Why I Write

Sunetra Gupta

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Abstract

For me, writing is an adventure, an excursion into the depths of my self. In this sense, writing is for me a kind of structured dreaming, where I am able to tap into my (sub)conscious in a more controlled manner than while I dream. This control is, of course, afforded by narrative, and while my dreams quite often have sequence, they are rarely harnessed by narrative. The act of writing therefore embodies for me a very tender junction between the chaos of my dreams and the stern order of the universe. It is this exhilarating coalition that I seek to celebrate when I write.

Sunetra Gupta was born on March the 15th, 1965, in Calcutta. She spent her early childhood in Africa, but most of her schooling was in Calcutta. She graduated in 1987 from Princeton University in Biology and completed her Ph. D. in Mathematical Biology at Imperial College, London, 1992. She is currently Research Fellow at Oxford University (Merton College & Dept. of Zoology), studying infectious diseases.

She has published two novels, *Memories of Rain* (Grove Press, USA, and Orion Books, UK) in 1992 and *The Glassblower's Breath* in 1993 (same publishers). She is now working on her third novel.

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'Je n'ai jamais éprouvé que le sommeil fut un repos', said Gerard de Nerval. Dreaming is hard work, and writing is no repose either. The strenuous task of pouring my own dreams and memories into the mould of other invented lives brings me closer I feel to the truth of these experiences. Writing is therefore a constant act of reinterpretation, reinscription and regeneration. In this way it serves as an alternative mode of analysis than that which I employ in my scientific research. The language of scientific rationalism can fail miserably when one is trying to make sense of emotion. Creative writing allows me to develop a language with which to probe the deeper recesses of my being. Writing is, in this sense, as much about discovering a new language as using the language to look further into yourself and those around you. I feel the need therefore to experiment with language, not in some directed way, but when the need arises. I feel it is important to communicate to the reader that language is pliable, and that creating your own language is the primary act of personal and political independence.

Finally, I write because I must. I only say this because I believe that passion plays a very important role in creativity. If this personal odyssey were not driven by such irrational visceral concerns such as the simple engulfing desire to write, I think I should be in grave danger of dishonesty. I say this to an increasingly graphomatic society, where writing has come to be viewed as a social responsibility rather than a maddening imprecise urge to which one is forced occasionally to submit. In this sense, the moment I can articulate very precisely 'why I write', may be the moment when I cease to do so. Happily, for now, it is a question that I can only respond to in this very unstructured manner.