

**Appreciating wine, poetry and art**  
**- a plain wo/man's guide to avoiding bunkum**

Mon 21<sup>st</sup> December 2015 at *The Blue Mugge* pub

Notes based on a session seven years ago: *Open Circle or the ODD Group*, Tue 3<sup>rd</sup> June 08 at *The Blue Mugge Pub*...

1. There's a widespread and popular view that much writing and criticism on matters relating to wine, poetry, art (and, indeed, many other kinds of activity from football to flower-arranging) involves pretentiousness.  
Why should that be? Views - giving or bringing examples, on this - from members of the group who wish to comment.  
Pretentiousness and snobbery - any difference? Take Woody Allen's quote 'Pretentious - Moi?' ...
2. Consider these quotations:
  - a) "A painting in a museum hears more ridiculous opinions than anything else in the world" Edmund de Goncourt French artist and novelist (1822 - 96)
  - b) "Cabernet Sauvignon Blanc often possesses light smoky aromas and is notably vegetal too with hints of green olives, freshly-mown grass, dill and fennel but generally is also very fruity with fresh fig, melon and citrus fruit etc to be discovered..."  
from the *Complete Encyclopedia of Wine*
  - c) Oscar Wilde wrote: "Art never expresses anything but itself". and "The truth is rarely pure, and never simple".
  - d) "Negative Capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason...". Keats.  
Shakespeare had that 'negative capability'? A hint of bunkum here, or insight...
3. In *Politics and the English Language* George Orwell outlined the following rules to avoid bad, pretentious, writing: " i) Never use a metaphor, a simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print; ii) Never use a long word where a short one will do; iii) If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out; iv) Never use the passive where you can use the active; v) Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent; vi) Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous."
4. "By 'postmodern', I mean, roughly speaking, the contemporary movement of thought which rejects totalities, universal values, grand historical narratives, solid foundations of human existence and the possibility of objective knowledge. Postmodernism is sceptical of truth, unity and progress, opposes what it sees as elitism in culture, tends towards cultural relativism, and celebrates pluralism, discontinuity and heterogeneity."  
Terry Eagleton in *After Theory* (2003).

Clear? Can you give a simpler definition of 'postmodernism', following Orwell's rules? Or are we better forgetting/ignoring *postmodernism*... enjoying an Xmas mince pie and a drink...

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