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Annotations on A Modest Proposal for Acceptable Terminology with Git
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Abstract

This document provides annotations on "A Modest Proposal for Acceptable Terminology with Git", particularly noting relevant quotes from, and references to, the works and life of George Orwell.

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1. Introduction to Annotations and to A Modest Proposal

Notes on "A Modest Proposal for Acceptable Terminology with Git" [MODEST] are given here. Quotes from original texts are given in approximately the same positions as the text alluding to them in that document. Quotes without a source, particularly those citing Part and Chapter, are from George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Novel" ("1984") [NOV].

[MODEST] is published on the first of April, April Fools' Day, a traditional time for the IETF to issue jests to reassure itself that it still possesses something akin to a sense of humour. Using the title A Modest Proposal to warn of impending satire is a longstanding tradition that began with the title of Jonathan Swift's cookery recipes [SWIFT].

The very interested reader can consult many useful Wikipedia pages.

The Umbrella Corporation is the ultimate cause of all events in the Resident Evil franchise. Not to be confused with the Umbrella Academy, the ultimate cause of all events in that other franchise.

2. Discouraged Terminology

To understand recursion, you must first understand recursion.

3. Constraining Use of Undesirable Terminology

'git' is an insult in British variants of English, not used in polite language. That it is now the name of a software tool used for maintaining the Linux kernel is perhaps unsurprising, given Linus Torvalds' creation of git as a result of displeasure with the actions of Andrew Tridgell [GIT]. The choice of name may suggest that git was never intended for widespread use, or for marketing broadly in git-based cloud services such as GitHub.

4. Replacing Use of Unwanted Terminology

George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four" is concerned with controlling human behaviour and with revising and rewriting the past, and with changing language to achieve those ends. And with committees.

P3S6 *_He had won the victory over himself._* -- the penultimate sentence. Victory Mansions. Victory Square. Victory Gin. Victory coffee. Victory cigarettes. Victory is entirely on-brand. Winning!

5. Beyond Legacy Terminology

"Thought leadership" is not an Orwellian term.

Aldous Huxley wrote "Brave New World". He also taught Eric Blair French at Eton. Blair went on to teach in Hayes and in Uxbridge. Later, Huxley wrote to Blair on which of the fictions of "Brave New World" or "Nineteen Eighty-Four" he thought was more dystopian and as likely to come to pass -- his own [HUX].

Eton has also moulded twenty British prime ministers, including the current incumbent of the office. Those twenty men all went on to create and rule their own actual real dystopias, showing, as ever, that those who can't do, teach.

P3C2 *_But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else._* -- O'Brien.

One cannot change this all in a moment, but one can at least change one's own habits, and from time to time one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase -- some jackboot, Achilles' heel, hotbed, melting pot, acid test, veritable inferno or other lump of verbal refuse -- into the dustbin where it belongs. [ENG]

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS
Chapter X [FARM].

After much thought Snowball declared that the Seven Commandments could in effect be reduced to a single maxim, namely: "Four legs good, two legs bad." Chapter III [[FARM](#)].

Dying metaphors [...] there is a huge dump of worn-out metaphors which have lost all evocative power and are merely used because they save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves. [[ENG](#)].

TCP implementations should follow a general principle of robustness: be conservative in what you do, be liberal in what you accept from others. Postel's Principle is now over forty years old, and ready for an update in reworked language appropriate for modern society.

Don't think of an elephant [[THINK](#)]. Good cognitive linguistics.

S1C5 _'What I had really intended to say was that in your article I noticed you had used two words which have become obsolete. But they have only become so very recently. Have you seen the tenth edition of the Newspeak Dictionary?'_ -- O'Brien.

P1C1 _The voice came from an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror which formed part of the surface of the right-hand wall. Winston turned a switch and the voice sank somewhat, though the words were still distinguishable. The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely._ Today, we are must attend and appear engaged in video conference calls. Your camera is off? What are you hiding?

P2C3 _'She was -- do you know the Newspeak word GOODTHINKFUL? Meaning naturally orthodox, incapable of thinking a bad thought?'_ -- Winston Smith.

6. Supporting the IETF

P1C2 _Down in the street the wind flapped the torn poster to and fro, and the word INGSOC fitfully appeared and vanished. Ingsoc. The sacred principles of Ingsoc._

P1C1 _BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU_ As are Facebook, Google...

7. A Picture of the Future

P3C3 _'If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face -- for ever.'_ -- O'Brien.

Thus, for example, UNCOLD meant 'warm', while PLUSCOLD and DOUBLEPLUSCOLD meant, respectively, 'very cold' and 'superlatively cold'. Appendix, The Principles of Newspeak.

P1C4 _times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusungood refs unpersons rewrite fullwise upsub antefiling_

"++ungood;" is a pun on doubleplusungood for programmers, coined in 2002 by Lloyd Wood and produced as a well-received T-shirt by Dave Green of the Need To Know newsletter. That shirt has been sported by computing luminaries, including Guido van Rossum and Aaron Swartz, and has appeared at IETF meetings [[SHIRT](#)]. Francis Spufford read the shirt, and coined the simpler _Plus Plus Ungood_ -- a new phrase for a newer Newspeak. The rise of emoji was not anticipated.

P1C1 _The Thought Police would get him just the same. He had committed -- would still have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper -- the essential crime that contained all others in itself. Thoughtcrime, they called it. Thoughtcrime was not a thing that could be concealed for ever. You might dodge successfully for a while, even for years, but sooner or later they were bound to get you._ Rather like celebrity journalists, really.

P2C5 _During the Two Minutes Hate she always excelled all others in shouting insults at Goldstein. Yet she had only the dimmest idea of who Goldstein was and what doctrines he was supposed to represent._

P1C4 _When one knew that any document was due for destruction, or even when one saw a scrap of waste paper lying about, it was an automatic action to lift the flap of the nearest memory hole and drop it in_

embrace, extend and extinguish -- Wikipedia summarizes Microsoft's corporate strategy on standards and their convictions.

P1C3 _The past, he reflected, had not merely been altered, it had been actually destroyed._

P1C5 _'It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words.'_ -- Syme.

P3C2 _'We do not merely destroy our enemies, we change them. Do you understand what I mean by that?'_ -- O'Brien.

P1C4 _The messages he had received referred to articles or news items which for one reason or another it was thought necessary to alter, or, as the official phrase had it, to rectify._

P1C1 _IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH_

P3C4 _If you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself._

"Your Garden Made Perfect" (BBC Two) is a television programme that uses virtual reality for its ideal purpose of reimagining back yards.

P1C8 _Statues, inscriptions, memorial stones, the names of streets -- anything that might throw light upon the past had been systematically altered._

P2C5 _'Already we know almost literally nothing about the Revolution and the years before the Revolution. Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.'_ -- Winston Smith.

P3C3 _'Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing.'_ -- O'Brien.

P1C1 _[Newspeak was the official language of Oceania. For an account of its structure and etymology see Appendix.]_ Now that computing debates such as 'emacs or vi' and 'tabs or spaces' have been resolved, correcting the language used should be straightforward.

P1C5 _'Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it.'_ -- Syme.

P3C2 _'It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party.'_ -- O'Brien.

8. Security Considerations

P1C3 _'Who controls the past,' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.' And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered._

P1C1 _ FREEDOM IS SLAVERY_

Did Orwell actually shoot and kill an elephant? [[BURMA](#)]

Why a code revision tracking system designed to meet the specific needs of developing and reviewing changes to the Linux kernel was ever considered appropriate for shared editing text or standards lies outside the scope of this document [[RFC8874](#)]. The IETF does not have a strong history of inventing or of funding development of its own

fit-for-purpose documentation tools, but does co-opt and repurpose popular tools from elsewhere. Value has been extracted from roff.

Wikipedia's pages are controlled and edited by the most persistent Wikipedians, who are usually male, and so reflect male bias [BACK]. It is fair to say that history is written by Victor -- not Victoria.

9. IANA Considerations

P3C2 _'Do you remember,' he went on, 'writing in your diary, "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four"?'_ -- O'Brien.

<http://xml2rfc.tools.ietf.org/> re-renders acute and grave accents as their base ASCII characters, and disallows wholly numerical reference targets such as "[1984]", while internet-drafts are now being written that describe correct Unicode emoji use -- without being able to use emoji, which is a mixed blessing. Moving to UTF-8 is one careful step [RFC7997]. Tools evolve the language that they convey. Choose your tools well.

10. RFC Editor Considerations

P1C1 _It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen._ -- the opening sentence.

There is an RFC Series Editor (RSE) function, but there has been no fully appointed RFC Editor since 2019 [RFC]. There is arguably less autonomy to counteract competing interests. Concern about imbalance in power structures is warranted. Given its past [RFC8700], what is the future of the Series? The RFC Editor would, one might think, be the final authority on language used in RFCs... but that is outside the immediate scope of this document. Do we need another Postel?

11. Acknowledgements and Address

P1C5 _'Or again, if you want a stronger version of "good", what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like "excellent" and "splendid" and all the rest of them? "Plusgood" covers the meaning, or "doubleplusgood" if you want something stronger still.'_ -- Syme.

Orwell learned Spanish, among many other languages, and fought in the Spanish Civil War. Earlier, he had lived with, and been unimpressed by, Esperanto speakers. We could all do with a little more polish.

George Orwell was the pen-name, suggested in a letter to his literary agent, of the man born and buried as Eric Arthur Blair. Blair was not a loud speaker, even before being shot in the throat during

trench warfare. His voice was deemed "unattractive", but that did not prevent a statue from being erected in his honour [BBC].

Without the protection of copyright, we will see more Orwell [COPY].

Re-education camps do not come from Orwell; the world that he describes `_is_` a re-education camp.

P3C5 `'_The thing that is in Room 101 is the worst thing in the world.'_` -- O'Brien. This was inspired by a basement room of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) where Orwell had worked [BBC].

Oceania is one of three superstates competing to rule the world.

Editing these annotations did not require any git-derived mechanism.

12. References

12.1. Normative References

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