</i>	David Birch
<i>The Language of Jane Austen</i>	Myra Stokes
<i>The Language of George Orwell</i>	Roger Fowler

Series Standing Order

If you would like to receive future titles in this series as they are published, you can make use of our standing order facility. To place a standing order please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address and the name of the series. Please state with which title you wish to begin your standing order. (If you live outside the United Kingdom we may not have the rights for your area, in which case we will forward your order to the publisher concerned.)

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd,
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 2XS, England.

The Language of George Orwell

ROGER FOWLER

© Roger Fowler 1995

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First published 1995 by
MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

ISBN 978-0-333-54908-7 ISBN 978-1-349-24210-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-24210-8

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
04	03	02	01	00	99	98	97	96	95

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements and Editions Used</i>	ix
1 Orwell's Life and Career	1
2 Preliminaries	7
The Styles of George Orwell	7
Linguistic Criticism	11
3 Orwell's Views on Language	19
Language and Class	20
'That horrible plummy voice from the radio'	22
Demotic Speech	24
Spoken and Written Language, and Standard English	25
'A catalogue of swindles and perversions'	28
Language and Thought	31
'An instrument which we shape for our own purposes'	33
4 A Personal Voice	35
Linguistic Varieties	37
Examples of the Personal Style	41
Linguistic Markers of Orwell's Idiolect	53
Orwell Over the Top	55
5 Versions of Realism	60
The Three 'Realisms': Brief Characterisation	63
Descriptive Realism and the Sense of 'place'	65
Naturalism and Surrealism in <i>Down and Out</i> <i>in Paris and London</i>	70
Naturalism in <i>Homage to Catalonia</i>	79
Realism, Judgement and Symbolism in <i>The Road</i> <i>to Wigan Pier</i>	81

6	Voices of the Other	87
	Heteroglossia	88
	Literary Representation of Speech	90
	English Dialects and Accents in the Early Fiction	93
	Experiment in Polyphony: the Trafalgar Square	
	Chapter in <i>A Clergyman's Daughter</i>	109
7	Further Aspects of Style	119
	The Picturesque	119
	Heteroglossia in <i>Burmese Days</i>	129
8	Point of View in Orwell's Fiction	136
	The Mind-style of Gordon Comstock	140
	Self-narration: <i>Coming Up for Air</i>	148
9	<i>Animal Farm</i>	159
	Narrative Style in <i>Animal Farm</i>	164
	Focalisation, Empathy and Distance	170
	The Rhetoric of Dominance and the Perversion of Language	174
10	<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>	181
	Focalisation: The Hyperconscious Anti-hero	184
	Memory, Dream and Hallucination	191
	The Golden Country	193
	Sordid Realism	195
	Violence	199
	Heteroglossia and the Grotesque	203
	Newspeak and the Language of the Party	211
	<i>Notes</i>	228
	<i>Bibliography</i>	241
	<i>Index</i>	246

Preface

When I was invited to write a study of the language of a writer of particular interest to me, I thought a lot about the choice of a possible subject, and George Orwell suddenly 'clicked'. He is a writer and a political thinker whom I have admired since my student days; he is a tremendously versatile stylist; he not only practises the arts of language, but the central theme in much of his work is language itself; and his interest in language centres on topics which have been my own preoccupations in linguistics: language as a political instrument, as an expression of or an inhibitor of thought, and as a practice which is central to all the workings of society: the media, the formation of history, literature, the ideas and the play of people.

Orwell's political and social analyses have had a profound influence on the way we think, largely thanks to the power and the memorable phrasing of his last two books, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. But the language in which he expressed his vision has been largely neglected. While James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, for example, are recognised as having created distinctive and influential linguistic structures for the representation of consciousness, and D. H. Lawrence is seen as having forged a powerful modern romantic style, Orwell is not seen as a stylist, but as a source of political ideas, strikingly worded. In this book I have tried to show, through detailed analysis of his language, how he evolved the distinctive 'Orwellian voice' (which some critics have mentioned, but not analysed). Beyond the personal voice, there is in fact a great diversity of stylistic technique: precise description, striking figurative expression, pastoral, naturalism, surrealism, representation of thought, powerful evocations of violence, a keen eye for the grotesque and an ear for what I have called 'voices of the other', trenchant parody of political styles; finally, quite different from these heightened modes of writing, the purest simplicity of style in the satires of *Animal Farm* and the Newspeak Appendix to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Although I have not consciously attempted to write a history of Orwell's stylistic development, this book follows roughly the sequence of his writing career. I was determined to take his early

fiction and non-fictional writings seriously, not least because the early books, particularly the novels, tend to get short shrift. Most of the techniques of style of his last writings are deployed in lively and effective ways early in his career. It could be argued – though I have not pressed this argument – that there is a fundamental unity to his lifetime's writings, despite their apparent diversity.

This study uses, broadly speaking, the theory and the analytic concepts of the method of 'linguistic criticism' as it has been developed over the past fifteen years or so. That is to say, I not only describe the patterns of language which form Orwell's various styles of writing, but also discuss their functions within the composition of the books and in relation to aspects of the historical context (space permits far less of this than I would have liked). Not only linguistic concepts are used, but also ideas drawn from French and Russian studies of literature and language: particularly in the areas of 'point of view' (focalisation) and 'voices of the other'. I have found the notion of 'heteroglossia', and a cluster of related ideas, originating in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, particularly relevant to Orwell. Being conscious that 'jargon' can be off-putting to the student of literature, I have kept technical terminology to a minimum, and explained such terms as we do need as we go along.

ROGER FOWLER

Acknowledgements and Editions Used

The author and publishers wish to thank the following for permission to use copyright material:

A. M. Heath & Company Ltd on behalf of the Estate of the late Sonia Brownell Orwell and Martin Secker & Warburg, and Harcourt Brace & Company, for excerpts from George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant' from *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays*, Copyright © 1950 by Sonia Brownell Orwell and renewed 1978 by Sonia Pitt-Rivers; George Orwell, 'Politics and the English Language' from *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays*, Copyright © 1946 by Sonia Brownell Orwell and renewed 1974 by Sonia Orwell; George Orwell, *Burmese Days*, Copyright © 1934 by George Orwell and renewed 1962 by Sonia Pitt-Rivers; George Orwell, *Coming Up For Air* and George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Copyright © 1933 by George Orwell and renewed 1961 by Sonia Pitt-Rivers; George Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* and George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, Copyright © 1946 by Harcourt Brace & Company and renewed 1974 by Sonia Orwell; George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Copyright © 1949 by Harcourt Brace & Company and renewed 1977 by Sonia Brownell Orwell; George Orwell, 'Why I Write', from *Such, Such Were the Joys*, Copyright © 1953 by Sonia Brownell Orwell and renewed 1981 by Mrs George K. Perutz, Mrs Miriam Gross and Dr Michael Dickson, executors of the estate of Sonia Brownell Orwell; George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, Copyright © 1952 and renewed 1980 by Sonia Brownell Orwell; George Orwell, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume I: An Age Like This 1920–1940, Volume II: My Country Right or Left 1940–1943, Volume III: As I Please 1943–1945, Volume IV: In Front of Your Nose 1945–1950*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, Copyright © 1968 by Sonia Brownell Orwell.

X ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND EDITIONS USED

Every effort has been made to trace all the copyright-holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity.

For quotations and references to Orwell's works, I have tried to use accessible editions, as follows:

Animal Farm, Penguin, 1973; *Burmese Days*, Penguin, 1967; *A Clergyman's Daughter*, Penguin, 1964; *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, 4 volumes, Penguin, 1968; *Coming Up for Air*, Penguin, undated reprint of 1962 edition; *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Secker and Warburg, 1986; *Homage to Catalonia*, Penguin, 1984; *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, Penguin, 1975; *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Penguin, 1984; *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Penguin, 1984.