

A Language Dead, A Language Born

The cell is cold, stark and blinding. The black steel of the cell bars contrasted with the cold grey of the concrete, my vision slowly coming into focus with my confusing surroundings. I feel a hard hand in the middle of my back, strong and firmly pushing, like a farmer with his cattle. I hit the ground hard, groaning as the pain registered and the insidious cold of the concrete starts to set in. I hear the guards laughing behind me, laughing at the small weak frame that is me. They would be used to killers, rapists... but now they have me, "a criminal as dangerous as Ted Bundy" apparently. The cold ache of the ground is too much for me to lie here anymore. I try to move, my muscles a combination of aching and numb. I manage to get myself on the cell bed, spreading the itchy blanket across myself, and quickly pass out.

The sound of a baton hitting each bar pierced into my consciousness like a pounding hangover, except the night before was not at all enjoyable. I opened my eyes slowly, the blinding light from the hallway, streaked between the bars of the cell, prohibiting my eyesight. A larger, scruffier, guard came past, slamming his baton into the cell bar.

"GET UP, BREAKFAST." The guard shouted, the thunderous booming of his voice being enough to rouse me properly from my sleep. Not a second later the doors slammed open.

Sitting up was painful, listening to the inmates yelling like wild animals competing for dominance was more so. These brutes can't even put a proper sentence together. I stand up and stagger to the cell door. Looking up and down the hallway I start to see the other prisoners leaving their own cells. Each time another comes out my heart drops a bit more. They're all built like mammoths, and none of them particularly friendly. The others are starting to notice me. One of the prisoners was bigger than the others and looked to be about six foot seven and two hundred kilograms. He made his presence known, simply by being there. The prisoners started parting for him to walk through and fell silent as he began to speak. "Look at him, no bigger than a child." His voice was that of a long-time abuser, gravelly and harsh, just like his looks.

I've already been noticed.

He lurched forward and grabbed my shoulder, pulling me forward with an almost unnatural level of strength.

"Why are you here?" He began again.

I keep my mouth shut, the second I speak they will know I'm different in more ways than my small body. This beast of a man wasn't going to leave me alone though, he was persistent.

"C'mon, what'd you do?" I tried pulling away from him, his grip only tightened.

"How about we make him speak then?" He barked at his companions.

His other arm raised, and fell, striking me in the stomach. My vision turned red. He raised his arm again, and again. I couldn't take it anymore, through sweat, blood and tears I tell them my crime.

As best as I can project, I say;

"I'm a writer."

The laughing and shouting immediately ceases.

A guard appears in the doorway, drawing a baton when he sees the crowd.

“GET TO BREAKFAST NOW!”

The same voice as earlier boomed, but with frustration this time.

Saved by the guard, the prisoners release me. I hurry to the kitchen, doing my best to get away from the others.

I get into the line for food, keeping my head down and trying my best not to be noticed. As I get given my tray of low-quality food even the kitchen staff sneer at me. Looking to escape the torrent of abuse I escape to the furthest table. My attempts to not be noticed are once again useless as a prisoner starts moving over to my table. He’s a big bloke, a mix of beer fat and muscle, with a large handlebar moustache and soul patch. His skin weathered from years of being outdoors. He sits down and shifts his weight on the bench to look toward me fully, his movements are fidgety, he’s nervous.

“What do you mean you’re here because you’re a writer?” He asked hesitantly.

His speech is almost decent, probably the most intelligent of these degenerates. I decide to pay him some attention, he may be the only good company here.

“As I said previously, I’m a writer.” My reply was short, but succinct.

He shifts his weight again; the answer obviously was not adequate. Yet curiosity gets the better of him.

“How does writing get you here?” He asks as he leans forward, showing his interest.

A realisation dawns on me, the prisoners probably don’t understand that using written language is now reserved only for government officials.

“About two months ago the government outlawed writing for everyone without a license, as far as I know there were roughly five thousand licenses issued for the whole nation. This meant I had to hide, all writers and people who used written language commonly were told to stop or else they would be persecuted.” I explained

The prisoner gave me an understanding look, almost a hint of sympathy. This coming from such a rough character was slightly disturbing.

“So, you kept writing?” He probed.

An odd question, he was thinking something over as he asked. His hand stroking his long salt and pepper beard as he stared at the bright prison lights in thought.

“Of course, however I shall probably never write again.”

The idea of that was sobering, it wasn’t something that had clicked yet. I had dedicated my whole life to literature, and now I may never see it again.

“Why don’t we just let them have English, you can just make a new one. You’ve got yourself a language that you can do whatever you want with.”

As he described his idea, the smile on his face grew like an infection, it even made the corners of my own mouth crack.

I lean forward, interested, but sceptical.

“Alright, but I still need pens and paper. How would I ever get them in here?”

The prisoner sits back and relaxes, obviously pleased with himself and his idea.

“Mate, it’s a prison, you can smuggle just about anything in here.” He scoffs.

Just like that I had hope again, I was going to be able to write once more.

Just like that, I was sitting in my cell two days later, dirty old pen and paper in my hands.

Just like that I wasn’t writing for entertainment, or leisure, but for the future of the nation, maybe even our race.

Just like that, one language will die, and another will be born.

Serve and Protect.

We shook our heads in disbelief as we sat around the kitchen table, eating a meal of curry chicken. All our attention focussed on the politics reporter, telling us what institutionalised conglomerate of power and corruption would be deciding the law over our lives next.

“The civil party only needs one more seat to hold a majority. However small victories are being won for the Countrymen party, with three seats now being held by the small party.” The TV continued as we talked and commented on the happenings. My family made erroneous remarks on the dangers of blindly re-electing the same people after so much dirt had been spilled on their actions. We did not want to believe that democracy had failed us, yet it was not surprising. Things went on like normal for a few more years after that, however more policing laws were being introduced, to the point it became evident that efficient policing was not the goal. Power is what they wanted, and power is what they got.

“So, class, that is how the nation of The Commonwealth of Australia became The Democratic Republic of Australia. Now, I was not meant to tell you any of that, because it is illegal to discuss the commonwealth, your other teachers will tell you it never existed. But-”

WHAM the timber door of the old transportable classroom slammed open with such inhuman force it shattered when it hit the wall, cutting the teachers voice off. A man standing taller than the door frame stood in the shards of timber and dust, clothed in pure black kevlar and emblazoned with the great red and black kangaroo. The giant stood back, allowing a much smaller man to walk into the classroom. He wore similar black and red clothing, that of an officer of the Australian Strength Force.

“Turn around and place your hands on the wall, resistance will be met with force.”

As I turned to face the wall, all the children stood up from their desks with military vigour.

“RESISTANCE WILL BE MET WITH FORCE” they repeated, robotically but forcefully.

I felt a cold band of metal clamp around my neck, a strength shackle, I thought. My vision starts to fade as its effects overwhelm me. One last thought goes through my head before my memory disappears. Such good, patriotic children.

This story is based purely in fiction and is not intended to represent any real-world figures, organisations or anything of the like.

Reflection

Reimagined worlds are an excellent conduit for ideas, agendas, opinions, concepts and beliefs. Through exploring reimagined worlds society is provided with an exploration of such concepts while being entertained. This duality of meaningful exploration and entertainment value is what makes the concept of a reimagined world such a powerful tool to a textual composer.

The purpose of my two pieces; “A Language Dead, A Language Born”, and “Serve and Protect.”, was to present a complex exploration of two political ideas, the issue of language degradation, and the issue of political “donkey” voting in democracies. Both concepts were inspired by real life concerns, as well as taking heavy inspiration from George Orwell’s “1984”.

Using hyperbolised settings representing the focus issues the two texts communicate ideas that make the viewer think. Presenting the viewer with issues such as donkey voting, or the degradation of language, and hyperbolising a manifestation of these issues causes the viewer to question where these issues may apply in their own life. This hyperbolising is achieved through harsh setting, extremely modal language, with violent tendencies being a recurring motif throughout both texts. These language forms were inspired by George Orwell’s “1984”, a dystopian novel where such issues as tyrannical politics and re-education are prevalent. These pieces all draw parallels to the real world, and this is where reimagined worlds can deliver a highly impactful message to its viewers, and that's where they can draw parallels and similarities between the piece and their own life.

Personally, the two pieces were composed from issues that were prevalent in the front of my own mind. Issues such as political donkey voting occurring in the NSW state election, and personal concerns to the level of authenticity behind “journalism” and “News”. Through these concerns came the premise of the pieces. Previously having studied “1984” additionally inspired the level of affect behind the pieces and how making them dramatic and impactful would best deliver the message. If I were to undertake this process again, I would focus on narrative theory, and how the hero's journey, along with other universal story techniques could be incorporated to form a more coherent and impactful piece. I used narrative theory by focussing on the reinforcing of the norm, and then showing the viewer just how dangerous these ideas may be. This use of the literary worlds “layers” allows for a heavier impact to the viewer by taking what they understand and know and forcing them to reflect on the implications of such changes. In this way the texts are predominantly realist, while incorporating a level of embellishment and surrealism to emphasise the impact that such extremes would have on the viewer’s own life.

Reimagined worlds allow the composer to push boundaries both with the message they intend on sending and in a literary sense. The utilisation of a reimagined world allows for extremes to be used, with genres such as satire, humour, realism, and horror all having great potential when used in conjunction with a reimagined world. Through writing my pieces I was able to explore and gain deeper understanding of just how the utilisation of a reimagined world was able to significantly emphasise my intended purpose of the texts. This was primarily achieved through the pushing the extremes of “what could happen”, as well as drawing parallels to topical issues in the real world.