

THEORIA

A JOURNAL OF STUDIES
in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Vol. LXXIV



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EDITORIAL

One of the functions of *Theoria* is to promote interdisciplinary discussion, and so we are pleased to be able to publish Anne Mackay's essay on the use made by a modern South African playwright, Athol Fugard, of the classical figures Antigone and Orestes. In his account of his own evolution as a literary critic working in the South African situation Michael Chapman makes it plain that he believes his reflections to be just as relevant, for example, to art critics. Guy Willoughby's discussion of sport as presented on television blends together the concerns and skills of the critic of literature, of television and of sport. In this respect Charles Simkins's article is perhaps the most striking: he speaks as economist, demographer and political commentator, and it is evident along the way that his interest in the relation between the music and the politics of Richard Wagner has played a significant part in his thinking. In fact none of the articles in this issue could be described as narrowly professional. They all, in their several ways, promote interdisciplinary thought and discussion. We intend to continue to devote issues of *Theoria* to specific themes which would draw together thought from various disciplines. At the same time we hope to maintain some issues as an open forum for a wide variety of articles.

This is perhaps the right moment to remind readers that we are inviting contributions for our next issue on the theme of Human Rights. This is, clearly, a topic of central concern at the present time, or indeed, any time.

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They are asked to send typescripts which are double-spaced. The beginning of each paragraph must be indented. Single quotation marks should be used for quotations, and double quotation marks only for a quotation within a quotation. When the title of a book is given it should be underlined. Notes should be consolidated at the end of an article, not inserted as footnotes. An abstract not more than 200 words in length should accompany an article. *A style sheet is available on request.*

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THE PRISONERS OF TRADITION AND THE POLITICS OF NATION BUILDING*

by CHARLES SIMKINS

The Prisoners of Tradition and the Politics of Nation Building is the title of a small book which grew out of a research project undertaken for the S.A. Institute of Race Relations and which was published at the beginning of this year.¹ However, my main concern is not to summarise an already compressed book, but to present some of the further developments in my own thinking and to comment on some recent events — as Harold Wilson once observed, a week is a long time in politics.

Accordingly, I shall concentrate on one major theme: the problem of constructing a new political framework which will both permit the further economic growth required to wipe out mass poverty and which will allow all — or all but the most recalcitrant — South Africans 'to feel free in their own country'. I must say at the outset that I use the phrase 'prisoners of tradition' because I believe that our history means that meeting both conditions will be formidably difficult, though not impossible: 'history may be servitude, history may be freedom', wrote T.S. Eliot. Passing from the former to the latter requires an uncompromising confrontation with what holds us in bondage — no matter how much it appeals to deep-rooted conservative instincts, no matter how fashionably it may be dressed up as attractive but deluded promises of liberation.

What is it that holds us in bondage? Perhaps the place to start is with the highly inegalitarian form of capitalist development in South Africa. In its earlier and weaker phase, it took a mercantile and monopolistic form under the aegis of the Dutch East India Company. By the late eighteenth century, South African development was stagnating as the Company stagnated, itself a consequence of Holland's decline. British rule did not bring a great deal of change until the minerals revolution, which certainly speeded up economic growth but also concentrated wealth. Adelman, Morris and Robinson in their studies of income distribution concluded that, as a general rule, mining-led development tends to be inegalitarian. In South Africa, this tendency was powerfully reinforced by the need for a concentration of capital to undertake the expensive work of deep level gold mining. But, while inegalitarian, South African capitalism has not been of a narrow, enclave kind. It has progressively transformed the entire society and has raised absolute living standards for nearly everyone. Merle Lipton has

* This is the text of a University Lecture delivered in Pietermaritzburg on 4 October 1989.

observed that real wages of black people nearly tripled between 1916 and 1970.² I have concluded that the evidence — unsatisfactory and open to dispute as it is — shows that the benefits from economic growth between 1960 and 1980 not only reached virtually the entire urban population, but most of the homeland population as well. I also believe that an economic growth rate of 4% per annum sustained for a generation in a system which remains predominantly capitalist, accompanied by sensible policies to improve income distribution would wipe out mass poverty. (Alas, not all the current analytical and strategic thinking about poverty is sensible.) But the narrowness of the ownership of wealth and the resentments built up in the course of our history severely prejudice the ability to reach the agreements to achieve the necessary growth. The classical formulation of the prisoner's dilemma posits benefits from co-operation which nobody has an incentive to introduce. We are in a worse situation. Many political actors feel a positive aversion — in the form of a perceived threat to cultural identity — to construction of the agreements required to improve their material situation.

Compounding the difficulty is the association between ethnicity and economic incorporation. Afrikaner nationalism earlier in this century fulminated against British–Jewish capitalism, as does the Afrikaner right today. It had its advocates of expropriation, though their programme was ultimately judged not to be in Afrikaner interests, partly because of the existence of Afrikaner assets in land and finance and partly because of Afrikaner political incorporation which allowed for the eventual conquest of state power by parliamentary means. Even so, the compromises reached in the years following 1948 were not reached without strain and their effects can still be detected. Even in the Democratic Party, which represents a coalescence between older PP/PRP/PFP social forces and an expanding Afrikaner middle class, one can hear both grumbles about Houghton snobs and reservations about the wisdom of having Sampie Terreblanche as an economic adviser.

Asset ownership and political incorporation are much less important in determining the political programme of contemporary African nationalism. I shall nonetheless argue that a programme of expropriation is not in black interests either. The trouble is that conditions make it difficult for this situation to be subjectively appreciated. These propositions are, of course, controversial and the case for them needs to be developed with some care.

One starts the argument by observing that the meaning and use of asset ownership varies across cultural and economic systems. In ancient Rome it was acquired, used and lost in predatory fashion; in the Middle Ages it was used in the perpetual battles between

fiefdoms and kingdoms; in traditional pastoral African society it underpinned chiefly power by conferring capacity for patronage. As Karl Marx rightly understood, it is only in capitalism that wealth is used to create more wealth in a process he referred to as expanded (as opposed to simple) reproduction. There is a stream of thought within African nationalism — most clearly articulated within the Africanist tradition — which is interested in control over assets not in order to participate in expanded reproduction but to end capitalism and restore an economic system akin to that of pastoral society. When I spoke to a PAC group, it was pointed out to me that the structure of African languages themselves supported such a concept. The word “izwe” for instance, refers both to the land and to the nation; control of the land (and everything on it) is essential to national life conducted according to African norms. The trouble with this conception, of course, is that it is hopelessly reactionary. Pastoral society has all but disappeared in the course of the last century; even families in the rural parts of the homelands create only a small proportion of their incomes in the form of agricultural produce. Restoration of pastoral society would require a radical reduction in population and living standards at a time when more and more South Africans are developing a taste for cars, houses filled with technology and all the rest.

But reflections of this kind do not stop the hankering, which is by no means confined to the Africanists. One should not be surprised; after all, nineteenth century Europe was full of the same thing. William Morris, for instance, was at once a revolutionary socialist and a passionate medievalist. The highest development of this sensibility occurred in the country where political conditions were the harshest. Richard Wagner's conception of *Tristan*, in his own words, that of a ‘tale of endless yearning, longing, the bliss and wretchedness of love; world, power, fame, honour, chivalry, loyalty and friendship all blown away like an insubstantial dream; one thing alone left living — longing, longing unquenchable, a yearning, a hunger, a languishing forever renewing itself; one sole redemption — death, surcease, a sleep without awakening’. And Deryck Cooke draws out the musical implications: ‘Wagner's conception of the work must have stimulated certain of the most expressive tonal tensions to materialise from the D minor/A minor key-area of his unconsciousness: these were naturally enough, the “tragic” minor third, the “anguished” minor sixth, the “hopeless” minor second, the “mournful” minor seventh, the “pathetically longing” fourth, and (most significantly) the “violently longing” major seventh’.³ The violently longing major seventh! — the perfect expression, because musical, of what is denoted by that peculiarly German word — *Sehnsucht*: the yearning for the impossible.

All this may (and did) make for remarkable art, but when it spills out from the theatre into the streets, disaster follows. Wagner's own politics were atrocious; what followed was much worse. Politics ceases to be the interplay of pressures and becomes a kind of magic instead, a phenomenon which (if you will permit me one last cultural reference) Thomas Mann understood well when he wrote 'Mario and the Magician', a story which adds layer upon layer of unease as it proceeds from the description of a beaiful of patriotic Italian children to its fatal climax. Politics as an expression of interests can be rough, but it is far exceeded in ruthlessness when power is wielded as an attempt to fill a cultural void. The enterprise must end in failure, but it is the failure of the drug addict who consumes himself in ever more desperate attempts to achieve success.

The most important recent manifestation of this factor in South African politics is a published internal ANC memorandum which, correctly, registered the fact that the organisation is and will be under pressure to negotiate a modified capitalist future. The general tone of the memorandum is alarm, most clearly expressed in the statement that 'this is not what we have been fighting for'. To this, the editor of *Business Day* has made the most pertinent response — very well then, but will you tell us what you *are* fighting for? The Freedom Charter supplies an answer, of course, but it is one which unites nearly all white people against it by inevitably making an enemy of business. (Not quite all, of course: for instance, there remain the leather sandal and baggy dress brigade, a section of the clergy undergoing a crisis of their own in a modernising and secularising society and Afrikaner literati bored with old 'dag op die plaas' culture even if — as in some recent renditions — it is enlivened with bouts of incest.) In acknowledgement of this, the economic section of the ANC's recently published constitutional guidelines adopts a softer tone (without, however, repudiating any of the Freedom Charter), but at the cost of replacing a bad economic programme with no economic programme at all. There is a good political reason for this — as soon as the ANC starts to become more definite about economic policy it will start to shed one or another part of the constituency it presently holds together on an anti-apartheid platform. This is a point of the first importance, and I shall return to it.

No discussion of this topic is complete without reference to the role of the Communist Party. The SACP has always followed the Moscow line and it has dutifully declared its support for Gorbachevism. But this must have been a bitter pill to swallow — as bitter as the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 for the European communist parties — because it strikes at the heart of the vision

which underpins the SACP-ANC alliance. As a result of Marx's theory of history, one of the oldest debates within socialism is whether stages of economic development can be skipped — in particular, whether socialism can be introduced before capitalism has developed fully. Opinion in industrially advanced late nineteenth-century Germany tended to the view that they could not. But Russian (and South African) communists had to take the opposite view. One could somehow be a Marxist and support precapitalist communal forms against the intrusion of capitalism. This effectively became the dominant position in the years following 1917, forming the ideological basis of Soviet support for third world nationalist movements. Seventy years later, with rising mortality levels and a stagnating economy which shows no signs of being able to produce the blue jeans so much prized in the Soviet Union, it looks as though the Germans had a point. As an American wit recently put it, communism now appears as the longest road from capitalism to capitalism.

I have started with a discussion of black politics, as any demographically informed person must. When I was on sabbatical leave at Princeton a few years ago, a black student came to see me to talk about South Africa. He was intelligent and engaging, but suffered from the peculiar kind of provincialism which so hampers the formulation of sensible US policy towards this country. One of the questions he asked me was why there is no bussing in South Africa. I explained to him that it would be whites, not blacks, who would have to be bussed and that, given that 13 black children are being born at the moment for every white one, there are not really enough whites to go round. These observations had a visible impact on his perceptions of South African politics. And so they should. One of the problems for a future generation of historians will be to explain how it has been possible for five million whites — most of them of quite scruffy origins and many remaining in that state — to wield the power that they have. But their social and economic dominance is rapidly crumbling. White people have not been able to fill the commanding positions in the economy since the late 1960s and the time will shortly arrive — when they will receive less than half of all personal disposable income. The faster the economy grows, the faster the dominance will crumble. They cannot choose economic stagnation — though stagnation may be forced on them — because it produces massive social discontent.

Such circumstances render a political challenge inevitable and it has been manifest ever since 1976, culminating in the paroxysm of 1984-86. I venture to say that, at the appalling cost of three thousand lives, it has been borne in on virtually all white people that the game of exclusive political control is up. Even poor Barend Strydom — especially Barend Strydom! — knows it; he could not

come to terms with the knowledge, but the rest of us must. The issue in white politics is now the basis of attempts to deal and people are lining up — to a considerable extent on the basis of interest — behind the three options which Alfred Hoernle delineated fifty years ago; partition, parallelism and assimilation.⁴ The clear black preference is for an assimilationist solution (but then, of course, there will be a *Kulturkampf* to settle the terms on which assimilation takes place just as there was when Catholic Bavaria joined Protestant Prussia in the German Empire), but there are also indications of willingness in some black political circles to incorporate a degree of parallelism, provided it is not based on statutory racial classification. It is even not beyond the bounds of possibility that if die-hards really want a chunk of the northern Cape for an *Afrikanerstan*, they will get it.

Given these developments, in what sense can we regard white people as prisoners of tradition? When I travelled around the country in 1987, an important question in the back of my mind was of course: Is South Africa in a revolutionary situation? I came to the conclusions that one important condition at least was missing: the exhaustion of the ruling class. When a senior industrial relations manager made the most sensible point in the entire set of interviews — ‘Nothing is not negotiable, but issues must be dealt with one at a time and there must be give as well as take.’ — I was struck by the sense of confidence and the search for new options rather than by the hidebound immobility one encountered in other contexts. Yet this, of course, is not the whole story.

When Werner Sombart posed his famous question in a lecture early this century: ‘Why is there no socialism in the United States?’, the answer he proposed was the existence of a moving frontier which enabled those without assets to create them there, if they wanted to, rather than being forced into wage-labour.⁵ If we ask today: ‘Why is there no socialism in South Africa?’, the answer is that some of its functions have been exercised by the creation of a patronage state. A patronage state redistributes income but not according to universal criteria. Rather the benefits go to a minority group which has captured state power: the political form of the patronage state is always oligarchical. The scene was set for the construction of a patronage state in South Africa by the constitution of 1910; the groundwork for its realisation was laid by the PACT government and it has been powerfully developed since 1948. It has, in part, redistributed income from the rich, but its greater impact has been to create opportunities for the middle at the expense of the vast mass of the poor. Here lies the great problem for those who think of themselves as social democrats today: how can redistribution through the state escape the prison of the patronage state tradition? It seems to me that much of the

advocacy of such redistribution amounts in practice to proposals for broadening the South African oligarchy somewhat, rather than a real democratisation.

Let me illustrate my point by discussing a field I spend much of my time at present thinking about: housing policy. It is clear that the anti-urbanisation policies of the 1960s and 1970s which left a huge housing backlog and the very rapid black urbanisation of the 1980s — above 10 % p.a. between 1980 and 1985 in both Durban and Cape Town and between 6 and 8 % p.a. in Port Elizabeth and the PWV right now — presents us with a housing crisis of even greater magnitude than the country confronted in the 1940s. Worse, whereas real per capita incomes rose in the 1940s, they are falling now. One hears voices urging a massive state housing programme; on enquiry about where the funds are to come from, references are made to cuts in the Defence budget. The housing lobby is, of course, not the only grouping with its eye on those funds; to name just two sectors, health and (most expensive of all) education have their claims and when all these claims are added up they will certainly far exceed what is spent on defence. Moreover, the assumption that the future South African state will be able to dispense with a defence force is highly dubious. Historical experience suggests that radical political change is often followed by increased military and security activity. Consider, for example, France after 1789, the Soviet Union after 1917, Germany after 1933 and Iran after 1978.

Conventional state built housing for all who cannot afford to purchase it is an unattainable goal at our present stage of development; insistence on it may continue to call forth some of it for those lucky or well-connected enough to gain access to it, but at the cost of no state assistance for the poorest and the newly urbanised. If one is interested in maximising the position of the least well-off, subject to equality of opportunity, a far superior policy is for the state to provide a lump sum subsidy for everyone who needs it in order to provide secure tenure of a modestly serviced site. Households may then build what they can afford to. Such a policy is feasible at the present stage of development. Certainly, there will be a considerable number of shacks, and for some time if the economy does not perform better than it has over the last decade, but the people in them will be much better off than they would be otherwise.

This example can be generalised, both across economic sectors and across developing countries. Hernando de Soto has observed, in the case of Peru, that the poor are best served by liberal development policies. The poor get the best housing, he argues, if they are permitted to house themselves; they get the best access to economic opportunities if they can function in a deregulated

environment. (Apparently it takes nearly 300 person-days to register a small business in Peru.) The Peruvian state, being narrowly-based, simply serves to stifle these efforts at advancement in a bureaucratic machinery which serves the interests of those effectively incorporated into the political system. It follows that, in the South African case, support for free enterprise from representatives of the homeland rural population is not merely sycophancy. Under the circumstances, it may offer the best opportunities for their constituency.

Analysis of this kind draws attention to the fact that South Africa has already a differentiated structure of interests. Indeed, if it were not for the special common interests and political structures created by statutory racial discrimination, the multi-party system which more and more people are talking about — and which is the best guarantee of political freedom — would already be a reality. Virginia Woolf was once asked what one needed to be a writer. She replied: 'Four hundred pounds a year and a room of one's own.' What does South Africa need to be a liberal democracy? — a 4% growth rate and the abolition of statutory racial discrimination. We will not have one without these conditions. With them, there is a good chance that the rest will follow. The former condition means that everything which lowers the economic growth rate — whether it be the inefficient use of resources associated with restrictive practices, on the one hand, or economic sanctions, on the other — is to be avoided. As far as the latter condition is concerned, it is up to the government to make an offer. The problem is how to get to that point.

Since I started to talk about the construction of a contemporary South African liberalism, I have been asked many times where this liberalism comes from. Often enough, the tone of the question has been similar to Stalin's reply to a wartime observation by Churchill that a certain measure would offend the Pope. 'The Pope!' scoffed Stalin. 'How many divisions has he?' Of course, politics is about the headcounts of contending mobilised groupings; but it is not only about that. Old traditions emphasise that politics is a matter of communicative action, even (to use Michael Oakeshott's rather donnish phrase) of a civilised conversation.⁶ (I prefer to avoid the word 'ideology' since so many people think that the identification of an argument as an ideology means that there is no need to think of a reply. In this sense, vulgar Marxism regresses well behind Marx himself, for whom critique — and that meant dealing with argument by argument — was the centre of his life's work.) Communicative action is of particular importance when one has to come to terms with the complex configuration of power which, contrary to many images, actually exists in South African society.

One important political principle which operates in a three-way

political context is that of *tertius gaudens*. If A and B fall out, the third (C) rejoices. A and B in our situation are African and Afrikaner nationalism respectively. While they both continue to count the interests of each member of their community for one and those of everyone else for none, they must be uncompromisingly opposed to each other. The only bases on which they can really negotiate an advanced industrial future (and negotiation is the word on everyone's lips, even if it is sometimes only the tribute vice pays to virtue) are the universal principles, deriving from the Enlightenment, which underlie a contemporary liberalism. The power relations between A and B must be such as to force negotiation and with it a wider South Africanism.

Where does liberalism come from? It comes from the future. More precisely, it comes from a possible future which cannot be guaranteed. Here it is worth noting that the worst decade for South African liberalism was the one following the severe defeat inflicted by Afrikaner nationalism on African nationalism at the beginning of the 1960s. It will go equally badly for liberalism should the reverse happen in the 1990s. Both an autocratic state and crippled economy would be the inevitable result.

One can demonstrate the point in another way by returning to the example of housing. It is gradually, gradually! being borne in on civil servants that the only viable subsidy policy is one which gives all South Africans in the same position the same chances of obtaining the same amount of state assistance. The old racial estate ways of thinking are dying hard and they re-emerge in a hundred new (but feebler) guises, but they are dying nonetheless. On the other hand, the greatest threat to this process is circumstances in which communities refuse to abide by cost recovery mechanisms — a situation for which past bad policies and processes are partly to blame. Under these circumstances of fiscal haemorrhage, the state simply becomes disabled and paralysed where it does have a potentially useful role to play in improving the position of the poor. Not only that, but a reaction by the government to the still not very firmly grounded acceptance of black urbanisation sets in. The storm signals are already there for those able to read them, and they may become more visible before too long. The moral is this: creation of a housing policy appropriate to our present circumstances requires re-evaluation of positions on both sides directed towards the attainment of a more universal perspective on the problem.

Let me recapitulate the core of my argument. The route to both freedom and prosperity lies through negotiation. Genuine negotiation requires the willingness to separate out issues, to work on them one at a time and to accept that agreed positions will take some time to emerge. The obstacles to the development of a real

disposition to negotiate are a high degree of inherited material inequality reinforced by the operation of a racial estate system. Associated with this has been the development of a political culture which produces pessimistic conservatism on the one hand and radical romanticism on the other. Both effectively deny the possibility of a negotiated transition to a fairer, more legitimate, social system.

The existence of pessimistic conservatism defines the necessary next stage in South Africa's development. It is that of achieving a real grasp of the meaning of a universal citizenship. Andre du Toit in his inaugural lecture as professor of political philosophy at the University of Cape Town last year took the pessimistic stance. In discussing my work, he claimed that I had failed to 'confront the problematic historical and moral assumptions of a universalist liberal ideology in a postcolonial context' and that unless I 'can find a base in our own historical experience and political conditions' my project is 'doomed to remain a purely academic exercise'. There are two parts of this critique which I cannot understand. The first is the implication of a contradiction between moral assumptions and universalism where none exists; indeed, one of the characteristics of a moral judgment is its universal character. Nor do I see that a postcolonial context makes universalism harder; indeed, it ought to make it easier because it abolishes the distinction between coloniser and colonised. But I do understand the bit about the base in our own historical experience and it needs dealing with.

A few months ago, St Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg invited instrumentalists and singers from Soweto to provide the music for High Mass. (It is for good cultural reasons that Anglo-Catholicism is the majority tradition in South African Anglicanism, whereas it has always been a minority in England.) It went on for hours: the cool xylophone, the drums, the choir, clouds of incense — all against a background of gothic choir stalls, an organ made in Birmingham and even British regimental flags mouldering in the side chapels. All of this has roots in our own historical experience — as much as the sjambok and Robben Island; all of it was not only able to coexist, but it combined in such a way that everyone had a good time in a celebration as rich as a page of the Kelmscott Chaucer. Not all our tradition imprisons — by no means.

In dealing with radical romanticism, let me say this. It may seem that by advocating a settlement on liberal terms, I am proposing nothing more than bland and boring bourgeois development. But it is not so. European decolonisation in the 1950s and 1960s opened the way for a great number of new voices to be heard on the international cultural scene. Coming to terms with these is no easy business; so great are the strains that we have heard not a little whining in the moral and political philosophical literature about

the failure of the Enlightenment as a practical political project. But the project has not failed. The Enlightenment certainly has new enemies, but enemies it has always had. It has never claimed that its success would be automatic; it has to be fought for. Small far-off South Africa is of such international interest precisely because we are a key front in the battle. But in the struggle, we can take heart from two of the Enlightenment's greatest representatives. Pale, northerly, Konigsbergian Immanuel Kant taught us the importance of rational reflection on duty, and nothing can substitute for this. But a passionate nation — and we have this much in common already — must also be concerned, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau was — with the politics of the heart. To combine our political obligations with the lekker jol of responding to the new life emerging around us — that surely must represent our greatest challenge, our most exciting aspiration, our special contribution to world culture.

*University of Cape Town,
Rondebosch.*

NOTES

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THE CRITIC IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY: TOWARDS A THEORY OF RECONSTRUCTION*

by MICHAEL CHAPMAN

(i)

Let me sketch for you a possible scenario in South African social, literary and artistic life. It involves a critic — whether of literature or art does not really matter. Living in a South Africa of prolonged social crisis, the critic begins to doubt his own artistic wisdoms. (For ease of identification and expression, permit me to designate this particular critic as a he.) After reading innumerable reports of corruption and duplicity in government circles, innumerable reports of detentions without trial and vigilante violence, the critic starts to wonder whether, at our historical juncture, issues of people's education and worker solidarity in the struggle for a living wage are not so morally pressing as to trivialise by comparison literature, or art, in any autonomous, or even semi-autonomous, sphere.

The critic turns to poems that are rich in allusion and erudition, but begins to find greater power in lines of communicative directness. He visits the art gallery and, unable to focus on the generous strokes of oil on canvas, his mind's eye moves beyond the frame of the picture and conjures up alternative images of a Europeanised bourgeoisie dispensing cake when bread is scarce. In contrast, the poor materials of coloured ball-point pen, ink wash on paper, watercolour, stoep polish, and enamel paint on wood begin to assume both an aesthetic and a moral appropriateness. Turning away from ideals of classical proportion, or romantic expressiveness, or even modernist juxtaposition, our critic realises that, in the middle of a state of emergency, an extra-artistic context of expectation has begun to modify his responses to the subject, to the technique, to the institutions of literature and art. A surrounding discourse concerning something like authentic testimony or participatory witness is regulating the credence he is able to grant to the text/object.

Thinking of existing histories of great achievements and lineages of artists seen in terms of influence and continuity, thinking too of the kind of arguments colleagues will mount against the literary person who seems to be questioning the significant work as the basis of knowledge, our critic tries to take stock of his own disturbing shift of perception. For his crisis goes beyond the recognition — embodied in the theme of the present conference —

* Keynote Paper, SA Association of Art Historians 5th Annual Conference, 'Diversity and Interaction'. University of Natal, Durban 17–19 July 1989.

of diversity or even interaction in the arts, and begins to erase the very character of the artefact. The object of his study suddenly becomes extremely vulnerable, and our critic feels compelled to examine his own position *vis-à-vis* his discipline. Some fifteen years ago, in literary studies, he subscribed along with most others to a moral-humanist/formalist belief that literary works are shaped, communicated and received, passed on from writer to reader in a system of exchange that ultimately transcends critical and historical specifics. As a result of the harsh attacks, since the later 1960s, on categories of the absolute and the universal, however, our critic in line with most of his colleagues can now appreciate different kinds of expression in relation to the demands of particular social, political and cultural beliefs. Living in South Africa, he has been influenced by the Africanist priorities of the Black Consciousness writers of the 1970s, where words and images spoke immediately, simply and with the function of raising the consciousness of local audiences in matters of political protest and resistance. More generally, he is the heir of new theory, and he witnessed a philosophical shift during the seventies from a Kantian to a post-Hegelian position. Consequently, truth is seen not idealistically in relation to things represented; rather, it operates structurally in relation to agreed series of interpretations. Roland Barthes' structuralism, for example, does not regard the work itself as the proper object of critical concern, but analyses the social and literary conventions that make meaning possible. Signs function because of their expansion into social contexts, and the question becomes not, Is my interpretation true?, but, What language of interpretation am I using, and for what purpose?

Such enlightened acts of reading — the key to the structuralist activity — have the potential to launch fundamental attacks on the existing paradigm of the great work. Yet in the early 1980s, prior to the declaration of the state of emergency, our critic was utilising new theory not so much to investigate the role of literature in society as to increase his understanding and appreciation of diversity and interaction in the arts. In absorbing Marx's original idea that aesthetic value is not the property or quality inherent in things themselves but something they acquire in human society, our critic simultaneously extended his formalist vocabulary to entertain a range of imaginative possibilities. In recognising that the significance of a poem is neither inevitable nor objective, he recognised that in this country a white poet like Douglas Livingstone might legitimately explore the split vision of the modernist in addressing his own dilemma as a white African.¹ At the same time, the black poet Mafika Gwala, equally legitimately, might favour direct statement in appealing to an audience of the oppressed. In short, flexibility rather than change became the

province of the critic, and new theory was deflected from its purpose of cultural analysis towards a literary approach for justifying greater eclecticism in literary-social life. The activity is by no means an invalid one, especially in a society which systematically sets out to restrict alternative opportunities.

What increasingly began to trouble our critic as he moved towards the later 1980s, however, was that, despite such diversity and interaction, the State seemed able to live quite comfortably with current practice and debate in the arts. In reading stories of repression and affirmation in the alternative media, our critic realised what the government, with a philistine astuteness, had realised for some time: that any text/object framed by the book or the gallery so as to suggest its generic identity as literature or art, even any text/object given academic sanction, becomes of less consequence to political action than the authority of actual living conditions. The police were thus reacting to the demands of the context when they banned the Arts Festival '86, organised in Cape Town by the End Conscription Campaign, before the exhibition could open: that is, before its texts could contribute to what white South Africa had already decided was the ECC's highly provocative, even traitorous anti-militarism. Having some years previously first questioned distinctions between art as universal and history as contingent, our critic — subscribing to the tenet of new theory in terms of which ideologically constituted readers 're-write' texts — was at this point experiencing his own crisis of literary-critical purpose. Feeling partly despairing, partly liberated, he wrote an essay entitled 'Writing in a State of Emergency'. I shall read you several extracts.

Writing in a State of Emergency²

Do writers of poems, stories and plays have any relevance, in South Africa, in a prolonged state of emergency? Responses range from the academic shudder at the very mention of the word 'relevance' to the materialist-idealisms of literature as revolutionary service.

From some we hear shrill defences of the imagination, in which East Europeans like Milosz and Kundera are cited as writers who, amid totalitarian power, have held on to art's special language of truth and beauty. Others see in such arguments little more than a continuing Western-elitist attempt to smuggle high art into the arena of proletarian necessity, and 'worker testimonies' have eschewed the very idea of the art product. In a revolutionary time the State, for its part, has tended to regard contexts as more authoritative than texts, and the consequences for the imagination are profound. Significantly, the film *Cry Freedom*, having been passed as a 'text' by the censors, was banned by the police in the 'context' of the state

of emergency. We can take another example. In 1986 Sisa Ndaba edited *One Day in June* (Donker). Appearing ten years after June 16, this anthology contains a celebratory record, in poems and statements, of the children of Soweto. Yet the book is freely on sale. By contrast, the cassette-tape, *Change Is Pain* (Shifty Records, 1986), by Mzwakhe Mbuli, is banned. Mzwakhe's words, which were spoken originally at political funerals and other gatherings, are in themselves no more radical than those of the Soweto poets of ten years ago. And packaged on cassette tape, *Change is Pain* is, ironically, already becoming a product rather than a process. Nevertheless, the State has attempted to control the phenomenon of Mzwakhe's performance poetry. The banning of the cassette, of course, hardly gets to the crux of the matter, where the poetry of the political platform can assume a purpose greater than any poetry of permanent form, and it is no surprise that Mzwakhe himself has been harassed and detained. In a state of emergency the authority of the experience, rather than its transformation into the art object, has become the real locus of power.

Such necessities have given crucial importance to the so-called alternative media, including *New Nation*, the *Weekly Mail* and *South*, where readership figures can reach 40 000 a week. Ashley Kriel's funeral, as reported in the *Weekly Mail* (24–30 July 1987), had a narrative which confounds the usual distinction between 'fact' and 'imagination', and should cause us to ponder hard on the possibilities of literary expression. Instead of fictive transfigurations we have the mimetic sign, emotively contextualised and yielding the rituals of a huge morality drama. As Gaye Davis reports, the police broke their word not to interfere in the funeral of the young ANC guerilla Ashley Kriel. The larger movement of the crowd was focused, for human interest, on the heroic figures of Tutu and Boesak, and on the anguish of the Kriel family, 'ordinary people'. Within this frame the songs, the insignia, the tear-gas canisters, the hearse, all provided socially precise symbols of good and evil:

'According to the family, police told them they had fifteen minutes to bury Kriel ... While mourners softly sang an Umkhonto we Sizwe anthem, police took photographs. As handfuls of earth were scattered on the coffin, a flash of the ANC flag could be seen, before the grave was filled to the strains of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika and mourners started drifting away.'

The reporter has, of course, shaped her material according to her own radical-liberal sympathies. Nevertheless, she is not the author of the story. It is the context of real life, at this particular time, that gives her text its meaning, and the participants in the events would have experienced what no reader can experience: the actuality of revolutionary solidarity. When the last strains of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika faded away, they must have felt that the story had not come to an end. As we are led to understand, closure was a Brechtian *gestus*, or point of focus on the epic road of history.

By contrast, the 'skilfully artistic' responses, in the mid 1980s, of acknowledged authors such as Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard and J.M. Coetzee could seem remote from what is most pressing in a state of emergency, and André Brink, in 1987, perhaps anticipated the trivia of his own latest novel *States of Emergency* (Faber, 1988) when he said: 'If the artist has come to be regarded as irrelevant by the authorities, perhaps it is because he has misrepresented the full extent of his function within this society. . . . What is feared by the government is the dissemination of factual information by the media, because whatever happens, people must not be allowed to find out.'³ Amid the repression of the state of emergency, however, a Gramscian zone of liberation⁴ has continued to identify itself: in symbols of oppositional culture, in confrontational performance, in the persistent affirmation of a non-racial, democratic future. The role of artists has been tied to the pragmatics of political change where they are accountable, in terms of subject and style, to progressive forces in the oppressed community.

Our critic's essay, 'Writing in a State of Emergency' duly appears in the January 1989 number of the *Southern African Review of Books*, and several virulent, even hysterical attacks are mounted against him. What is objected to most strongly is the comment that in our state of emergency the authority of the experience, rather than its transformation into the art-object, has become the real locus of power. Here is the attacker, Stephen Watson, blasting away:

There is a solution for people who find themselves in Chapman's particular Emergency. [As you will have realised, our critic's name is Chapman.] If they believe, as they are perfectly entitled to do, that matters in South Africa have reached such a pass that literature (especially the derided 'skilfully artistic' sort) is worse than worthless; if they feel nothing but contempt for 'song' in the face of so much 'suffering' . . . they have no need to pass off their thinly disguised disgust with the creative faculty as some superior cultural-political wisdom. They can, as many responsible people have done, give up literature altogether.⁵

In conclusion, I am challenged to resign my professorship and to take up a role — presumably as an MK freedom fighter — where I can participate in actual living conditions and thereby inherit the authority of experience. Surely Watson's distinction between 'contemplation' and 'action' is problematic — I reply⁶ — and needs to be subjected to continual investigation. If a white professor of literature, at a largely white university — as Watson designates me — feels impelled to engage in 'real' activities, the attendant questioning could have consequences in relation to matters of admission policies, standards, syllabus reconstructions, value and

perception. Racially and culturally heterogeneous groups of students could, for example, be introduced to literature, or art, not as received tradition, but as a site of cultural struggle and debate. It follows that some might see Ellen Kuzwayo or Mtutuzeli Matshoba or Thami Mnyele as more 'experience-laden' than Athol Fugard or J.M. Coetzee or Andrew Verster. I decline to resign my professorship.

If the arguments seem abrasive, hyperbolic or just plain daft, then we might want to characterise our current phase of literary-artistic life in South Africa as farce or melodrama. If we do, we shall be using Marx's description of the time when the ruling classes begin to lose their way. There is either a retreat from change into older securities — a kind of last feast in which old modes, old atavisms, are revived as if they were new — or there is squabbling, rancour, frenzy and morbidity, those manifestations — as Gramsci identified them — of the interregnum, when the old order is dying and the new cannot be born. There is, of course, another perspective from which to regard such a time of transition: that of epic. According to this view, the oppressed begin to shape their own future, and the heroic path forward opens up a horizon on which the highly wrought artefact could quite feasibly occupy a relatively minor space. Here the autonomy of art exists only *by, in, and through* its social conditioning, as the heroic phase locates its own struggles for power in a wide cultural field, where artists become cultural workers. Accordingly, art is seen as a higher form of labour, a manifestation of the practical activity of people by virtue of which they express and confirm their potential of transformation in the material world. When the esoteric work arrives, its import is swiftly minimised. Instead of J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) filling the horizon, we use the insights of Jacques Derrida to read the text deconstructively: against the grain of authorial intention, we interrogate its ideological 'silences' and gaps. In his critical writing,⁷ for example, Coetzee understands that so much white South African writing has characterised Africa as either empty landscape or monster. We could add: Africa as noble savage. We now turn these images of colonial psychosis against Coetzee himself, and note that in *Foe* his black figure — Friday — has no tongue. As the writer of 'difficult' fictions Coetzee, as seen from the perspective of epic, may have lost his own tongue as a novelist of consequence. Using his postmodernist allegories to unpick imperial power relations, he has difficulties in knowing what identities need rebuilding. After fragmenting his subject — the white European authority — Coetzee is unable, or unwilling, to turn the African Other into a new Subject. There are no new solidarities.

The epic voice, by contrast, has no such difficulties. As we white

liberal readers sympathise with Coetzee's protagonist Michael K (*Life & Times of Michael K*, 1983) who, amid civil war, keeps alive the idea of gardening, the people of the epic would probably invest greater significance than Coetzee in the stories of the guerilla band, who are convinced that theirs are stories for a life time: stories which recuperate the past for meaningful living in the future. The writers and artists of the epic — like the guerilla band — might need to free themselves from the frame of the artefact and give totality to alternative spaces in many forms. As the novelist Menán du Plessis said in her opening speech at the cultural festival 'Breaking the Silence':

Resistance art doesn't follow the path of bourgeois art with its access to the entire range of technical apparatus. Released from the production line, that special economy of publishing and marketing, resistance art finds itself in the daily lives of the oppressed class.⁸

Du Plessis goes on to include as examples of resistance tools the rousing toyi-toyi dance, singing, murals, stickers, banners, badges, posters and AK 47s made of wire and wood.

Is any of this transferable to more permanent artistic forms? Perhaps the question is invalid, especially in the epic phase. Only after independence in Mozambique, for example, did the spontaneity of the first wave of mural art give way to the mural as total work conceived and created from a plan and carried out under professional guidance.⁹ Nevertheless, several spokespersons, writers and artists feel, I think, that the narrative of history is already set upon a future course where, to use the synthesising term of Marx's farce-epic dialectic, the romance of the post-apartheid society will become the reality. In the war of signifying language, the State has lost control of humanising vocabulary such as freedom, non-racialism, democracy, justice, rule of law, sympathy, people. And Pallo Jordan of the ANC, in his keynote address at the CASA (Culture in Another South Africa) conference in Amsterdam, in 1987, could anticipate a society where the praxis of people has created the new conditions necessary to advance the humanisation of things and senses beyond utilitarian necessity to the level of the aesthetic sensibility:

The ANC does not ask you to become political pamphleteers. There are a number of those, though we need more. The ANC does not require poets to become sloganeers; the walls of South Africa's cities testify to our wealth in those and the mastery they have of their craft. While we require propaganda art, we do not demand that every graphic artist and sculptor becomes a prop. artist. We would urge artists to pursue excellence . . .¹⁰

Excellence, however, is to be put to the service of the liberation struggle: 'The task of the democratic artists' — Jordan continues — 'is to define, through their art, the political and the social vision of the democratic majority'.¹¹ The call is for the humanist, internationalist, but distinctly South African character of people's culture. The formulations can be grasped more in the spirit, however, than the letter. Perhaps this is inevitable, for the ANC in the epic phase needs to weld together a broad alliance against apartheid. The romance of Marx's classless society is therefore converted to that of victory over social and economic racism. Bridges are set up between 'populist' and 'workerist' aspirations, and the National Union of Mineworkers emphasises not proletarian power, but an anti-apartheid coalition. Instead of doctrinaire programmes, we hear of a mixed economy. Thus the humanist, internationalist, but specifically South African voice gains credibility both in the West and with progressive-minded white as well as black South Africans. What of the democratic artist's voice?

I should imagine that the delegates at the CASA conference, confronting the 1989 Cape Triennial exhibition, would find too much farce and not sufficient epic. The large, moody apocalypses, in thick paint, suggest simultaneously our bourgeois excesses and nightmares. As in Coetzee's novels, there is an obsession with dismemberment, but barely any vision of a reconstructed future. I should imagine too that several of the images on the exhibition would strike the adherents of the epic as ideologically suspect. What in 1989, for example, are politicised viewers expected to make of Penny Siopis' 'Patience on a Monument'? Given that we are committed to reading the meaning of its form, do we see another silent, biological, organic figure in the black woman who, by the mere fact of her endurance on the African earth, will outlast the collage of patriarchal colonial history? But such a perspective is caught in the trap of its own colonial myth-making. The trouble is that the passivity of the Patience-figure does not rehabilitate a humanised and socialised environment. This can only occur dynamically, and to glimpse the transformative potential of the woman's image we might keep in mind an Albertina Sisulu, for whom identity involves active intervention in the structures of contemporary power. How, in the frame of the artefact, might we represent the totality of such a progressive vision?

My own thinking on this issue led me to linger over Peter Clarke's 'The Only Way to Survive' (1983),¹² in acrylic ink on board. Here, the orange street and the whitish wall of the house throw into sharp relief the three comrades, the faces and postures of whom suggest strength amid vulnerability, while scribbled messages on the wall signal not frenzy, but a new occupation of the social and cultural terrain:

The only way to survive
 these days,
 Is to have a sense of humour
 So . . . we live
 We perform
 we
 survive . . .

We survive not *naturally*, or even supernaturally, but always in conjunction with our deeds; and at the edge of the board Clarke selects his words from James (2, 15–16):

Suppose a brother or sister
 Is without clothes & daily
 food. If one of you says to
 him: 'Go I wish you well;
 Keep warm and well-fed'
 But does nothing about
 His physical needs, what
 good is that?

Instead of empty landscapes or monsters or noble savages, we have the dignity of reassembled identities. Instead of Manichean bifurcations of white-subjects and black-others, the colonial Other has, in Clarke's painting, become the Subject. In its imaginative interplay of the image and the word in a recognisable political context, 'The Only Way to Survive' testifies to its meaning beyond its frame. It suggests that value is determined not merely by the created properties of things, but by the social relations embodied in those things. Possibly the anxiety displayed by Watson and myself — two white critics in a state of emergency — was occasioned, partly and even unconsciously, by the fact that both of us are by implication being required in the late 1980s to marginalise ourselves: to become for a time the European-other. And yet, as I replied to Watson: 'A period defined by a shrinkage of white-European significance in the arts need not simply be seen in negative terms.'¹³ Instead, all of us who have been trained to perceive and revere the brilliant artefact, could benefit from a lesson in humility.

(ii)

I trust that my argument so far has suggested not a fashionable bashing of high art, but a difficult questioning of the character and function of literary-artistic activity in South Africa. In a society where contexts seem to overwhelm texts, how do we proceed as critics and educators? My own reponse to such a question is to

attempt, in the present paper, to move beyond the title 'The Critic in a State of Emergency', and to give body to the subtitle 'Towards a Theory of Reconstruction'. Initially, I have wanted to hold on to the procedures of deconstruction, which have alerted us to the ideological underpinnings of all writing from Shakespeare to Wilbur Smith, all art from the medieval cathedral to the 'happening'. At the same time, it is salutary to remember that as early as the mid-1950s Es'kia Mphahlele had seen the function of the black critic in South Africa as essentially restorative. As the fiction editor of *Drum* magazine, he sought to substitute ordinary life for spectacle and, in consequence, to fill the landscape — so thoroughly colonised by white politicians, educators, writers and artists — with credible black human beings. Instead of seeing monsters or noble savages, Mphahlele saw dignity in African realism; dignity in African humanism with its value of sharing in community.¹⁴ More recently, Njabulo Ndebele has also sought to rediscover the ordinary.¹⁵ Instead of perceiving Africa as the exotic or nightmarish Other, Ndebele can quite sanely see Africa as the Subject, and it seems to me that in any restructured future our new identities will have to be formed through a resolution of the black/white dichotomy. As writers, artists or critics, we need to experience black and white as people with differentiated class and gender alliances, but with undifferentiated claims to human sympathy. Undoubtedly, most of us here would agree with such a humanist direction. As I said above, however, the ideal of reconstruction might mean, initially at least, a more severe check on white-European influence than anything hitherto experienced, in literary-artistic education, in this country. The consolation might be original contributions to the making of a community of purpose. As Frantz Fanon has put it:

... if an intellectual in a colonial situation wishes to create an authentic work of art he must first understand the realities of his nation, and if he wishes to use the past he should do so with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis of hope. But to ensure that hope and give it form, he must take part in action and throw himself body and soul into the national struggle. Furthermore, the writer must remember that the colonial situation drives indigenous cultures underground.¹⁶

This is a demanding statement of intent. The crucial point is, how do we account not only for rupture, but for restructuration? For the post-apartheid ideal is future-based. How do we, as contemplative beings, intervene creatively in pressing material concerns? If we believe that literature and art are liberatory, what precisely do we mean? When he looks at the future, J.M. Coetzee sees a crisis of linearity, in which the subject is dispersed in the face

of a fragmented and reified history. Yet any attempt to reconstruct requires that we accept — pragmatically — the idea of linearities not as inevitable crisis, but as necessary master-narratives towards new social and aesthetic relations and ideals. For one thing, we might need to attend conferences where papers deal not so much with European theorists as with African thinkers. When we prescribe Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) for our students, we might need to set its hallucinatory picture of Africa and its theme of the dissolving European psyche in debate with Chinua Achebe's critical realism in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). If Achebe's realism seems 'uninnovative' in comparison with Conrad's montage, then our aesthetic views might begin to alter as we learn to sympathise, morally, with Achebe's achievement within the constraints of his historical moment: at the time of colonial transition in Nigeria. As he said, in 1965, in his article 'The Novelist as Teacher':

I would be quite satisfied if my novels, especially the ones I set in the past, did no more than teach my readers that their past — with all its imperfections — was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.¹⁷

I have shifted here from the political funerals of the epic to new canonisations in the phase of reconstruction. To some, this could seem to herald a welcome return to a sanctioned field of art. Others will notice, however, that the yardsticks are derived increasingly from African challenges and demands. Instead of French theorists, we might encounter the Nigerian Abiola Irele,¹⁸ who is a humanist, an internationalist, and is even designated 'bourgeois' by younger Marxist critics in his country.¹⁹ Irele allows texts their volition in contexts; he believes that important books matter in the intellectual life of any country struggling out of the disjunctures of colonialism. His priorities are, however, specifically African books in an African society, and his Department of Classics would centre itself around African oral traditions. In believing that African writers and critics have a responsible voice, that they need to address large issues, critics like Irele might want to set aside some of our European favourites on syllabuses and give priority, by way of example, to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). In this novel Ngugi affirms a set of values by which to re-organise one's life. What becomes important is not individualism, but relations between people. It is a utopian thrust of regeneration but, in Ngugi's writing, it is not naive. For Ngugi is alert to the need for constant vigilance against one power bloc replacing another without material benefit to most of the people. The messianic urge of the epic is replaced by the analytical mode, as Ngugi sees that behind any anti-colonial front

will lie other tensions concerning the different aspirations of capital and labour.²⁰ As we examine a writer like Ngugi, our critical vocabulary needs to embrace modified terms of value: from individualism to the socialised individual, from private life to community, from capitalist surplus to socialist redistribution.

As new maps are drawn, the challenges to writers, artists and critics, who are usually from the middle classes or at least the petty bourgeoisie, will be to reach out to the experiences of most people in South Africa. This is not a simple procedure, and we can recall with concern the way in which English studies, under the influences of F.R. Leavis and the American New Critics, were increasingly removed from any democratising view of life, and became the preserve of the university-trained 'ideal reader'. As an educator in Africa Irele, who himself subscribes to Leavisian notions such as moral substance, experiential concreteness and imaginative insight, nevertheless feels compelled to express his difficulties with Leavis' postulates:

an élite in touch through the best in literature with a vital current of feeling and values . . . [is] highly questionable.²¹

Along with analytical coherence, therefore, humility — as I have suggested — emerges as a moral and critical priority in any society in transition. As a critical requirement, it assists us to enter, in a spirit of enquiry and sympathy, into apparent dislocations, apparent awkwardnesses of syntax, phrase and contour, which will often mark literary and art forms produced across a society characterised, like ours, by an unevenness of literacy and learning. As a moral requirement, our humility reminds us to seek value not only in the achieved product, but in processes of exploration and articulation. Thinking of *Staffrider* graphics or worker testimonies, for example, we need to stick with the unfamiliar text so that we begin to feel it in the bones as well as the head. We need to delay the closure of arrogance or the over-hasty judgment until we are sure it is the works, and not ourselves, that are displaying the limitation.

It is a healthy reconstructive exercise which, as a literary person, I can perform on the visual arts with what is probably a simple openness. On my walls I have several of George Msimang's drawings of township people. I notice that, in recent years, the rubber-spined musicians have begun to share interest with the solid forms of factory-workers, and a few weeks ago I purchased Msimang's 'Granny' (1988), a profile in charcoal and water-colour, where the jutting angle of the wizened face gives human substance to the idea of resilience. I looked eagerly in available books on South African art, but found disappointingly little on Msimang. I

began to wonder, therefore, whether once again my own pre-artistic sympathy for a revitalised drive towards non-racial, democratic life in South Africa was not influencing my view of Msimang's sketches. Was the context infusing Msimang's ordinary subjects and poor materials with moral resonance? Was it that his images were cohering around a meaningful idea? The fact that Msimang just as quickly lapses back into older forms of submission, older Dumile-type figures of psychological introspection, suggests that he is not himself always cognisant of the meaning of image-making inscribed in discourse. If so, do we as critics simply condemn the unevenness of his artefacts, education and life, or do we understand, sympathetically, not only his products, but the authority of his experience as a person and an artist in a particular time, place and circumstance? Am I now mingling art appreciation and cultural analysis? If so, is it an invalid activity to see the art-object in an expanded field, where it ceases to be the preserve of any single discipline?

What I am doing, as literary critic, is to treat Msimang seriously. When the Soweto poets began to appear in the late 1960s, the first reaction by critics was either hostility (these poets can't create forms) or adulation (these poets are black). The next stage was to treat the poetry neither as curiosity nor as 'transitional', but to give it the benefit of rigorous analysis and, on its own terms, to grant it significance.²² As we can now see, in fact, Soweto poetry more than any other literary response filled the mental and imaginative horizon of the 1970s. I mention this as I look with excitement at developments in the visual arts, which have manifested themselves recently in publications such as Gavin Younge's *Art of the South African Townships* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), Matsemela Manaka's *Echoes of African Art* (Skotaville Publishers, 1987) and Steven Sack's *The Neglected Tradition* (Johannesburg Art Gallery, 1989). Younge's book gives credence to Bishop Tutu's comments in the foreword that to be human is to be creative, but the real challenge facing Younge and other progressive historians in the reconstructive phase is to convince art educators that a contemporary sculpture from Venda can provide as valuable a source of study as a cubist painting. I have no doubt that it can, and, like Manaka who says that we need to grasp the process by which artists were unmade,²³ Younge is obviously alert to the necessity of stretching and modifying any purely object-directed language of art criticism when he says: 'As a force for communication, the internal consistencies of the works of artists as different as Mnye and Ngumo transcend any categories that can be established by comparing their work. Rather, we are left with the larger categories of their dispossession and their martyrdom.'²⁴

Such contextualised considerations, however, require that we

intervene not only in order to endorse affirmations of humanity, but — as I suggested in the case of Msimang — to engage in constructive dialogue with the unevenness and difficulties of our artistic life. Younge remarks that Tito Zungu's ball-point pen celebrations of city life help migrant workers cope with degradation at the same time as whites are keen to purchase the zany creations because they show that life in the ghettos cannot be all bad.²⁵ As critics, however, we cannot stop at the mere observation; we need to investigate the contradiction between colourful image-making and regressive content. If indeed Boeings and skyscrapers signal joy on colourful envelopes, the referents of these images are also objects of Zungu's oppression. This is not simply to negate his vision. The dialogic method of enquiry requires us to enter, with understanding, into the narrow and problematic spaces that Zungu occupies as a creative human being.

As I see it, then, a theory of reconstruction will be anything but reductive. It could help to revitalise the humanities in South Africa. Without sacrificing international insights we can begin, in confidence, to chart our own field of activity. Initially, sharp erasures may occur. Some Zimbabwean scholars, for example, have needed to ignore, for a time, almost the entire corpus of literature produced by whites prior to independence in 1980; the only two white authors to enter the phase of reconstruction on their own terms are Arthur Shearly Cripps and Doris Lessing, both of whom were harshly critical of colonial policies and practices. If such severe tests of progressive content were applied to South African literature, only two white figures prior to the twentieth century are likely to emerge relatively unscathed, namely Thomas Pringle and Oliver Schreiner. Seen as a diagnostic exercise rather than a proscription, such redrawings can have value, and it is to be hoped that earlier lessons in how traditions in South African literary-artistic life became monolithic first-world constructs will prevent the scholars of reconstruction, in their turn, from being insensitive to differences as a store of strength and knowledge. The way forward does not lie simply in explaining the relationship between an art work and the society of its times. It should also involve us in determining how the products of art, nourished by the ideals, emotions and aspirations of a society, may have continuing interest and value for us in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Programmes of affirmative action will, nonetheless, initially be necessary, and progressive relevance as a substantive measure of content is undeniably important. In literary studies, translations will assume fresh significance. With English serving most practically as a *lingua franca*, we shall need to hear, in English, almost forgotten voices such as those of the great Xhosa poet

Mqhayi and the Zulu writer Vilakazi. As the Other becomes the Subject on our syllabuses, the prized Western forms of the poem, the play and the novel will need to make room for forms which have proved to be persistent in our own circumstances, such as the short story, the autobiography and the political testimony. Alongside Nadine Gordimer's novels, we might want to teach *Vukani Makhosikazi: South African Women Speak* (Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1985), a collection of transcribed testimonies by domestic servants and rural women. In fact, Gordimer's own comment in the preface to Ellen Kuzwayo's autobiography *Call Me Woman* could serve to encourage debate about the respective characters of the 'artist' and the 'witness'. Gordimer says that Kuzwayo 'is history in the person of one woman. Fortunately, although she is not a writer, she had the memory and gift of unselfconscious expression that enable her to tell her story as no one else could'.²⁶ This is back-handed praise indeed, and perhaps it is no wonder that some students of literature could find Kuzwayo to be more experientially substantial than Gordimer.

I keep returning to the suggestion that a theory of reconstruction will blur distinctions between literary-artistic studies and cultural studies, and that criticism as a contribution to social analysis and change is the path to value and relevance. Whether the subject is art or literature, critics will need to devise strategies for occupying a public sphere. Instead of delineating contemplation and action as mutually exclusive, we should learn to relate the opportunities of the universities to the demands of wider communities in our attempts to make literature and art count in any transfiguration of human and social consciousness. In this regard, we might learn from sociology, political science and history, all of which have seen the advantages of disseminating progressive insights in the pages of the alternative media and even in the middle pages of the mainstream press. Admittedly, the equivalence between art and practical reality is not unproblematic; but we could ensure that our reviews, even if they are read largely by our peers, contain less pretentious irony and more moral coherence. In reaching outwards, we learn to communicate our insights in accessible ways. We begin, too, to create a real and symbolic readership for our views.

As a teacher of literature, my contemplations thus begin to be translated measurably into contexts of actual behaviour. When a student comes to me and says, I want to write on so-and-so, I might be impelled to ask why. For whom were you writing? For what purpose? What has your writing got to do with restructuring identities in this country? Is your writing progressive in intent,

liberating in purpose? What do these questions about literature and art have to do, finally, with ideas of justice and compassion in a post-apartheid South Africa?

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NOTES

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2. Michael Chapman, 'Writing in a State of Emergency', *Southern African Review of Books*, London (December 1988/January 1989), p. 14. See also the extended version of this essay, 'The Liberated Zone: The Possibilities of Imaginative Expression in a State of Emergency', *EAR* 5, Johannesburg (February 1988), pp. 23-53.
3. André Brink, Keynote address, National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, (7-11 July 1987).
4. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).
5. Stephen Watson, Letters, *Southern African Review of Books* (April/May 1989), p. 23.
6. Michael Chapman Replies, *Southern African Review of Books* (April/May 1989), p. 23.
7. See J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
8. Menán du Plessis, Address, Cultural Art Group Festival, University of Cape Town (August 1986).
9. See Albie Sachs, 'The Murals of Maputo', *Images of a Revolution* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1983).
10. Pallo Jordan, Keynote address on behalf of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, *Culture in Another South Africa*, ed. William Campschreur and Joost Divendal (London: Zed Books, 1989), p. 265.
11. Pallo Jordan, Keynote address, p. 264.
12. Colour reproduction in *Art of the South African Townships*, ed. Gavin Young (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp. 78-79.
13. Michael Chapman Replies, p. 23.
14. See Ezekiel (Es'kia) Mphahlele, *The African Image* (London: Faber, 1962).
15. Njabulo S. Ndebele, 'The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Oxford, Vol. 12, No. 2 (April 1986).
16. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), p. 232, 244.
17. Chinua Achebe, 'The Novelist as Teacher', *New Statesman*, London (January 1965).
18. See a selection of essays in Abiola Irele, *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1981).
19. For Marxist reactions to so-called bourgeois criticism in African literature, see *Marxism & African Literature*, ed. George M. Gugelberger (London: James Currey, 1985) and Chidi Amuta, *The Theory of African Literature: Implications for Practical Criticism* (London: Zed Books, 1989).
20. See Ngugi's *Writers in Politics* (London: Heinemann, 1981).
21. Abiola Irele, 'Studying African Literature', *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*, p. 23.
22. See *Soweto Poetry*, ed. Michael Chapman (Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill, 1982).
23. Matsemela Manaka, *Echoes of African Art* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1987), p. 10.
24. Gavin Young, *Art of the South African Townships*, p. 9.
25. Gavin Young, *Art of the South African Townships*, p. 45.
26. Ellen Kuzwayo, *Call Me Woman* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), p. XI.

ANTIGONE AND ORESTES IN THE WORKS OF ATHOL FUGARD¹

by E. A. MACKAY

A young man took a bomb into the Johannesburg station concourse as an act of protest. It killed an old woman. He was eventually caught and hanged. I superimposed, almost in the sense of a palimpsest, this image on that of Clytemnestra and her two children Orestes and Electra. There was no text. Not a single piece of paper passed between myself and the actors. Three of them. Anyway, after about twelve weeks of totally private rehearsals we got around to what we called our first 'exposure'. This was an experience that lasted for 60 minutes, had about 300 words, a lot of action — strange, almost somnambulistic action — and silence. It was called *Orestes*
...²

In part influenced by Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre*, in part the result of his own creative development, in 1971 Fugard set out to produce theatre not dependent on written text, and thus free to exploit non-verbal imagery: visual images, images of rhythm, imagistic juxtapositions that do not demand the response of intellectual mediation. The few words of 'text' served mostly to identify and label, hardly ever to express directly the interrelationships between characters. Characters were not rounded, not 'studied' in the conventional sense — they too were reduced to an overlaid series of images. One actor was at once John Harris and Orestes; another was Clytemnestra destroying Agamemnon physically through the image of the demolition of a chair, and at the same time she was the old-woman victim of the bomb.

It is impossible in this verbal description to do justice to the effect of Fugard's *Orestes*: perhaps it is better simply to suggest that this superimposition of characters, expressed visually by image and action, encouraged the viewer to perceive conceptually a vast and intricate web of potential interrelationship between a disturbed and angry young man and his (presumably) 'innocent' old victim. The richness of Aeschylus's net of causation and motivation was chosen to underlie the figure of Clytemnestra; his Orestes and Electra Fugard drew from Euripides' stark, emotionally committed pair.³ It is important to realise that Fugard was not interpreting Aeschylus or Euripides: he merely juxtaposed, or rather superimposed, like a double exposure in photography, so that one perceived two images which fused to make a new pattern. Because the images were primarily visual, they did not evoke an intellectual response (and did not demand an intellectual preconditioning). They drew a deeper response from the emotions,

and thus perhaps came close to a genuinely mythopoietic experience.

In conventional drama and most other literature, the poet (in the widest meaning of the term) sees likenesses between unlike objects and presents this perception through the medium of descriptive metaphor. In *Orestes*, Fugard tried to work dramatically rather than descriptively, using sight and sound, visual and rhythmic images. He took the basic emotional conflicts of the ancient stories (brother and sister; mother; husband) and by means of *dramatic* metaphor, involving all the motif systems we expect of creative literature, but *visually* presented through actions repeated and developed,⁴ he saw and exposed a modern event through the translucent metaphor of the ancient story.

In his experimental theatre, Fugard makes a vital distinction between the 'actor as courtesan', who merely 'illustrates' what someone has written, and what he terms the 'holy actor': pretence versus truth.⁵ His *Orestes* was *par excellence* the example of the holy actor at work: Fugard had an idea, an image, a whole series of images; he gave these to his actors as a mandate, and then stimulated and provoked them into giving their own responses to these ideas, drawn from their personal life-experiences.

Yvonne Bryceland (Clytemnestra) has described this creative process:

Athol had some very clear ideas about what he wanted to do, but he didn't have a script because he did not want to have a script at that stage. He called himself a scribe, and every day he would come and feed an idea, starting off with the Orestes, Clytemnestra, and Electra relationship and running parallel, John Harris and the station bomb. Iphigenia's murder was handled simply. Athol said, 'Imagine there was someone in your life you called to, you said their name every day until suddenly, one day, she didn't answer.'

That's a typical kind of suggestion he makes as director. He will find your point of pain and remind you about it. That moment was terrible for me; I can hardly think about it now. We managed to do the play night after night because Athol had been able to touch wells in us that could be repeated in the same pain — without any technical tricks or things like that.

Clytemnestra went mad for his child that would never answer her again. Agamemnon never appeared, but Clytemnestra's destruction of him was symbolically enacted, and in that destruction lay her own destruction.⁶

In rehearsal, Fugard confronted Bryceland with a chair:

'This is unique, Y. There is not another one like it in the world. It is useful, a "good" thing. It will hold and cradle the full weight of you. And because it is useful it is also beautiful. Get to know it.

Explore it until you get to know every crack in its wood, every creak from its joints, every scab of peeling paint. Love it. And as you love it look for its flaw, its imperfection, its one fatal weakness.'

The actress did all Fugard asked of her.

'Have you found the weakness? Good. Now destroy it. Start with that small piece of torn upholstery and utterly destroy it, using only your hands. I want to see it completely obliterated. Given time and the discovery of the flaw you would do that to a Sherman tank.'

Every night, every performance that is, Clytemnestra destroyed one unique, irreplaceable chair called Agamemnon. It was an awesome and chilling spectacle.⁷

Although Fugard's *The Island*, produced in 1973, could be taken for a conventional play — it is published,⁸ unlike *Orestes*, and has thirty-one pages of text in four scenes — nevertheless it does not respond well to conventional literary analysis. It too is a product of experimental theatre, and like *Orestes* is to a large extent a palimpsest, this time involving the figure of Antigone. Attempts to isolate specific *literary* evocations of Sophocles' play can result in a grievously truncated perception of Fugard's mythopoetic dramatic method.

Deborah Foster, for example makes an ingenious attempt in '*The Blood Knot* and *The Island* as Anti-tragedy'⁹ to identify in the alternation of prison-centred scenes and *Antigone*-rehearsal scenes an imitation of the structural pattern of Greek Tragedy, with episodes separated by choral lyrics. She assumes at the outset that 'by the incorporation of Sophocles' *Antigone* within the text of the play, a comparison is implied between *The Island* and Greek Tragedy.'¹⁰ She makes the mistake (common to many who bring a literary training to bear on drama) of forgetting that Fugard's audience do not have the Sophoclean text on their laps, nor do those few who are familiar with the ancient play have the opportunity or the inclination in the course of an emotion-packed performance to 'compare' ancient and modern dramatic techniques. Based on a simplistic idea of the rôle of the chorus, who, in what she calls 'typical Greek Tragedy', 'act as interested commentators upon the action or express the universal significance of the dramatic events,¹¹ her interpretation sees the *Antigone* sections of *The Island* as a clever device on Fugard's part to allow the two characters to 'comment on their own situation without having cognition of that function as characters or necessitating an objective third person such as the separate Greek chorus.'¹² She then goes on to label *The Island* anti-tragedy because the conflicts presented in the prison situation and in the *Antigone* playlet are not

resolved: the play 'does not invite the audience to understand their own moral nature, but to consider the imperfect nature of the social order.'¹³ Such an approach seems to me to miss not only *the* point, but quite a few subsidiary points as well. If *The Island* submits to any label, it should be one derived from Fugard's own comments on his dramatic approach:¹⁴ 'Existential Theatre' (not existentialist), and with substantial elements of Theatre of the Absurd. This statement will be elaborated below, but first it is relevant to consider a little of the background to the creation of *The Island*.

In 1965, the Serpent Players, a Black drama group from Port Elizabeth with which Fugard was for quite a few years associated, produced among other plays Sophocles' *Antigone*. In 1967, two years later, Fugard commented: 'Five of our actors are in jail.'¹⁵ There is a reference in Scene I of *The Island* to this historical production, a supposed reminiscence by John which names the real actors from that cast.¹⁶

Fugard's *Notebooks* document occasions when friends and colleagues, released from Robben Island, told him of their experiences: Welcome Duru in 1966, and Norman Ntsinga (the 'Norman' in the next cell) in 1967. They told about the general organisation of Robben Island: the work gangs, the clothing, the absurd labour when they ran out of work in the prison. They told of inmates injured by warders, tending one another's cuts with urine for want of a better antiseptic; they described how the prisoners would retell movies they had seen in better days, for the entertainment of the rest, and how one man used to hold imaginary telephone conversations into a tin can, and how, once, Norman, who was arrested at the time when he was to play Haemon in the Serpent Players' *Antigone* production, organised a two-man performance of the *Antigone* for a prison concert.¹⁷ All of this recurs in *The Island*, helping to create amid the depths of human degradation a warm human atmosphere to which the audience can readily respond.

John Kani, one of the 'holy' actor-creators of *The Island*, had taken the part of Haemon in the Serpent *Antigone*, after Norman had been arrested. Winston Ntshona, the other actor-creator, was himself imprisoned at one stage. In this way, at the most obvious level, the play presents at first hand the personal reactions of the actors who created and indeed gave their names to the two characters. They react either from their own experiences or from those of their close friends.

What then is Fugard's part in the creation of *The Island*? Without really entering the vexed dispute over 'authorship', let me say that, having seen how the *Notebooks* document over some years an on-going process of accumulating ideas, and bearing in

mind that as early as 1956 Fugard had written a prison play for the Circle Players entitled *The Cell*, to me it is evident that in *The Island* just as in *Orestes*, Fugard's rôle was first to offer the actors their mandate, and then to provoke *their* own genuine reaction; from this he wrote down text and directions — very detailed directions. It is impossible to say — and does it matter? — how much serendipity was involved in the coincidence of the historical *Antigone*-productions and Fugard's palimpsest; the creative effect and dramatic success are unquestionable.

Although for the most part in *The Island* Fugard's use of the Antigone image is unconventional, on one level the preparation for and presentation of the prison-concert version of Sophocles' *Antigone* is accessible within the conventions of a play-within-a-play. Conventionally, it creates different layers of reality, especially when Winston is refusing to take part, in Scene II: 'I'm a man, not a bloody woman' and 'Only last night you tell me that this Antigone is a bloody . . . what you call it . . . legend! A Greek one at that. Bloody thing never even happened. Not even history! Look, brother, I got no time for bullshit. Fuck legends. Me? . . . I live my life here! I know what I'm here, and it's history, not legends. I had my chat with a magistrate in Cradock and now I'm here. Your Antigone is a child's play, man.'¹⁸ John, of course, has a deeper perception of Antigone's relevance.

This interconnects with the unreality — the absurdity — of life on the island. For instance Winston again: 'You get this, brother, . . . I am not doing your Antigone! I would rather run the whole day for Hodoshe. At least I know where I stand with him. All *he* wants is to make me a "boy" . . . not a bloody woman.'¹⁹ There is also the 'telephone conversation' in Scene I: this contrasts the prison with real life outside — at least, it is a picture of 'reality', but it is totally fabricated, *unreal*. The playlet is unreal in a different sense, as Winston says, but yet it reflects a universal reality, as Winston demonstrates in the last scene. There is thus a superimposition of the real world, and the world of the prison, and the more 'philosophical' realities and truths of *Antigone*, within the dramatic context.

The grim world of the prison is an encapsulated Absurd world, with Sisyphean tasks, and an unlogic of its own: John's imminent release is as absurd as Winston's continued imprisonment. But it is significant that Fugard does not present an Absurdist viewpoint. The prison is an island of Absurdity, physically and figuratively cut off from the real, realist world outside on the mainland. Robben Island's absurdity is not 'reality' and it is significant that even though Winston cannot now back out, he has submitted to its absurd rule by an act of conscious will. That Winston the actor playing Winston the character should dress up in false breasts and a

string wig and be Antigone is absurd, but on another level it represents another reality, a conceptual reality expressed and made accessible through visual imagery.²⁰

It is important to realise that *The Island* does not induce a detailed comparison with Sophocles' play, except insofar as the way in which the prisoners perceive the Antigone story, how they relate it to their *own* 'realities'. For instance, in Scene I when John coaches Winston on the plot of the play:

- John:* It is the Trial of Antigone. Right?
Winston: So you say.
John: First, the accused. Who is the accused?
Winston: Antigone.
John: Coming from you that's bloody progress. (*Writing away on the cell floor with his chalk.*) Next the State. Who is the State?
Winston: Creon.
John: King Creon. Creon is the State. Now ... what did Antigone do?
Winston: Antigone buried her brother Eteocles.
John: No, no, no! Shit, Winston, when are you going to remember this thing? I told you, man, Antigone buried Polynices. The traitor! The one who I said was on *our* side. Right?
Winston: Right.
John: Stage one of the Trial. (*Writing on the floor.*) The State lays its charges against the Accused ... and lists counts ... you know the way they do it. Stage two is Pleading. What does Antigone plead? Guilty or Not Guilty?
Winston: Not Guilty.
John: (*Trying to be tactful.*) Now look, Winston, we're not going to argue. Between me and you, in this cell, we know she's Not Guilty. But in the play she pleads Guilty.
Winston: No, man, John! Antigone is Not Guilty ...
John: In the play ...
Winston: (*Losing his temper.*) To hell with the play! Antigone had every right to bury her brother.²¹

And of course that last statement has even more barb in South Africa today than it did in 1973.

In *The Island*, there is a single spotlight (metaphorically speaking) on Antigone and her act, and not, as in Sophocles, a double focus, on Creon's predicament as well. Creon here is provided with no justification: he is revealed by his own words as a self-deceived hypocrite. Within the given dramatic situation of the play it is probable, even inevitable, that from Sophocles' original the prisoners should select Antigone's stand, and omit virtually all of Creon's rationale.

In Sophocles, Antigone as a figure is indistinguishable from her decision and her action: she incontestably commits an existential act, one which gives expression and thus existence to the essence of her being. Winston too has committed an existential act. He tells us in Scene II, still complaining about having to dress up as a woman: 'I didn't walk with those men and burn my bloody passbook in front of that police station, and have a magistrate send me here for life so that he can dress me up like a woman and make a bloody fool of me.'²² In each instance the characters, as a conscious decision, have committed the acts which define themselves and which bring into being their respective situations. There is a fundamental similarity between Antigone and one such as 'Winston' that Fugard perceived and presented, but not only by having Winston dress up as Antigone and quote Sophocles. Fugard's approach may fairly be described as mythopoesis, for in some ways he is working with the raw materials of myth, not *only* with quotation from and evocation of an earlier literary source. It is beyond the scope of this article, but the study of Fugard could lead to new insights into the Greek dramatists' relation to their mythical material.

Winston from the very beginning reveals himself as a potential Antigone-figure: he is, as John puts it, 'difficult' and 'hard-arsed'; in the first scene, after the mime, he wants to take the victimising warder to the office, to make him read his warrant. 'I was sentenced to Life brother, not bloody Death.'²³ Winston believes in absolutes; he does not 'see through' the *Antigone* play, does not perceive the sophisticated interplay of realities: he believes Antigone is Not Guilty.

It is significant that from the outset he does not want to play Antigone. His eventual change of mind is not represented in the text, but emerges from the juxtaposition of events. From the point at which Winston learns of John's commuted sentence, he develops before our eyes into a figure of heroic resignation: at first he is overjoyed for his friend, but then realises that *he* is still imprisoned for life, and will lose his friend to boot. He torments John — and himself — by imagining John's release, stage by stage, to the ultimate celebration back home: family, friends, beer, and a woman. He thinks of old Harry who has forgotten himself, forgotten 'why he is here, where he comes from,'²⁴ and fears that he will follow suit (the ultimate existential disaster). Then, face to face with the endlessness of his sentence, one day after one day after one day for life, he confronts within himself his jealousy of his friend. Fugard's stage direction is important:

(John has sunk to the floor, helpless in the face of the other man's torment and pain. Winston almost seems to bend under the weight of

the life stretching ahead of him on the Island. For a few seconds he lives in silence with his reality, then slowly straightens up. He turns and looks at John. When he speaks again, it is the voice of a man who has come to terms with his fate, massively compassionate.)

It is no coincidence that Fugard reported himself strongly affected by Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus*. Winston's next words are 'Nyana we Sizwe!' (Brother of the Land). He repeats:

'Nyana we Sizwe . . . it's all over now. All over. (. . .) Forget me . . . (. . .) No, John! Forget me . . . because I'm going to forget you. Yes, I will forget you. Others will come in here, John, count, go, and I'll forget them. Still more will come, count like you, go like you, and I will forget them. And then one day, it will all be over.'

Again, the stage directions:

(A lighting change suggests the passage of time. Winston collects together their props for Antigone.)

Winston: Come. They're waiting.

John: Do you know your words?

Winston: Yes. Come, we'll be late for the concert.²⁵

John now is hesitant; Winston assumes the leadership, in a reversal of their earlier rôles. Immediately Scene IV begins — the presentation of the playlet.

Winston's decision to play Antigone is thus, by the juxtaposition, shown to be a concomitant part of his acceptance of his situation. He is in prison, for life, as a result of his own act, committed by his own choice. Antigone, essentially similar, becomes almost a natural *persona*. His change of mind is not presented on stage because it is *not* in fact a change of mind but a change of attitude, and that is documented in full. By the end of the play, Winston is Antigone is Winston, addressing the audience as the prison audience:

Winston: Brothers and Sisters of the Land! I go now on my last journey. I must leave the light of day forever, for the Island, strange and cold, to be lost between life and death. So, to my grave, my everlasting prison, condemned alive to solitary death.

(Tearing off his wig and confronting the audience as Winston, not Antigone.)

Gods of our fathers! My Land! My Home!

Time waits no longer. I go now to my living death, because I honoured those things to which honour belongs.²⁶

The two images are fully superimposed. The palimpsest is complete.

Apart from this very explicit parallel between Winston and Antigone, there are no other specific and consistent parallels to be drawn. There is, however, a considerable number of important Sophoclean elements that are incorporated in reworked form. For instance, though John acts Creon in the playlet, he is in some ways closer to an Ismene-figure. He is the one with the sense of social responsibility: 'Don't start any nonsense now, Winston. There's six days to go to the concert. We're committed. We promised the chaps we'd do something.'²⁷ He sees the practical value of toeing the line, avoiding standing out — he keeps begging Winston, in a variety of circumstances, not to be difficult, not to be 'hard-arsed'. In this way, John fulfils much of Ismene's function as a foil to Antigone's determination, a figure of tacit acceptance, of cooperation, as opposed to confrontation. Like Ismene, John survives — he will get out — and towards the end of the play, his character fades. Yet the identification is not consistent, for the relationship is reversed: John is the dominant character in the first half of the play.

In a similar fashion, Fugard weaves into the fabric of *The Island* a surprising number of images and themes drawn from or coincidental with Sophocles' *Antigone*. For instance, central in Sophocles is the conflict between the State and the Individual. This conflict is of course inherent in the whole concept of a political prison, but is highlighted by such passages as 'Polynices. The traitor! The one who I said was on *our* side.'²⁸

Merging with this is the distinction between human law and divine justice. Sophocles contrasts Creon's human νόμος to the νόμιμα ἄγραπτα associated with ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη. The parallel in *The Island* is drawn in the question of Antigone's guilt and Winston's Antigone had every right to bury her brother.²⁹

Sophocles' point of departure in *Antigone* is the concept of two brothers opposed. In *The Island*, John and Winston constantly refer to each other as 'brother'. In the opening mime (incidentally one of the most powerful visual images in the play) they are set in opposition, each to torment the other in Sisyphian counterpoint. The shovelling of sand must surely be seen as a grim parody of the idea of burial:³⁰ each 'brother' is burying the other, and in doing so, hates and is hated in turn. The whole action is presided over by the sadistic warder, Hodoshe, whose unseen, unheard presence pervades the play. In Xhosa, *hodoshe* means carrion fly, a connotation brought out unmistakably in the mime when the hum of a bothersome fly is persistently imitated, and the men swat at the air. The mock burial is enforced by the carrion fly, a symbol of

decay. Sophocles four times evokes the image of decaying flesh: Antigone's practical stimulus to her existential act is to protect her brother's body from becoming carrion.³¹ The parallel is clearly stated by Winston-as-Antigone near the end: 'If I had let my mother's son, a Son of the Land, lie there as food for the carrion fly, Hodoshe, my soul would never have known peace.'³²

In Sophocles, the distinction between living and dead is blurred — a corpse lies unburied, a living girl is entombed. The distinction is played with mainly in metaphor by Fugard. The burial parody and significance of Hodoshe have already been discussed; the imprisonment is presented as a living death: 'I was sentenced to Life brother, not bloody Death!'³³ By contrast with the descriptions of life outside, life in the prison is *no* life. Consider the living death that Antigone-become-Winston proclaims in the closing lines quoted above.

The interplay of conflict in Sophocles between male and female becomes one of the most amusing motifs in *The Island*. Of course, we see two men, in a world of men. But Winston rejects the Antigone rôle as a man rejecting the prospect of looking ridiculous in a wig and false breasts — 'titties', he calls them, significantly. When he first tries on his costume, John in jest makes up to him as a sex-object. Winston is outraged. When, later, he agrees not to let John down, he says: 'Here's Antigone: take these titties and hair and play Antigone. I'm going to play Creon. Do you understand what I'm saying? Take you two titties — I'll have my balls and play Creon.'³⁴ There are many other passing innuendoes.

The major structural conflicts that constitute Sophocles' play seem thus in metamorphosed form to be present in *The Island*. What of the differences? To catalogue every omission would be tedious; one stands out as immediately significant. Fugard presents in *The Island* only 'The Trial and Punishment of Antigone'. That is, he breaks off the story as Antigone leaves the stage to be 'immured' on Robben Island. Just as Fugard does not pursue Creon's point of view, does not make him a credible opposition to Antigone, so he does not pursue 'what happened afterwards' so far as Creon was concerned. Of course, in political treason trials, nothing happens afterwards to the State. The State suffers no recognition of folly, encounters no tragic consequences — as it seems. *The Island* is not in the classical sense a tragedy — Deborah Foster is right to this extent. But for me as a Classicist, so far from its being anti-tragedy, in stopping short of the traditional outcome, *The Island* evokes recollections of what happened next in Sophocles. How, in post-'Rubicon' South Africa, can one familiar with the *Antigone* avoid recalling at least the attitude if not the words of Creon's recognition:

τότ' εἰκαθεῖν γὰρ δεινόν, ἀντιστάντα δὲ
ἀτη πατάξαι θυμὸν ἐν δεινῷ πάρα.

It is a terrible thing to give way, but terrible too in resisting to be stricken by disaster.³⁵

and again: ἀνάγκηδ' οὐχὶ δυσμαχητέον.

We must not engage in a useless struggle against the inevitable.³⁶

Of course, this interpretation may not be accessible to many of Fugard's audience. Nevertheless for Fugard and Kani, both from practical experience well-versed in the Sophoclean play, this interpretation could have been as valid, in the years between Sharpeville and Soweto, as it is for a Classicist now. However, one must treat political interpretation of Fugard's plays with due caution. He himself has said:

I myself do not consider my plays to be necessarily political. At one level they say something about social conditions . . . I try to relate the very real issues of today to my plays. Perhaps you could describe it as 'theatre of defiance'; yes, my object is to defy. I am protesting against the conspiracy of silence about how the next man lives and what happens to groups other than our own.³⁷

Although in this interview he was speaking of *Boesman and Lena*, his words apply equally to other plays, including *The Island*. Antigone is above all a figure of defiance.

The Island draws explicitly on Sophocles' *Antigone*, but nearly 2500 years of historical literary development cannot be erased. Used, re-used, even abused, Antigone has acquired a cumulative aura as a figure of defiance in protest literature. To select only the most striking:³⁸

1580, France, civil war between Valois and Guizes: Robert Garnier produces *Antigone ou la piété*.

1814, in reaction to Napoleon, the *Antigone* of Ballanche.

1916, a quarter of a million unburied corpses at Verdun: Romain Rolland writes *A l'Antigone éternelle*.

1937–1943, Germany: Alfred Döblin writes *November 1918*.

1944: Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*.

1948: Bertolt Brecht's *Antigone*.

1958, in reference to the Second World War in Germany: Rolf Hochhuth's novella *Die Berliner Antigone*.

1961, Bratislava: Peter Karvaš' *Antigone a tí druhí*, set in a concentration camp.

1973, Istanbul: Kemal Demirel's *Antigone*.

1973, South Africa: Athol Fugard's *The Island*.

At times of internecine conflict, and when man's inhumanity to man is most in evidence, Antigone seems to spring like a phoenix, ever renewed, from the ashes of human decency. In this widest historical context, any society in which Antigone surfaces should

look long and hard at the conflicts which give rise to her resuscitation. She has become the ominous hallmark of an oppressive régime.

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NOTES

1. The text of this article is based on a paper delivered at the 17th Biennial Conference of the Classical Association of South Africa, Stellenbosch, 22 January, 1987.
2. A. Fugard, J. Kani & W. Ntshona, *Statements* (O.U.P. 1974) from the fourth (unnumbered) page of Fugard's Introduction; he was himself quoting from what he said three years earlier in an interview published in *Yale/Theatre IV*, 1 (1973). Although no 'text' as such exists of *Orestes*, the production is described in detail by Fugard in '“Orestes” Reconstructed: a Letter to an American Friend', *Theatre Quarterly* 8 no. 32 (1979), 3–6.
3. A. Fugard, *Notebooks 1960–1977* (Ad. Donker, 1983), 188. (Henceforth cited as *Notebooks*.)
4. For instance, the playing with the matchbox; the destruction of the chair.
5. *Notebooks* 201, and *cf.* 186.
6. R. Vandenbroucke, *Truths the Hand Can Touch* (Ad. Donker, 1986), 150.
7. *Theatre Quarterly* 8 no. 32 (1979), 5.
8. In *Statements* (see n. 2 above), 45–77. All subsequent references will be to this edition.
9. In *Athol Fugard*, ed. S. Gray (McGraw-Hill, 1982), 202–217.
10. *Loc. cit.* 208.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Loc. cit.* 209.
13. *Loc. cit.* 215, quoting R.B. Heilman, *The Iceman, the Arsonist, and the Troubled Agent* (Seattle, 1973), 44.
14. *Notebooks* 189–190, and *cf.* 75–76.
15. *Notebooks*, 149.
16. *Statements*, 53.
17. *Notebooks*, 144, 150–153, 176–177.
18. *Statements*, 60 and 62.
19. *Op. cit.* 60.
20. *Cf.* John's words. *Statements*, 61: 'When you get in front of them, sure they'll laugh ... Nyah, nyah! ... they'll laugh. But just remember this brother, nobody laughs forever! There'll come a time when they'll stop laughing, and that will be the time when our Antigone hits them with her words.'
21. *Op. cit.* 52–53.
22. *Op. cit.* 63.
23. *Op. cit.* 48.
24. *Op. cit.* 71.
25. *Op. cit.* 72.
26. *Op. cit.* 77.
27. *Op. cit.* 50.
28. *Op. cit.* 52.
29. *Op. cit.* 53.
30. So also G. Steiner, *Antigones* (Clarendon, 1984), 144.
31. Sophocles, *Antigone* lines 29–30, 205–206, 411–412, 697–698.
32. *Statements*, 76.
33. *Op. cit.* 48.
34. *Op. cit.* 61.
35. Sophocles, *Antigone* lines 1096–1097, my translation.
36. *Op. cit.* line 1106; my translation.
37. *Athol Fugard* (n. 9 above), 51.
38. G. Steiner (n. 30 above) cites and discusses many more Antigones than are listed here; I am indebted to his thorough study.

MODERNITY AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY*

by RAPHAEL DE KADT

It is a great honour and privilege for me to give this Richard Turner Memorial Lecture. All those who knew Richard Turner will recall his many qualities: his brilliant mind, his intellectual passion and his political commitment. Turner was an outstanding philosopher — his was, perhaps, the most profound philosophical intelligence in post Second World War South Africa. The best and most substantial part of his work, which remains, alas, unpublished, encompasses a magisterial reconstruction and interrogation of the history of dialectical reason from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Jean-Paul Sartre. His accounts of Kant and Hegel, in particular are paradigms of philosophical writing: wonderfully lucid, economical and sharp.

Philosophical reflection, for Turner, was no mere exercise in contemplation or technical virtuosity. It was an exercise in social and political engagement, an exercise in cultivating the practices of open, public discourse, of discursive rationality. For him, philosophy was, as Agnes Heller has put it, an exercise in thinking together.¹ The wonderful limpidity of his prose served the purpose of stimulating public discourse; it was a limpidity that he constantly, and consciously, struggled to achieve. For Turner was, and clearly saw himself as, a thoroughly situated and engaged philosopher. The compass of his reading and his interests was remarkably universal — I remember well his detailed and highly informed reflections on topics as divergent as the thought of Paracelsus and the mechanisms of the French electoral process. Yet his actions and his commitments were local and situated. His political energies were expressed in attempts to address and challenge the irrationalities and injustices of South Africa in the 1970s. Turner was, in this, a man of great moral and intellectual courage and, in his assassination on the 8th January, 1978 he paid the ultimate penalty for this courage. The power of philosophy as an instrument of emancipation in his hands was amply demonstrated precisely by the desperate resort to the assassin's bullet.

Turner was also a situated thinker in another sense: his work involved a conscious, critical appropriation and extension of the philosophical and political projects of the European Enlightenment, projects which have as their purpose the construction of a free, rational and democratic society. And it is

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about the origin, nature and fate of these projects that I wish to speak today.

In my title I refer to modernity. Why do I use this term, and to precisely what does it refer? Modernity, as I shall be using it in this lecture, refers to a particular, complex set of ideas about the nature of the human being and of his (and later her) relationship to both the physical universe and the world of other human beings. It might, indeed, be used, with some caution, to refer to the predominant moral consciousness of the economically more advanced regions of the world from the seventeenth century through to the present. In particular, it refers to a set of ideas that embodies a particular range of values in terms of which the legitimacy of social, political and economic institutions in the modern world is both grounded and challenged. It refers to a kind of world view or *Weltanschauung* which, though it has many and often contradictory elements, comes to constitute the principal framework for moral and political discourse in modern times. It must be distinguished from the term "modernisation" which refers to the growth and development of the various instruments through which nature is controlled and harnessed, productivity increased and societies more efficiently administered. Indeed, I shall want to claim that modernity and the forces of modernisation stand in a relationship of tension with one another.

In what, then, does this set of ideas consist? To answer this question adequately we need to contrast the modern world with the mediaeval world which preceded it. In particular we need to contrast the principal politico-philosophical visions of the mediaeval world with those of the modern. With regard to the evolution of political thought perhaps the most important point is that — to risk a generalisation — the *homo credens* of the mediaeval world view replaced the *homo politicus* of the classical Greek world. The politically significant aspects of this mediaeval world view are that it emphasised the importance of divine ordination and the need properly to interpret the will of God. Secular affairs needed to be adjusted to conform with this will.²

The development of the modern world embodied a number of fundamental challenges to the principal mediaeval conceptions of how the world might be comprehended and how it ought, socially and politically, to be organised. In particular three major and highly complex sequences of events, which were to have a fundamental role in forging the intellectual and political framework of the modern world, unfolded. These were the Renaissance, the Reformation and, most importantly in my view, the great intellectual ferment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Renaissance, of course, entailed the re-appropriation and re-assessment of classical learning and marked a

significant step on the road to modernity. The Reformation also signalled important developments in that it posed a challenge to the authority of the Pope. This accelerated the breakdown of the old religious sodality of mediaeval Christendom. The view that authority in general could be monopolised was eroded through the establishment of a plurality of sources of religious authority.

The main rupture, however, occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These, after all, were the centuries of Descartes, Spinoza, Newton, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant, to mention just a few. And it was the seminal writers of these centuries who first really defined the terms of modern intellectual discourse.

In what, then, does the significance of this rupture consist?

First, the seventeenth century marked a profound secularisation of thought in which theological authority and Aristotelianism were challenged. This challenge had two prongs to it. The first was the challenge to established ways of thinking about, and the grounding of knowledge of, the physical world. The second was the challenge to established ways of justifying political authority and moral knowledge. It could be said — with perhaps some exaggeration — that the *homo credens* of the mediaeval world came to be replaced by the *homo dubitans* of the modern age. This transition had a number of key features to it. In particular, method came to replace revelation as the proper basis of knowledge and the seventeenth century could well be called the 'age of method'.³ The implications of this were significant. Knowledge could only be secured through the application of the correct method. Knowledge came slowly to be conceived as a common or public good accessible to all; it was no longer, at least in principle, the privileged preserve of a fixed class or stratum of people such as religious functionaries. It could even be said that the elevation of method as the principle upon which knowledge is based had a decidedly democratic aspect to it, for the capacity to generate knowledge was put within the reach of anyone who cared to apply the right method. The testing of truth claims, therefore, was disconnected from the particular qualities or station of the person making them. The means for their testing — method — was external to, existed independently of, the claimants.

Second, and related to the prominence given to method, is the role of the categories of reason and rationality. Indeed, the very nature of human beings came to be fundamentally re-defined. They came to be seen as bearers of reason and, through their reason, as able to make choices, establish morality and transform the world. As I shall elaborate further on, the modern quest for political authenticity involves a quest for the expression of world-transforming rational will. The compass of reason came to be seen

as wide and reason came even to have an application in the grounding of morality. Thus Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* insists that

... *morality* is capable of demonstration as well as mathematics . . . and I doubt not but, if a right method were taken, a great part of morality might be made out with that clearness, that could leave, to a considering man, no more reason to doubt, than he could have to doubt of the truth of propositions in mathematics, which have been demonstrated to him.⁴

One could say that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the modern, normatively axial conceptions of the person were constructed. In terms of these conceptions, the person came to be seen as essentially or inherently rational, free and equal. This threefold description of the person is pivotal to the principal moral discourses of the modern world. Of course, what it *means* for a person to be free, rational or equal was — and still is — a much contested matter. But that, in some way, people were free, rational and equal came to be a guiding assumption of most of the more important moral and political philosophers from the seventeenth century to the present.

The implications of this conception of the person as free, rational and equal need to be spelled out. First — and I must emphasise here that, owing to the pressure of time, I am employing generalisations in a manner that I would not normally do — such free, rational and equal persons would not normally accept as legitimate the arbitrary exercise of political power. Thus — and this becomes clear in the writings of the social contract theorists — only the consent of the governed can serve as the proper basis of government.

Second, the individual human being came to enjoy a specially privileged status. The individual came to be defined as a bearer of rights who has to be tolerated and treated with respect. Furthermore, it is these very human beings themselves who are identified as the proper source of values, of morality. One particular aspect of this modern account of the person that needs to be emphasised is that rights attach to his or her self regardless of any contingent qualities or characteristics that he or she might have. Such a person is, in this sense, 'abstracted' or 'desituated' from society; his or her socially constituted identity as worker, Frenchman, Black, musician or whatever — has no bearing on his or her formal status as a bearer of rights. This view of the 'universal' nature of the person came to be encoded in various documents central to the liberal tradition. It is, for example, given exemplary expression in the Declaration of the Rights of Men and

Citizens issued by the French National Assembly in August 1789. Article 2 of that Declaration states that 'The aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; these rights are liberty, security and resistance to oppression' and article 12 declares that 'The guaranteeing of the rights of man and of the citizen necessitates a public force: this force is then established for the advantage of all and not for the special benefit of those to whom it is entrusted'. Thus the purpose of government was to protect the rights of man, and these rights included the rights both to freedom of thought and to property and were attached universally to all persons. This conception of persons as bearers of rights is distinctively modern; a strong case can be made that, although they may have had social practices that were consistent with the idea of rights, the Ancients did not define people in terms of what today we would call rights.⁵

This normative model of the person also stresses that people ought to be more or less empowered to control the circumstances of their lives. Persons on this view are active; they are agents able to shape their lives and societies in accordance with their wills. History came to be seen as an elective human project, as something that is constructed and constructable. People's lives were no longer seen as regulated by eternal, immutable cycles, by forces over which they had no command. Indeed, the philosopher of history Reinhart Kosellek has suggested that the modern conception of historical time as no longer cyclical but as a linear progression, the direction of which can be determined by human choice, has its origins as late as the period of the French Revolution.⁶

To summarise: the normative conception of the person central to modernity is that of a free and equal being who bears rights and is possessed of a potentially rational will through the expression of which he (and later she) can construct a rational society. Such an account of the person is necessarily democratic, for it disallows the arbitrary exercise of power. It is egalitarian since it forbids discrimination in terms of some putatively natural hierarchy. And it is discursive in that it suggests that the public good and common interest can be realised rationally through a process of discursive will formation — a point emphasised in widely different contexts by very different protagonists of this view such as John Stuart Mill, Rosa Luxemburg, Hannah Arendt and Jurgen Habermas. It is central to most serious liberal conceptions of the self and society as well as to most serious socialist thought. Indeed liberalism and socialism are both, in this respect, essentially phenomena of modernity.

The claim I now wish to advance is that a number of tensions exist between this normative account of the person and the various contexts in which it has been invoked. It is a tension, if I may so put

it, between the ethical content of the principal discourses of the modern world (ignoring here, of course, nihilistic and romantic anti-modernist discourses) and the social, political and economic frameworks spawned by the processes of industrial and economic growth. It is a tension between the values of modernity and many of the forces and consequences of modernisation. The democratic and emancipatory promise of modernity remains largely unredeemed on account of the anti-democratic and constraining nature of modern systems of power. The principal institutional forms of modern societies — the market as a system not only of exchange but of power, the state as a labyrinthine and often inscrutable apparatus of surveillance, administrative control and coercion — have all limited the extent to which democracy as an exercise in rational will-formation can be realised. The Rousseauesque or Kantian models of autonomy or freedom as obedience to a law that one has prescribed to oneself fit ill with a world in which the structures of power and systems of decision-making are not only limitedly responsive to the needs and wishes of ordinary people, but often prevent such people from knowing or freely defining these needs and wishes.

The conditions for autonomy exist only imperfectly. It might be said that the core normative vision of modernity and the processes of modernisation — those very processes necessary to the building of a world in which scarcity might be overcome and the circumstances for autonomy created — stand in a relationship of tension one with another. Some might even go so far as to say that the normative premisses of the Enlightenment, of modernity, are dead and that all we have are the consequences, mostly tragic, of an attempt to harness, control and direct the forces of nature; that the project of the Enlightenment with its commitment to the creation of a free and rational society has, and must of necessity have, failed; that the attempt to establish reason as a moral Archimedean point was doomed and that, insofar as modern societies are rational, they can only be rational in a crassly instrumental sense, not in the sense in which Kant or Marx would have wished. I don't, for reasons that will become clear, share this view. Rather, I see the promise of the Enlightenment to be as yet unfulfilled, its project incomplete.

The perception that this ethical vision of modernity stands in tension with the social, political and economic arrangements of modern society is not new. Rousseau himself in the eighteenth century perceived, acutely, in his *Discourse on the Arts and the Sciences*, that the modern civilisation he saw unfolding before him was not an unmixed blessing and, in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* identified the structural, historically created inequalities of modern Europe — in particular the institution of private

property — as the principal cause of human misery. ‘Man’, after all said Rousseau in the *Social Contract* ‘is born free, but everywhere is in chains’. Rousseau saw direct or radical democracy as the theoretical solution to the human predicament but doubted that such a form of government was really possible for men. Although Rousseau might be regarded as the first radical critic of modern society, he remained, in the end quiescent.

In the nineteenth century in the writings of Karl Marx, the cause of human misery came to be seen not so much in the general structures of civil society as in the specific arrangements of the capitalist system of production. This was a system of alienation, wage labour and exploitation of the labouring classes by those who owned the means of production. Marx claimed that human beings in modern capitalist societies were unfree, but that this condition of unfreedom could be rectified. He provided a detailed analysis of the mechanisms through which he claimed this unfreedom was maintained, and identified the agency — the industrial working class — through which he believed it could be negated. It is necessary to emphasise that for Marx what was wrong with capitalism was that it was, by the very logic of its organisation, a system of unfreedom in which the inherent creative capacities of people could not be fully expressed. The worker was, in his view, alienated from the product of his labour, from his creative self and from his fellow human beings. For Marx, the capitalist, too, was alienated, though the circumstances of his life were more commodious. Thus, although he greatly admired the productive capacities that had been unleashed under capitalism, Marx condemned capitalism because it was a system in which people were disempowered, in which workers were reduced to the status of commodities, of things; because it was a system which denied them their status as free and rational persons with dignity who — in Kant’s formulation — should be treated not as means, but rather as ends in themselves. For Marx, and for his followers, capitalism would be transcended through the revolutionary action of the working class, that class which was in civil society but not of civil society and which had nothing but its chains to lose. It was, for Marx, the first truly universal class able, in emancipating itself, to emancipate the whole of society. Its world-historical mission was to create, in the building of socialism, the first properly classless society.

The crucial point is that for Marx and socialists in general, the claim that freedom and human rights were realisable in a capitalist society was illusory. The distribution of wealth and power was — regardless of the constitutional guarantees within such a system — too unequal for this to be possible. Formal equality before the law did not entail substantive equality. ‘One law for the lion and the

ox', said William Blake, 'is oppression'. Or, in the later famous observation of Anatole France 'The law in her majesty forbids the rich and poor alike from begging on the streets and sleeping under the bridges'. For Marx, the state and the law were not only not neutral as between the opposed interests of the ruling class and the ruled; they reflected and reinforced the interests of the former.

Thus, for Marx, democracy, as the institutional expression of human autonomy was not possible under capitalism. Capitalist democracy was, strictly speaking, a contradiction in terms. The creation of democracy required not simply the reform of the more iniquitous aspects of the system, but rather its complete transcendence. Others, such as John Stuart Mill, who were critical of the poverty and injustices associated with nineteenth century capitalism did not believe that these were the necessary consequences of the system; rather they were accidental or contingent features that had their origins in the particular history of the system. In terms of this view, all that was needed was the reform of the less happy aspects of the system.

There are, however, other phenomena of the distribution of power in modern societies that are not reducible to the arrangements specific to the capitalist mode of production. These phenomena have been expressed as much in systems that are not capitalist as in those that are. They inhere in all modern systems of production and social and political organisation. And they are, in their own way, as difficult to marry with the values of a properly democratic civilisation as are the inequalities of the capitalist system. These phenomena inhere in the complex division of labour, the multiple and hierarchical chains of command, the multiplicity of interdependent centres of production and consumption and the sheer demographic and territorial scale of modern societies. They are phenomena identified by terms such as technocracy, knowledge elite, bureaucracy and the surveillance state; they betoken unaccountability, inaccessibility and the potential for great irresponsibility in the exercise of power. In their extreme forms these phenomena have been expressed in the totalitarian systems of the twentieth century; and, as Anthony Giddens has suggested, totalitarianism is a tendential property of the modern nation state.⁷ Indeed, the theory and practice of representative democracy can be seen as a compromise, as a means of checking and constraining these phenomena. John Stuart Mill, one of the great nineteenth century protagonists of representative democracy was quite explicit: he saw parliamentary democracy, among other things, as a means for limiting and directing the exercise of bureaucratic power.

The implications of these phenomena for the prospects of democracy are large. It would seem that only some kind of

indirect, highly mediated expression of popular will is possible under such circumstances. Democracy becomes, then, not so much a positive affirmation of popular will as a protective device through which the interests of ordinary people can, to an extent, be defended against the abuse of power. It would seem that the imperatives of scale, of organisational complexity and of expertise in both the economy and the political system make of direct democracy a utopian dream. What was feasible for the non-slave, non-metic male citizens of classical Athens would seem not to be feasible for people in the twentieth century with its great concentrations of state and corporate power. It would seem that a Schumpeterian vision of democracy, where democracy is defined as a process in terms of which contending elites effectively set the political agenda and compete for popular support, is the only vision that is plausible in the modern world.

I should like to suggest, in a spirit of realism, that in the contemporary world the prospects are poor for a form of radical or direct democracy in which relations between people are transparent, popular will is formed through practices of open, unconstrained dialogue and the autonomy of the individual is fully reconciled with the authority of the state. I should also like to suggest, and this too in a spirit of realism, that the preceding vision of almost total disempowerment is also wrong. I should like, rather, to suggest, tentatively, that there exists what I have called a 'dialectic of modernity'.

This 'dialectic' inheres in the contradictory nature of modern systems of power. There are five elements to this 'dialectic' that I should like to adumbrate. First, the very instrumentalities in terms of which modern societies are regulated and rendered opaque and un-free also generate the conditions that enable the totalitarian potential of the modern state and the abuse of power by corporate systems to be checked; for modern systems of power are increasingly dependent for their survival on an ever better educated population that is increasingly likely to question the arbitrary exercise of power. The tendency in modern societies is towards the ever greater specialisation in and demand for ever more complex cognitive skills. Second, the consequences of modern decision-making have increasingly global ramifications; more and more people are affected by the consequences of modern production processes. Thus, environmental damage transcends local, class or sectarian interests to the extent that even the status of the modern nation state as a seemingly natural unit of territorial administration has come, at least in some respects, to be challenged. Third, as capitalism continues to expand globally, so ever larger segments of the world's population will be drawn, at ever more sophisticated levels of productive activity, into this

system of production; this is likely to result in the construction of a truly universal human identity in consequence of which people might well come to challenge the legitimacy of highly inegalitarian systems of political and economic power which are purportedly based on universalist and egalitarian principles of co-operation. Fourth, as the complexity of problems increases, so is it likely that solutions to collective problems will have to be addressed co-operatively rather than competitively; for, as some game theorists have argued, co-operative solutions to complex problems tend to be more efficient than competitive solutions.⁸ Fifth, and perhaps most centrally, those who preside over modern decision-making systems will have — and indeed have had — to confront an ethic of responsibility articulated by those affected by the outcome of such systems.

The environmentalist lobbies, the peace movements and the various women's movements well illustrate the potential effectiveness of mobilisation around such an ethic of responsibility. In some important respects, too, these movements have shifted the locus of democratic activity away from the formal structures of the state and into the arena of civil society. As Raymond Aron wrote in *The Century of Total War* 'Frederick the Great left to his legal apologists the justification of his conquests after they had taken place. Public opinion played hardly any part in the limited warfare of the eighteenth century; the professional soldiers . . . felt no need to know why they were fighting. In the twentieth century, the soldier and citizen have become interchangeable; and the general public, believing itself peacefully disposed, demands an accounting from its leaders'.⁹

To shift briefly to a more abstract level of exposition: my central claim is that there is, if I may so put it, a dynamic or creative tension between the forces of modernisation, governed as they are by imperatives of technical reason — of profit and of the extension of administrative control — and the moral legacy of the Enlightenment defined as it is by an ethic of autonomy and responsibility. This latter necessarily places strains on modern systems of economic and social power, for it embodies the values in terms of which the very legitimacy of these systems must inevitably be questioned. It is an ethic which emphasises not only the basic equality of all people but also their right to forge their own life plans and control the circumstances in which these plans are to be expressed. It is an ethic which demands accountability and the empowerment of ordinary people. It is an ethic, too, which in my view transcends the old, somewhat wrongly formulated, antinomy of liberalism and socialism. For, in its stress on autonomy and tolerance it has a clearly liberal moment; and, in its stress on equality, it looks beyond the inegalitarianism of modern

capitalism. It is also, and very importantly, an ethic that demands a commitment to practices of discursive rationality. And, as I shall suggest, it is precisely through the cultivation and extension of such practices of discursive rationality that many of the most effective challenges to these systems are likely, in the future, to be articulated. For, as Charles Taylor has said, 'societies destroy themselves when they violate the conditions of legitimacy which they themselves tend to posit and inculcate'.¹⁰

It should be clear that I am suggesting that in the advanced industrial societies forms of democracy richer and stronger than the present systems of representative democracy are in the future likely increasingly to be secured through complex processes of communicative action and communicative rationality; such action will require both a liberal and an egalitarian or socialist content to it. Liberal, in that the conditions of a liberal political order — the freedoms of speech, of association and of assembly with the associated juridical and constitutional guarantees — are necessary to democracy; egalitarian in that the egalitarian distribution of the resources requisite for the effective pressing of rights claims is necessary in order not to render such freedoms illusory for many people. The achievements of social democratic parties and of welfare states in countries such as those of Western Europe mark, however limited, advances on this road. So too, one hopes, do the recent phenomena of Glasnost and Perestroika in the Soviet Union. Though one ought to be careful in expressing such opinions, it would appear that, as the twentieth century nears its end, the democratic project — after many set-backs, among which one need only mention Fascism and Stalinism — is, in the more economically advanced regions of the world, more or less back on course.¹¹

I need now to address what is perhaps the main alternative account of how the promise of the enlightenment might be redeemed: that of canonical Marxism. I believe that it is time to acknowledge that the canonical Marxist contention that emancipation will be secured through the revolutionary action of the industrial working class is seriously flawed. The reasons for this are many, but they include the fact that nowhere in the advanced capitalist world is the traditional industrial working class a majority of the population. Thus, parties representing working class interests in these countries have been forced into compromises with parties representing other, powerful, interests. The conventional Marxian visions have also tended to assume too readily that the problems of collective action on the part of diverse individuals and groups in societies with highly striated and complex systems of class structure are less difficult to resolve than they really are. Converting a class 'in itself' into a class 'for itself' has proven to be a more difficult

task than anticipated where classes are constantly in the process of formation and reformation, of constitution and dissolution. Individual identities and interests are too complex, too contradictory and too fragmented for this model to hold.¹²

This is not to deny the power of Marx's own vision. His accounts of alienation and of the circumstances of nineteenth century capitalism remain peerless. His view of the historical process as one in which people make history albeit under circumstances not entirely of their own choosing, and in which social structures are seen as both enabling and constraining, remains compelling. And, at a more abstract level, he was probably correct to say that capitalism will be transcended when the forces of production can no longer be accommodated within the relations of production by which is characterised. But the expectation that its abolition will be effected through the concerted and united action of the labouring classes in a coherent revolutionary struggle is, I suggest, implausible.

In what, then, does a more plausible vision consist? In the countries of advanced capitalism, development of the technologies of production will generate ever more free time. The traditional concerns with unemployment will be replaced by concerns with the quality of free time as people come more and more to think and reflect and machines, increasingly, do the work. Capitalism, I suspect — and here I think Marx was correct — will not be the last form in which material production will be organised and I suspect that an ethically higher form of production will follow it. However, the manner of its coming will, I think be neither through the work of an insurrectionary party nor through a working class seizure of parliamentary power. Rather it will be through a long, complex and highly dis-articulated set of processes through which the many individual irrationalities of contemporary systems of power will be challenged and transcended. There will be many individual struggles by many different interests, but there will be no single class agent, and no coherent and organised assault on these irrationalities as a whole. Rather more or less enlightened visions of individual, group or class interest will merge in complex, sometimes paradoxical and often unintended ways with collective, indeed global interests. The political and economic forms that historically have come to be regarded as 'natural' features of the modern world — the nation state as the principal object of mass loyalty, hierarchical and environmentally hazardous systems of production, etc. — will probably be slowly eroded.

The project of modernity is as yet incomplete and this project has, as its kernel, a rational and evolutionary thrust. In this long historical process both capitalism and state socialism are likely to

be transfigured into forms that bear little resemblance to them as presently they are constituted — into something that we may, perhaps, wish to call authentic socialism. Of course they may evolve into some nightmarish catastrophe, a ghastly terminus to that illusory prospect of emancipation that has its origins in the Enlightenment. This latter dark outcome I believe is unlikely, though many battles lie ahead in which reactionary, anti-modernist forces such as those associated with various religious fundamentalisms and nationalisms that stress particularist as opposed to universalist identities, will need to be combatted. For in my view these reactionary, anti-modernist forces are, in the long run functionally incompatible with the processes of modernisation, with scientific, technological and economic development. These processes, with the complex challenges they pose, require that a plurality of values, of conceptions of the good, of discourses, be recognised; no one conception of the good can be forced with desirable outcomes upon an advanced industrial world. Rather, modernisation needs to be integrated with the values of modernity — the values of tolerance, of individualism, and of both formal and substantive procedural justice.

If I may venture a concluding prediction: the twentieth century has, among other things, been the century of science, of the systematic expansion of our knowledge and ability to control the physical world; the twenty-first century, to hazard a guess, will be the century of practical wisdom, increased communicative competence and rational will-formation; science and technology will continue to expand, but the emphasis will shift to the building of structures of discursive rationality through which science and technology can be better disciplined and directed and through which both their promise and that of democracy may be redeemed. Democracy will come, increasingly, to be a decentralised practice within civil society rather than simply a form of state organisation. And this will be because societies are complex, evolutionary learning systems, and much will be learnt — and has, I believe, already been learnt — from the disasters of our own century.¹³

I have spoken principally of the fate of the advanced industrial societies. I have not spoken of the special problems of those parts of the world that are economically backward. Their challenges are great, but need to be addressed in a different context. However, what I have said has a bearing on South Africa. For, as the economist Charles Simkins has said, South Africa is about one generation short of becoming an advanced industrial society.¹⁴ Once apartheid has been abolished, as surely it will be, South Africans will have to address, along with the problems of urbanisation, poverty and economic growth, precisely the kinds of

issues I have raised. For the most advanced societies present to the less advanced images of their own futures.

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NOTES

1. Agnes Heller, *Radical Philosophy*, Oxford, 1984, pp. 9 and 10.
2. See the account, from which this characterisation is drawn, in David Held, *Models of Democracy*, Oxford, 1987, Ch. 2.
3. See the excellent discussion in J.W.N. Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas*, London, 1965, Ch. 3.
4. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London, 1964, p. 398.
5. See A.I. Melden, *Rights in Moral Lives*, Berkeley, 1988, Chs. 1 and 2 for brief but sensitive discussion of this issue.
6. Cf. Reinhardt Koselleck, *Futures Past*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1985, pp. 198–212.
7. Cf. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence*, Cambridge and Oxford, 1985, Ch. 11.
8. See, inter alia, Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Co-operation*, New York, 1984; Michael Taylor, *Anarchy and Co-operation*, London 1976 and Michael Taylor, *The Possibility of Co-operation*, Cambridge, 1987, for discussions of this point.
9. Draus F. (ed) *History, Truth, Liberty: Selected Writings of Raymond Aron*, Chicago, 1985, p. 54.
10. Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, Vol 2, Cambridge, 1985, p. 248.
11. Cf. inter alia, Stein Ringen, *The Possibility of Politics*, Oxford, 1987, for a recent assessment of the achievements of the welfare state.
12. For a discussion of some of these problems see Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, Cambridge, 1986.
13. For a comprehensive treatment of the questions of societal evolution and the nature of communicative action see the writings of Jurgen Habermas, especially his *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Boston, 1979, and his *Theory of Communicative Action* (2 vols), Boston, 1987.
14. Cf. Charles Simkins, *The Prisoners of Tradition and the Politics of Nation Building*, Johannesburg, 1988.

XANADU: THE DESERTED PALACE

by A.E. VOSS

I have no desire to explain away the unexplainable, and behind the discoverable processes through which beauty is created . . . in . . . 'Kubla Khan' . . . is and will always be something inscrutable, which no analysis can reach — or harm.

John Livingstone Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*

. . . in the last decade of the 18th century, the last trace of the common land of the agricultural labourer . . . had disappeared . . .

Karl Marx, *Capital*

'Kubla Khan' is itself something of an underground river, and like Alph suffers a long delay between its disappearance and re-emergence. Composed in 1797 or 1798, it was first published, 'at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity [Lord Byron],' only in 1816. That same gap in time which separates the body of the poem from its preface, may explain Coleridge's paraphrase of the sentence from 'Purchas's Pilgrimage' which was the waking genesis of the dream poem:

Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall.
(*Poems*, p. 296)

Purchas had written:

In Xanadu did Cublai Can build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteen miles of plaine ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant springs, delightfull Streames, and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the middest thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure, which may be removed from place to place.

(Quoted Lowes, p. 358)

Coleridge's version is more a re-writing, an eighteenth-century 'imitation', even a pastiche than a faulty recollection of Purchas. The poet forgets (suppresses) the fact that the first five words of this poem come straight from Purchas, but makes a significant change from 'encompassing' to 'inclosed'. Perhaps Coleridge was remembering some of the prototypes of his Kubla's 'nostalgic and dangerous poetic paradise' (Coburn ed., Vol. 2, 191 n).

Then the king inclosing the place, made it holy.

(1611 Bible 2 *Macc.* i, 34 [OED])

... where Abassin kings their issue guard.
 Mount Amara (though this by some supposed
 True Paradise) under the Ethiop line
 by Nilus' head, enclosed with shining rock,
 A whole day's journey high.

(*Paradise Lost*, IV. 280–284)

The word 'enclose' does not recur in Coleridge's poem, but the idea is everywhere,¹ from the tyrant's 'girdled . . . ground' to the 'circle round' the poet; and 'enclosure' is the social practice that draws the poem back from dreams of thirteenth-century Asia to the reality of England in the last decade of the eighteenth century.

Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* does not use the word 'enclose' either, yet 'enclosure' is clearly the process that emptied Auburn, where 'the sounds of population fail' (125). Towards the end of his poem Goldsmith asks:

Where then, ah, where shall poverty reside,
 To scape the pressure of contiguous pride . . . (303–4)

Enclosure has taken from the poor any room into which to move at home:

If to some common's fenceless limits strayed,
 He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
 There fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
 And even the bare-worn common is denied. (305–8)

The only alternative routes for the poor are those of urbanisation ('to the city sped' 309) or colonization ('To distant climes . . .' 341). My argument is that 'Kubla Khan' is a refraction, a displacement of the later poet's reaction to the same social process that drove Auburn's poor to London or the colonies. I proceed by exploring the comparability of the two poems, referring both to a *topos* of late eighteenth century English writing, which itself is referable to the social process of which 'enclosure' was a part.

* * *

Of the possible verbal parallels between *The Deserted Village* and 'Kubla Khan', perhaps the most striking is between Goldsmith's 'dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign' (319) and Kubla's 'stately pleasure-dome', but there is a general level of high abstraction at which the action of the two poems is comparable. Both recall a *locus amoenus* (Auburn: Xanadu), which is no longer attainable. The destruction implicit in Kubla's 'ancestral voices' is the explicit fate of the social order which the

'loveliest village of the plain' represented for Goldsmith. Goldsmith's poem is expansive and sentimental, Coleridge's is oracular and enigmatic. Coleridge writes in his preface that his poem was a spontaneous discovery, an *objet trouvé* recovered from his own subconscious. *Can* that be called 'composition'?

... in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation of consciousness or effort. (*Poems*, p. 294)

Whereas *The Deserted Village*, in part at least, is the product of what may be called empirical research:

... I have taken all possible pains, in my country excursions, for these four or five years past, to be certain of what I alledge, and that all my views and enquiries have led me to believe those miseries real, which I here attempt to display. (*Dedication*)

It is difficult to imagine a clearer contrast between an immanent and a referential idea of linguistic meaning. Despite these obvious modal differences, both poems conclude in a prospective appeal to a female muse-like figure: Goldsmith's 'Poetry . . . loveliest maid' (407) is the counterpart of Coleridge's 'Abyssinian maid'. At issue, however, are opposed conceptions of poetry, as Goldsmith's sense of a close relationship between the heuristic function of 'poetry' and its referential obligations contrasts with Coleridge's position, which I take to be fulfilled in 'Kubla Khan':

... poetry as poetry is essentially *ideal*, [and] avoids and excludes all *accident* [and] apparent individualities. *BL* 2: 45-46

What this essay wishes to stress is that the establishment of context for 'Kubla Khan' which includes *The Deserted Village* releases something of the social referentiality of Coleridge's poem.

As a 'tyrant', Kubla refers both to traditional stereotypes of oriental despotism, to the *ancien régime* across the channel, and to English figures like Gray's 'little tyrant of his fields' and Goldsmith's tyrant whose hand is seen amidst the bowers of Auburn, the 'One only master [who] grasps the whole domain'. If this parallel holds, Kubla is an 'improver', but as the poem stresses, his motive for improvement is pleasure rather than increased agricultural productivity: the ground he encloses is 'fertile' but is exploited for ornament and enjoyment rather than sustenance. Both Goldsmith and Coleridge give an outside perspective on the encloser, although Coleridge's perspective is close to the point-of-view of Kubla himself (as the 'vision' emphasises). Goldsmith's

expansiveness, however, attempts to cover the whole social process of what is lost and gained in enclosure and depopulation:

One only master grasps the whole domain
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain . . . (39–40)

The man of wealth and pride,
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage and hounds . . . (275–278)

Kubla's decree operates like a magic spell — he decrees — and suddenly 'walls and towers' girdle round the estate — both a garden and a fortress: the two aspects are mutually functional since Kubla's enclosure makes for both pleasure and property and property must be protected. The magic of Kubla's decree is anticipated in Cowper's ironic evocation of the art of 'Capability' Brown, the landscape gardener:

Lo! he comes, —
The omnipotent magician, Brown, appears.
Down falls the venerable pile, the abode
Of our forefathers, a grave whiskered race,
But tasteless. Springs a palace in its stead,
But in a distant spot, where more exposed,
It may enjoy the advantage of the north,
And aguish east, till time shall have transformed
Those naked acres to a sheltering grove.
He speaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn,
Woods vanish, hills subside and valleys rise.
And streams, as if created for his use,
Pursue the track of his directing wand,
Sinuous or straight, now rapid and now slow,
Now murmuring soft, now roaring in cascades,
Even as he bids.

from *The Task* (1785), Bk. III (*Poems*, p. 68)

And the suddenness of the transformations here is testified to in historical experience, which has social and not merely aesthetic significance.

The replanning of the English landscape affected nearly 2½ million acres of open fields, most of it accomplished between 1750 and 1850. On top of this more than two million acres of commons and 'wastes' were enclosed; but the visual effect on the commons and heaths was much less. On the open-field arable it was a total revolution in the landscape . . . A whole parish, a complete and ancient landscape, could be transformed in a couple of years. (Hoskins, pp. 78–9)

Both Cobbett (1763–1835) and Clare (1793–1864), in later generations, give striking accounts of enclosure which recall Goldsmith's. At Royston, Cobbett saw fields 'enclosed by act of parliament; and they are certainly the most beautiful tract of *fields* that I ever saw' (*Rural Rides*; I. 80). But by enclosure, he argued, 'numerous families of the children of labourers were crammed into the stinking suburbs of towns, amidst filth of all sorts . . . ' (*Autobiography*, 141). In 'Remembrances', Clare wrote that 'Enclosure like a Bonaparte let not a thing remain' (80). Clare's poem "Enclosure" identifies the "unburdened freedom" of the unenclosed waste with the "sweet vision" of the poet's "boyish hours", and gains its power from this coincidence of individual emotion with profound social change:

Enclosure came, and trampled on the grave
Of labour's rights, and left the poor a slave . . .

In what could be described as a characteristically peasant vision, Clare finds, in pre-enclosure's ready access to the "nature" of the waste, a freedom that encompasses and inter-relates clouds, flowers, sheep and cows, lark and plover. Clare is responding to a late moment in the process of enclosure, anticipating the spread of suburbia and the fight for rights of way:

Each little tyrant with his little sign
Shows where man claims earth glows no more divine . . .

Kubla's and Brown's transformations are conversions from necessity to luxury. Goldsmith wrote that 'In regretting the depopulation of the country,' he was concerned to 'inveigh against the increase of our luxuries' (*Dedication*; see lines 295–302, 385–394). As Paine had argued in 1791/2, the transformation to luxuries tended to conceal the labour that had been the main instrument of transformation:

One thing is called a luxury at one time, and something else at another; but the real luxury does not consist in the article, but in the means of procuring it, and this is always kept out of sight. (Paine, p. 273)

Paine goes on to argue that 'an overgrown estate . . . is a luxury at all times, and as such is the proper object of taxation' (p. 273). In No. IV of *The Watchman* (23 March, 1796), Coleridge included, in an essay 'On the Slave Trade', an extract from that section of 'Religious Musings', published in the complete poem as 'Origin

and Uses of Government and Property'. Coleridge's defence of property rests on 'the restless faculty of Imagination' whence arise

... all th'inventive Arts that nurse the Soul
To forms of Beauty; and by sensual wants
Unsensualize the mind, which in the *Means*
Learns to forget the grossness of the *End*,
Best pleased with its own activity.

(*The Watchman*, p. 131)

Even 'Wide-wasting ills' are 'each th'immediate source/Of mightier good'. Coleridge's defence of luxury is essentially that of Burke in the *Reflections* (p. 273).²

Goldsmith, in his descriptions of enclosure, lays not particular emphasis on the labour needed for the process and none on consequent benefits. *The Deserted Village* exposes the costs of emparkment; in impoverishment, in depopulation and in personal suffering. The latter is expressed particularly in two isolated female figures, emblematically contrasted as between old and young, rural and urban to suggest both those left behind by and those swept onward by the economic process. Abandoned to forage in Auburn itself is the 'widowed, solitary thing,' a

... wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread,
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
To pick her wintry faggots from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn . . .

(129, 131-134)

Washed up on the polluted shore of the city is 'the poor houseless shivering female',

Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head . . .

(326, 331-332)

In *The Watchman* of 9 March 1796, Coleridge published 'The Present State of Society' (another extract from 'Religious Musings') which opens with a lament for 'The wretched MANY!' The implication of the opening paragraph is that the poor have been 'remov'd . . . from . . . blest Society' and among the individual emblematic figures evoked are females reminiscent of Goldsmith's poem:

O pale-eyed Form!
The Victim of Seduction, doom'd to know
Polluted nights and days of blasphemy;
Who in loath'd orgies with lewd Wassailers

Must gaily laugh, while thy remember'd home
Gnaws, like a Viper, at thy secret heart.
O aged Women! ye who weekly catch
The morsel tost by law-forc'd Charity,
And die so slowly, that none call it murder!

(*The Watchman*, pp. 64–65)

Perhaps such figures are the origin of the two women who feature in 'Kubla Khan', the 'woman wailing' and the 'Abyssinian maid'. Both are more closely related to the 'victim of seduction' than to the 'wretched matron' figure (*DV*, 131), being associated in a characteristic masculinist way with nature and pleasure ('delight' line 44).³ Pleasure is a dominant theme of 'Kubla Khan' and a recurring one in *The Deserted Village*,⁴ where it is treated in a significant way.

Goldsmith contrasts the pleasures of the poor with those of the rich. In the remembered village of the poet's youth 'every sport could please'(6): on holidays 'toil remitting lent its turn to play' (16). The principle of alternation distinguishes rural life:

And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired . . . (23–24)

Those were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught even toil to please . . . (31–32)

The villagers face exile with 'every pleasure past' (365). In contrast the rich are described as 'the sons of pleasure' (313). For them 'toiling pleasure sickens into pain' (262); luxury diffuses 'pleasures only to destroy' (388). This is a striking difference: between the juxtapositions (toil/pleasure) of the life of the rural poor and the indistinction (toil=pleasure) of the life of the rich. The only significance which Kubla can draw from his enclosure (dedicated to pleasure and excluding toil) is ominous:

And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war! (29–30)

Recalling something of Goldsmith's couplet:

While thus the land adorned for pleasure all
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall. (285–286)

Kubla's 'Fears in Solitude' clearly relate this poem to Coleridge's other political poems of c. 1793–1802.⁵

The contrast between Goldsmith's technique of juxtaposition and Coleridge's of interjuncture is, I would suggest, a

characteristic contrast between 'eighteenth century' (Enlightenment?) and Romantic poetry. For temperamental and perhaps even historical reasons Goldsmith's juxtaposition generates neither satire, nor chiasmus, nor zeugma, as Pope's tends to do:⁶ but the principle of juxtaposition runs characteristically through 18th century poetry, as it does through *The Deserted Village*: present and past, rich and poor; country and city; metropolis and colony. An illustrative moment comes towards the end of *The Deserted Village* when Goldsmith juxtaposes the City (309–340) and the colonies (341–362) as the only alternative destinations for the displaced villagers. But Goldsmith's epithets find similarities in the juxtaposition, implying that neither City nor Colony offers a home of genuinely humane dimensions.⁷ The interjuncture of opposites or their reconciliation in paradox is associated with aristocratic decadence. Perhaps unwittingly much Romantic poetry is driven towards such interjuncture and paradox, partly because its only measure of authenticity is personal, individual:

Could I revive *within me*
Her symphony and song . . . (42–43)

There is no social or material embodiment of the interjuncture of opposites, which can only take place 'within'. I suggest, therefore, that 'Kubla Khan' is, in a sense, about 'Enclosure'. But perhaps a more interesting implicit hypothesis is that in the aetiology of certain Romantic poems, there is an initial gesture of 'Enclosure' (Blake's 'rural pen', Keats's 'melodious plot') whose significance is socially determined. (In 'Kubla Khan' the equivocal relationship between poet and tyrant may recall Shelley's 'Ozymandias'.) The social implications may be drawn from Coleridge's notebook entry of October 1800:

Those who have written delightful Poems with good sense, & the common feelings of *all* good and sensible men; but without the passion, or the peculiar feelings & strange excitements of the poetic character — *Deserted Village* . . .

(Coburn ed., Vol. 1, 829)

Goldsmith is to Coleridge as 'delightful . . . good . . . common . . . and sensible' are to 'passion . . . peculiar . . . strange . . . poetic'. Romantic poesis, then, is an alienation *from* Nature and the common. *The Deserted Village* was published two years before Coleridge was born and I have not wished to imply that the two poets faced the same alternatives. The social history of Europe in

the few years before 'Kubla Khan' forced Coleridge to a radical decision which Goldsmith never had to face.

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NOTES

- 'cave(rn)s' (4, 27, 34, 36, 47), 'girdled round' (7), 'gardens' (8), 'enfolding' (11), 'cover' (13), 'In a vision' (38), 'within me' (42), 'a circle round' (51), 'close' (52), 'Paradise' (54).
- In the opening lines of the extract:
*Hence the soft Couch and many-colour'd Robe,
The Timbrel and arch'd Dome and costly Feast . . .*
(*Watchman*, p. 131) 'Robe' and 'Dome' may recall lines 279 and 319 of *The Deserted Village*.
- 'Pleasure is the business of woman's life, according to the present modification of society, and while it continues to be so, little can be expected from such weak beings.' Mary Wollstonecraft, p. 55.
- See D.V.: Lines 23, 262, 285, 313, 319, 365, 388 (pleasure); 6, 32, 159, 186 (please).
- See Carlos Baker, 'Introduction', pp. 8-11.
Kubla's "relationship with the slave-force which, presumably, enacts his decree for him is utterly impersonal" (Yarlott, 130): "The Khan . . . may be something of a barbarious fop" (George Watson, in *Casebook*, 231).
- Perhaps Pope is most clearly recalled in lines 317-318:
Here, while the proud their long drawn pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
- | | | | |
|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| <i>City</i> | | <i>Colony</i> | |
| 'profusion' | (310) | rank | (351) |
| baneful | (311) | poisonous | (351) |
| luxury | (312) | luxuriance | (351) |
| black | (318) | dark | (352) |
| glooms | (318) | dreary | (341) |
| blazing | (321) | blazing | (347) |
| rattling | (322) | rattling | (354) |
| luckless | (334) | hapless | (355) |

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FROM TURNSTILE TO TUBE: SPORT AND THE AESTHETICS OF TELEVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA

by GUY WILLOUGHBY

The front pages of newspapers are traditionally reserved for 'hot' topics or events; they also carry information that readers are presumed anxious to know. Like many newspapers, *The Star* of Friday, 3 February 1989, chose to announce, on that front page, the details of the coming weekend's sports coverage on television. Of an approximate 93 hours' viewing available on SABC-TV and M-Net combined, some 24 hours were to be devoted to a diverse range of sport, including (so the previewer wrote) athletics, Five-Nation rugby, two sorts of boxing, two sorts of golf, pistol-shooting, a road marathon, two sorts of cycling (including motorised), and a tri-relay — *in toto* nearly a third of transmission-time on 4–5 February.¹

Nor is this an exceptional state of affairs. At least twice a day on the state-run services, and often for several hours at a time on M-Net, licence-holders are offered sports-meets of all kinds, local and international, differing widely in kind and quality. This represents a consistent trend: in January, 1989, for example, the total transmission tally of TV1 was increased by some 20 hours a week over equivalent figures for 1988 — and the time devoted to sport, about one-fifth of the total, rose in the same proportion over this period.²

All this is common place; it is regularly lamented by newspaper critics, who regret the commensurately sparse attention afforded the arts on each channel (and which, on M-Net, is practically non-existent).³ What is less regularly noted, however, is the interesting two-fold explanation for this trend — an explanation that takes us beyond the familiar plaint that South Africans are 'sports-crazy' and neglect more cerebral leisure-time pursuits.⁴

In the first place, the preponderance of sport on our screens neatly coincides with the needs of an embattled hegemony, apparently eager to distract South Africans (whites in particular) from pressing social and economic realities, by fostering the spate of organised games which J.M. Coetzee calls 'a diet of boerewors and circuses'.⁵ More fundamentally, the televising of this cavalcade marks a local response to a recurring structural feature of post-War industrial capitalism: a necessary over-supply of goods and services, which requires a receptive and ever voracious consumer.⁶

Television, as shrewd economists and advertising men attest, provides the ideal *aperitif* for this hypothetical customer. According to Neil Postman in his provocative study *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985), the process has so succeeded in the

United States that TV commercials now shape viewers' cultural perceptions to an alarming, McLuhanite extent, and come close to reducing all public discourse to a series of unrelated entertainments — 'a form of baby-talk'.⁷ The benefits for the consumer ethic, no doubt, are almost incalculable.

The South African context, of course, is markedly different. Several factors besides the economic mitigate the influence of television *à la* Postman in this country: only one generation, and that still young, has been formatively exposed thus far to the blandishments of Albert Hertzog's 'little black box';⁸ the sheer number of commercials does not compare with that of Europe or North America; total transmission time is a fraction of overseas equivalents.⁹ It is for these reasons that organised sport — always a site of prowess and group esteem in South Africa, due to peculiar historic factors¹⁰ — presents a splendid occasion for the corporate system. It comes as no surprise, then, to discover that huge sponsorship sums have been generated for televised sport in recent years, and that the trend shows no sign of abating.¹¹

The advantages for sponsors are severalfold. Besides the generous tax deductions that accrue to altruistic corporations — a fact which in itself reveals the interest of the state in these enterprises¹² — such sponsorship is a powerful drawcard in a society still suspicious of over-abundant advertising. The donor need hardly advertise formally at all: his product or company name is likely to fuse in time with that of the event, as the sports *aficionado* at home will imbue that corporation with the pleasurable emotions he derives from the game, excitement, suspense, cathartic relief.

Taken together, televised sports contests thus advance the ultimate achievement which J.K. Galbraith ascribes to contemporary advertisers and marketers: 'by making goods important [they make] the industrial system important'.¹³ So an irresistible pressure mounts on games to 'go professional', and particularly for television to broadcast them — a process spearheaded by M-Net, who have obliged SABC to follow suit.¹⁴ The success of this commercialising venture is signified in changing nomenclature: enthusiasts are now accustomed to speak, and thus to think, about the Castle Currie Cup, the J&B Metropolitan, Benson & Hedges Night Cricket, and so forth.

Meanwhile what has been the rôle of the sports spectator, the object of all this toil and ferment? Figures are difficult to compile, but it is probably true to say that more South Africans are watching *TopSport* (TV1) or *Supersport* (M-Net) than are playing or viewing on the ground. In other words, it seems that games supporters have acquiesced to the new situation at worst, welcomed it at best; certainly the negligible public discussion of this trend — anxious

critics aside — suggests that viewers at large are satisfied with the result. South Africans of every persuasion may still be sports-loving people; however, they are taking part via the tube rather than the turnstile in the late 1980s.

Recently some of our more thoughtful commentators on sport have noted, to their dismay, certain changes in the nature of their favourite games. J.M. Coetzee, surely the most erudite of rugby commentators,¹⁵ detects a tendency away from 'the inherent logic of the game' towards its mere 'spectacle value', and maintains that sportswriters have a duty to correct this trend through informed and purposeful analysis: 'it is up to [the sportswriter] to help the spectator discriminate and understand the phases of emotion with which he responds to the game'.¹⁶ Yet the truth is that rugby and cricket are altering, rather, because the act of watching sport on television is a different kind of activity from that of watching on the ground; the mediation of the event by the camera and producer creates a new kind of 'logic', one more appropriate to the demands of television technology. The aesthetics of spectatorship, then, are different before the box than in the stands, and it is this difference — and its seductive power to gain a whole new audience — that I now want to consider.

To begin with, we must consider the aesthetics of sportsviewing itself that cluster of experiences, emotional and cerebral, generally associated with the business of participating from the sidelines, beyond the magic circle of play itself. Traditionally in the West, organised sport has been regarded — however consciously or otherwise — as a replay, or a preview, of desirable social mores; like the Aristotelian theatre, the field of play becomes an occasion for values to be tested in conduct, for virtue and vice to discover themselves in action. These notions, long current in one form or another, became in Victorian England quite central to the curriculum of the privileged classes, encapsulated in such ringing phrases as 'playing life with a straight bat': their rôle in the consolidation of British esteem and imperial prowess in that era of expansion still requires comprehensive study.¹⁷ Yet the *moral* dimension of sporting activity, both for observers and participants, remains almost a *sine qua non* of educational, and sociological, theory throughout the West. As late as 1988 J.M. Coetzee could summarise the position thus, that 'team sports are rituals evolved by the collective wisdom of cultures to formalise aggression, to teach people — principally young men in the flower of life — that there are ways of expressing one's vitality other than by beating, kicking, slaughtering, raping'.¹⁸ The gloss of twentieth-century psychoanalysis and anthropology may have overlaid the nineteenth-century view, but the sound pedagogic core of those 'rituals', for those 'in the flower of life', remains.

The obvious aesthetic correlative for the sportsfield, then, is the theatre, and the Aristotelian precepts that still largely govern the latter are transposed to the former: thus Roland Barthes calls boxing 'a demonstration of excellence', 'a story that is unfolded before the eyes of the spectator,' in which moral values are to be contested. Wrestling, with its insistent element of spectacle overlaying narrative, becomes 'a real Human Comedy' after the *commedia dell'arte* and Molière, turning (in America, at any rate) into 'a sort of mythological fight between Good and Evil' often permeated with topical, ideological contests or crises ('the "bad" wrestler always being supposed to be a Red').¹⁹ Watching a sports match involves — as does the theatre — entering a contract, allowing the strictures of convention to dictate the field of moral aspiration: 'it is from the fact that there is a law that the spectacle of the passions which infringes it derives its value' (Barthes).

Beyond topicalities, however, a profoundly structural, in fact aesthetic, lesson is learnt. The spectator participates in a drama made of the frustration or progress of abstract ideas — order, coherence, clarity, community itself; within the context of convention, he discovers that such ideas are triumphantly possible. This participation in football match or athletic meet derives from his sense of significant moments, each related to those preceding and following (and this, according to Coetzee, is the task of the ideal critic: to make those moments accessible).

The sportsfield, then, is as busy and meaningful a semiotic terrain as any other human artefact, and offers the spectator a jostling host of signs which if he is to grasp, he is *made social*, he sees beyond to the dynamics of culture; he enters at last into a larger contract, *le contrat social*, and (to sustain the Aristotelian analogy) is made ready for significant action, for *praxis*.²⁰

(It is interesting to reflect a moment on the umpire or referee in this terrain. As arbiter, he attempts a universal consciousness — like an omniscient narrator, a single vantage-point of synthesis. He is the would-be author in search of characters. All spectators' quarrels are with an umpire: that is because the umpire stands in for us, we — like Stanley Fish's readers — are likewise trying to make a story for ourselves in some way.)

But televised sport is different: what it does is to deny us that readerly privilege. One hopeful view of this medium has always been that it makes great art accessible to the many, a view that underscores much criticism of television;²¹ the harder truth is that it has a twofold contrary influence. First, the camera lens-into-screen frames the viewer's perceptions to a startling degree, decreeing the vantage he is to have of any event or object; thus, a sports match is deconstructed via a battery of selected camera angles, and then rebuilt (by editor, producer or both) into a *particular* order, a

particular set of meanings. We are to enjoy a comprehensive, godlike view, certainly; but it is one in which we individual or collective spectators have no creative share — no work, Walter Benjamin might say, to do at all.

This point explains a concomitant influence of television, namely its power to seduce the viewer into an uncritical acceptance of that paucity of work or vision. More than any other medium, television effaces its own techniques, so potent is the combination of sight and sound which we gloss — trustingly, from within our *sanctorum* at home — from a screen composed of a busy, semi-mesmeric interplay of electronic points. This unstated mediation induces a laziness: relieved of responsibility for events, we are freed for a kind of voyeurism only. We fail to notice, unless through real effort, that the perspective television offers is not ours, and that we fail to participate at all in the scenes we witness.²²

How, then, does television specifically alter the aesthetics of sports-watching, and what are the consequences for those games themselves? To answer the question we must consider some recent examples of contests televised on SABC-TV: I draw them from the weekend programme of February 4–5, with which I began this article.

On that Saturday afternoon, *TopSport* on TV2 relayed the England–Ireland match from Twickenham. What particularly interested me about this British production was the way in which, while the match had been (originally) broadcast ‘live’, the logic of the contest had been reorganised to allow for maximum excitement: in aesthetic terms, the narrative was continuously disrupted in order that spectacle be foremost. To sustain the viewers’ sense of unflagging energy, a dynamic interweave of camera shots — between a bird’s-eye vantage of the field, and close tracking or zooming of key players — was maintained throughout, while constant replays of ‘highlights’ in slow motion rubbed out the slacker moments of matchtime.

The overall effect, then, was of a tidying-up, a polishing and recutting of the original event into a multi-surfaced, brighter, glossier artefact: an aestheticising, in the superficial sense of the word. The focus on ‘highlights’, whatever violence it may have done to the cumulative logic of the game, revealed a discrepancy; match-time and television-time do not coincide, and so the synchronic structure of rugby must be disrupted, to fit the briefer attention span which TV invites.

Another example: on Sunday the 5th, a kick-boxing competition at the Summit Club, Hillbrow, was broadcast ‘live’ on TV2. This television experience was dull by comparison with the Five-Nation rugby event. The camera angle on the ring seldom varied (there were two in operation, at most); the commentary was effusive and

redundant; the whole merely a dreary, because unrelieved, record of slogging. It was bad TV entertainment for the reverse of those features which had been so successful the day before: it needed multi-angled views, replays of striking and unusual feints or blows, a commentary which did not intrude on the visual business: it needed reconstruction according to television aesthetics.

By contrast, the tri-relay (to be exact: the Caltex Tri-relay) that was broadcast from Verwoerdburg later in the programme, was a model of televised excitement. This kind of hybrid sports event (swimming, cycling and running in one meet) offers the various visual sensations which the medium reproduces best. A battery of cameras, again moving from the omniscient to the particular, can relish the numerous competitors, the variegated outfits, the many attitudes struck.

Most intriguingly, a snappily-paced sound-track had been added, as deft accompaniment to the shorts of bikes and runners sweeping past stationary cameras to the close of each heat. By race's end, as we tracked away from the triumphant winners, our lasting mood as viewers was surely one of happy surfeit; in exchange for choice of perspective, we had been given variety aplenty. These hybrids — and they are increasingly popular — being free of tradition, are in many ways most susceptible to television aesthetics. A musical accompaniment (except in a preview) is unthinkable for rugby or cricket, but becomes almost intrinsic to the sensational pleasures of meets such as these.

What, then, are the consequences of such sedulous media pressure, vigorously encouraged by corporate sponsors, on the shape of sport itself? Already the phenomenon of one-day (or night) cricket, its competitors gaily clad in company colours and logograms, has arisen to compensate for the subtle logic of a game which most obviously confounds television aesthetics; in terms of estimated viewership, these overtly commercialised meets have already superseded the popularity of the conventional game. A similar pressure is mounting on provincial rugby, masked as a call to 'professionalise' the game, and to reconsider its rules — a pressure that will no doubt prove decisive.²³

International tennis has thus far survived intact, largely because of a happy coincidence between the field of play, and the size of the television screen: with appropriate editing, the location of the contest, and the pace of its action, are ideally suited. (It is a question whether or not the number of sets might not be taxing viewers somewhat, however.)²⁴ An enthusiast like J.M. Coetzee may complain that little of the 'good rugby' being played in South Africa 'is actually being *seen*'; the point is that it is being *reseen* at home via the television camera, to the ultimate cost of the conventional game.

To conclude, sport as dramatic experience now shrinks to sport as sport: as mere amusement, diversion only. The viewer is gradually learning to exchange spectacle — disconnected, uncontextualised excitements — for coherence; to replace the more subtle, less easy engagement in a *process* of signification for dollops of amusement; to abandon, however unconsciously, the moral ramifications of spectatorship that accompany a grasp of its structure. Such a viewer is achieving what Postman would call the *Weltanschauung* of the TV commercial, in which fragmentary divertissement, 'entertainment' at its most banal, supplants analysable experience. Deprived of choice, the spectator now faces the ultimately unreadable text, the small flickering miasma of images that suspends rather than abolishes thought.

Certainly (and this is a point neglected by Postman) the process serves corporate interests; televised sport is helping to recreate South African viewers as the tamed, endlessly greedy consumers of America. Beyond this, it is ruinous of felt perceptions, felt experience; it replaces the spectator on the ground, a contributor in the contest, with the passive voyeur whose only power is to switch on, or off (and 'off' for many may simply mean the problem of unmediated experience — a prospect too alarming to contemplate).

John Coetzee may rightly insist that the sportswriter should encourage his reader to understand the complex dynamics, the 'dramatic experience', of the game under review; what he has not allowed for, however, is that the TV spectator may not *want* readerly criticism, may be incapable of understanding it. The critic who showcases spectacle in his report, thus aping television itself, might merely be catering for his audience's tastes. If we are to understand what is happening to sport in South Africa today, we have to go beyond political forces, beyond economic analysis: we have to understand — as with any other field of human endeavour — the aesthetics of the medium involved. Only by grasping that operation, in fact, will we be able to realise how a novel epistemology is being shaped amongst us.

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NOTES

1. The following table represents the break-down of transmission time on 4-5 February:

	Sports coverage	Total transmission
SAT		
TV1	6	18
TV2	2	21
TV4	0	4
M-Net	5	16
SUN		
TV1	0	9
TV2	5	10
TV4	1	4
M-Net	5	11
	<hr/> 24	<hr/> 93

2. These calculations are derived from programme outlines provided by the *Sunday Times* during this period (October 1988–January 1989). The total number of hours devoted to sport is likely to rise by some 48 hours a week if a new 'all-sports subscription station', presently under consideration by M-Net and the SABC, comes into effect (Ian Gray, 'All-Sport Channel Could End TV War', *The Star*, 14 February 1989).
3. For the first time since its inception in 1986, the independent subscription channel has recently launched a brief 'arts and entertainment programme', *Revue Plus* (March 2, 1989). According to the producer, Mark Williams, the 40-minute show is 'designed to showcase all aspects of local and overseas entertainment, from movies and the theatre, to where to eat, where to go and so on' (sic). Arts coverage on TV1 during the same three-year period has been confined to *Collage* on Mondays or Sundays, and musical programmes on the latter evening — a total of some 4 hours a week. See my 'Like Living in a Locker Room' [television column], *The Cape Times*, 11 April 1988, for a further discussion of this topic.
4. This kind of argument is put forward, for instance, in James A. Mitchener's discussion of South Africa in *On Sport* (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 509–10.
5. J.M. Coetzee, 'Playing Total (itarian) Rugby', *Die Suid Afrikaan*, 1 No. 16 (August 1988).
6. J.K. Galbraith's *The New Industrial State* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972) remains a comprehensive study of this phenomenon. He argues *inter alia* that 'in the absence of the massive and artful persuasion that accompanies the management of demand, increasing abundance might well have reduced the interest of [Americans] in acquiring more goods . . . Advertising and its related arts thus help develop the kind of man the goals of the industrial system require — one that reliably spends his income and works reliably because he is always in need of more' (pp. 214–5).
7. Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 161.
8. Dr Hertzog's disparaging — and possibly apocryphal — definition of TV, made while he was Minister of Posts and Telegraphs in the 1960s. His opposition to the 'corrupting' influence of the medium helped delay its introduction in South Africa — an opposition, given the rôle of SABC-TV in the maintenance of state hegemony in the 1970s and '80s, that now seems ironic indeed. See in this connection Peter B. Orlik, 'The SABC: An Instrument of Afrikaner Political Power', *Journal of South African Affairs*, Vol. 3 No. 1 (January 1978).
9. The United States, for example, has been used to 24-hour viewing for two decades; in the United Kingdom, with the advent of cable TV, the equivalent period is now available. See R.M. Liebert, J.M. Neale, and E.S. Davidson, *The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth* (New York, 1973), and Sue Leeman, 'Satellite TV Hits Britain', *The Star*, 3 February 1989.
10. See R. Archery and A. Brouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism* (London: Zed Books, 1982), and G. Jarvie, *Class, Race and Sport in South Africa's Political Economy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), for a

- discussion of the rôle of sport in the entrenchment of a racial oligarchy in South Africa. André Oudendaal considers the parallel function of games in mobilising a 'counter' culture among the disenfranchised in *Vukani Bantu! The Beginnings of Black Protest Politics in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1984).
11. The pressure appears to be hardest on the last bastion of amateur sport, namely provincial rugby. For instance, South African Breweries recently donated R1 561 000 to the South African Rugby board for the 'Lion Cup' competition (*The Pretoria News*, 17 February 1989). Likewise, Saambou Building Society has announced a sponsorship of R600 000 'for the benefit of rugby in our armed forces' — a revealing announcement, given the coincidence of state and corporate interest in the current promotion of sport.
 12. A recent news item highlighted the advantages of sport sponsorship in South Africa at present. The vice-president of the World Aerobic Association, Peter Celliers, declared at a press conference that, if a company could be found to sponsor the South African Aerobics Challenge at Phalaborwa (April 2–14) to the tune of R300 000, the donation 'would qualify as a tax benefit and at the end of the day the company would not be paying for it from its own pocket' (*The Pretoria News*, 15 February 1989).
 13. Galbraith, *op. cit.* p. 215.
 14. As mentioned in n. 2, the SABC and M-Net are considering a jointly-run sports subscription channel in order to eliminate the fierce rivalry between them for sole viewing rights. Thus far, this situation has benefited corporate sponsors only: '[the sports channel] would end the growing competition between the two for major events which, in turn, would cut costs as sponsors and overseas distributors would be dealing with one customer, not playing off one against the other' (Ian Gray, *op. cit.*).
 15. Professor Coetzee has attempted an aesthetics of rugby spectatorship, after the fashion of Roland Barthes' essays in popular culture; see 'Four Notes on Rugby', *Speak*, Vol. 1 No. 4 (July–August 1978), pp. 18–19.
 16. Coetzee, 'Playing Total (itarian) Rugby', p. 6.
 17. But see C.L.R. James' study of the sociology of cricket in the British Commonwealth, *Beyond the Boundary* (London: St Paul, 1978); also W.F. Mandle, 'W.G. Grace as A Victorian Hero', *British Journal of Sports History*, Vol. 65 No. 13 (Summer 1986); and K. Sandiford and W. Vamplew, 'The Peculiar Economics of English Cricket Before 1914', *Br J Sports Hist*, Vol. 165, No. 15 (December 1986).
 18. Coetzee, *op. cit.* p. 5.
 19. Barthes, 'The World of Wrestling', in *Mythologies* (1957; London: Jonathan Cape, 1972, transl. Anette Lavers), p. 23.
 20. Such action may be solidly grounded in class relations: David Robins has recently explored the function of soccer, and soccer spectatorship, in the development of a communal identity in traditionally disadvantaged areas of England and Scotland. See his *We Hate Humans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984).
 21. The position was given a forthright defence recently, at the XIth International Congress of Aesthetics, University of Nottingham: see Antoni Lukacs, 'Television and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life', (unpublished paper, read August 30, 1988; International Association of Aesthetics). For Dr Lukacs, effectively summarising the optimistic view, television offers an unprecedented opportunity in the hands of gifted producers for the dissemination of those arts that are otherwise in danger of becoming marginalised (pp. 10–11).
 22. I do not discount the potential of the medium to facilitate communication in some future form: since 1981 the possibility that two-way cable television may allow the viewer a novel involvement in bureaucratic processes, at present denied him, has been explored in the United States. See Mit Mitropoulos, 'Implications of Cable TV for Participatory Democracy', *Cities*, May 1983.
 23. This 'pressure' is in part Coetzee's subject, *op. cit.*; he refers to the danger that the game 'be rationalised to maximise its spectacle value for an unsophisticated viewership' (p. 6).
 24. It is worth noting that much of our contemporary interest in the game has to do with the well-publicised antics of its 'star' performers. The amount of time TV

commentators devote to what effectively amount to biographical asides *during matches* is, I suggest, central to the entire experience of the viewer. More than any other sports participants, international tennis players have the status of showbiz personalities; they are the harbingers of what is to come in other contests too.

SEAMUS HEANEY'S 'BOOK OF CHANGES': *THE
HAW LANTERN*

by DUNCAN BROWN

Discussing Yeats Heaney says:

He bothers you with the suggestion that if you have managed to do one kind of poem in one way, you should cast off that way and face into another area of your experience until you have learned a new voice to say that area properly. (*Preoccupations*, 110)¹

A restlessness with what has been achieved already has characterised Heaney's poetic career. The range of his poems is wide: from the early Hughesian rural poems of *Death of a Naturalist*, down into the world of the unconscious in *Door into the Dark*, the etymological delvings of *Wintering Out*, the political/archaeological delvings of *North*, the more pastoral poems of *Field Work* and the Dantesque journey of self-scrutiny in *Station Island*. Although each volume follows thematically on the previous one (and this is made simply demonstrable by Heaney's habit of picking up on the final poem of the previous volume in the next), each volume moves beyond the concerns of the previous one, by extending them as *Door into the Dark* did with *Death of a Naturalist*, or by moving in a different direction as *Field Work* did with *North*. *The Haw Lantern*, too, moves beyond the concerns of the previous volume, yet carries with it certain themes from the previous work. Heaney here constructs the 'book of changes' which he referred to in 'On the Road' at the end of *Station Island* (121).

In the new volume Heaney moves further away from the local fidelities which characterised his early work into a more international mode. This does not entail an escape from the 'mess of the actual' in Ireland, as poems like 'From the Frontier of Writing' (6) indicate, but a move away from a specifically and self-consciously Irish poetic mode. Even as late as *Field Work*, Heaney was concerned with the tension between local speech and literary expression. In *Station Island*, however, Joyce was the Irish exemplar who paradoxically freed Heaney from his previous Irish exemplars, Yeats and Kavanagh, and *The Haw Lantern* is characterised by an openness to a variety of literary influences, felt particularly in the range of poems in different styles and on different themes. Mandelstam, Zbigniew Herbert, Blake and Wilbur are all felt to varying degrees in the volume. Heaney said to Frank Kinahan in 1982:

The business of being an 'Irish' poet is by now a literary game almost. Most of the Irish writers that I know can play with it, but they're not really worried about it. I worried about it once, but not any more.²

The shade of Joyce said the same at the end of 'Station Island':

'Who cares,'
he jeered, 'any more? The English language
belongs to us. You are raking at dead fires,

a waste of time for somebody your age.
That subject people stuff is a cod's game.'

(*Station Island*, 93)

Although the tension between poetry and dialect continues to a certain extent in *The Haw Lantern*, it seems that the lesson offered by Joyce in 'Station Island' has been taken in this volume, as it is characterised at times by a confidence in its own mode. The poem dedicated to Daisy Garnett, 'A Peacock's Feather' (38), discovers an image for itself as something small but beautiful:

Where I drop this for you, as I pass
Like the peacock's feather on the grass.

This confidence, however, as the image suggests, is never overbearing or self-regarding. The sense of loss which carries through from the previous volume rebukes any inflated sense of the efficacy of poetry.

Picking up the volume for the first time one is immediately struck by the spare, more prosaic nature of the language:

A shadow his father makes with joined hands
And thumbs and fingers nibbles on the wall
Like a rabbit's head. He understands
He will understand more when he goes to school.

('Alphabets': 1)

There is little of the jagged uneasiness of *Station Island*, but a barer, more discursive language. From a poet with a reputation for the ability to evoke through his diction the physicality of rural life, the new mode is intriguing. The clue to this shift in mode is, I think, in the book's strong emphasis on allegory, not only in the longer allegorical poems like 'Parable Island' (10), 'From the Republic of Conscience' (12), 'From the Land of the Unspoken' (18) or 'The Mud Vision' (48), but also in the smaller allegorical lyrics like 'The Spoonbait' (21) or 'In Memoriam: Robert Fitzgerald' (22). Many

of the other poems in the volume exhibit elements of the allegorical in their working, too, if they do not constitute extended allegories in themselves. Language, for example, serves different semi-allegorical purposes in 'Alphabets' (1) and 'From the Canton of Expectation' (46), suggesting personal and artistic growth in the first and a change in the political climate in the second. I use the term 'semi-allegorical', for language itself is also the subject of the poems. The tendency towards allegory necessarily entails a remove from one's subject-matter, and it seems that this distancing of himself from his material in the allegorical poems influences many of the other poems in the volume in Heaney's use of a less semantically charged diction. This said, however, in the commemorative sonnet sequence 'Clearances' (24), Heaney is very close to his subject-matter, the death of his mother, and here the mode is far closer to his earlier work. The volume as a whole is far less thematically or stylistically unified than his previous volumes, the number of elegiac or commemorative poems suggesting that it is, to some extent, a volume of occasional poems.

Particularly interesting is the volume's drawing attention to the act of writing. Metafictional elements have been common in Heaney's work, yet the degree and manner of self-referentiality in this volume are far closer to modern theoretical contentions, notably amongst Structuralists and Deconstructionists, about the constructedness of human meaning systems, not least of which is the literary text. In the way the volume focuses upon its own process of turning experience into text, it is very much post-modernist in mode, as these lines from 'Hailstones' (14) illustrate:

I made a small hard ball
of burning water running from my hand

just as I make this now
out of the melt of the real thing
smarting into its absence.

The Haw Lantern is a highly experimental volume, in which Heaney tries out various forms. It is appropriate, therefore, that the opening poem should deal with growth and development. 'Alphabets' (1) uses the device of language to trace Heaney's development from childhood learning ('Then draws the forked stick that they call a Y') to poetic maturity:

As from his small window
The astronaut sees all he has sprung from,
The risen, aqueous, singular, lucent O
Like a magnified and buoyant ovum . . .

The various stages of his development are objectified in the languages he learns: 'copying out' which becomes 'English'; Latin ('Book One of *Elementa Latina*,/Marbled and minatory, rose up in him'); Irish ('And he left the Latin forum for the shade/Of a new calligraphy that felt like home'); and poetry ('The poet's dream stole over him like sunlight/And passed into the tenebrous thickets'). Yet these languages not only symbolise Heaney's development, they embody it, for there is a strong sense in the poem of language determining reality, suggested by the various languages being described in imagery of the external world:

The letters of this alphabet were trees.
The capitals were orchards in full bloom,
The lines of script like briars coiled in ditches.

The final section of the poem is the most interesting. Here the child is now adult, and the O which described the globe in section one becomes the 'wooden O' of the stage (the globe/Globe pun). This image, the conflation of world and stage, suggests that the world is structured by texts similar to those of a play and that the artist has divine status within the world of his/her own text. The old language/land congruence which characterised much of Heaney's earlier poetry, particularly in *Wintering Out* and *Field Work*,³ has now been replaced by a less comforting, more chastened computer allegory:

Balers drop bales like printouts where stooked sheaves

Made lambdas on the stubble once at harvest
And the delta face of each potato pit
Was patted straight and moulded against frost.
All gone, with the omega that kept

Watch above the door, the good luck horseshoe.

The all-inclusive vision (alpha to omega) is no longer possible, and a new language must be learned. A very important break occurs in the poem after the lines just quoted, as Heaney's present poetic vision is introduced.

These last stanzas are very complex. The reference to 'shape-note language, absolute on air/As Constantine's sky-lettered IN HOC SIGNO' suggests, I think, what Mendelson refers to as 'the autonomous visionary manner that increasingly illuminates [Heaney's] poems'.⁴ This relates to Heaney's sense that a turn towards the visionary may be necessary as a response to 'the awful and demeaning facts of Northern Ireland's history over the last couple of decades' (*The Government of the Tongue*, xx). He argues

that, in the past years, bigotry in Northern Ireland has been so blatant as not to require exposing, and that consequently 'political conditions had to be outstripped' and increasingly poetry has become 'an ideal towards which poets turned in order to survive the stunting conditions' (*The Government of the Tongue*, xxi-xxii). The visionary may, then, become a means towards moving beyond stunting political conditions, as the certainty of a vision like Constantine's may offer a liberating possibility. The necromancer and astronaut images, although they are ostensibly introduced as alternatives ('or' and 'as'), qualify this as they offer images of the artist which are undercut by the child's vision of the plasterer. Both the astronaut and the necromancer images suggest perspectives upon the world, the necromancer's symbolic 'figure of the world' and the astronaut's geographical distance from the Earth. These imply that the artist may play a liberating role in providing some sort of visionary perspective by distancing him-/herself from events. In this way the poem justifies the volume's larger allegorical movement. Yet as the description of the world as an O suggests, the artist's world is constructed of words, which deflates the larger visionary perspectives of the preceding images. This is captured in the final image of the child's watching the plasterer. The poem does not reject the visionary moment, however, it simply qualifies it, in that Heaney reminds himself of the gap between world and text, a gap which complicates any simple sense of the political efficacy of the poem. The 'he' of the preceding sections of the poem is suddenly internalised into the 'my' and 'our' of the final stanza, suggesting that the name 'Heaney' is being written on the gable. So the poem ends with Heaney signing his name to the 'world' created by the language of his own poem. Though he never goes as far as to agree with Mandelstam's sense that poetry is as necessary to the people as bread, there is a sense in this poem, I think, that the poem's very removal from the world, its status as text, ironically accounts for its efficacy, as the momentary liberation achieved within it may be both valuable and necessary. In 'Hailstones' (14) this epiphanic moment is described as follows:

in that dilation
 when the light opened in silence
 and a car with wipers going still
 laid perfect tracks in the slush.

This small liberation has become increasingly valuable to Heaney in his recent work, becoming, in a sense, his validation of poetry:

The achievement of a poem, after all, is an experience of release. In that liberated moment, when the lyric discovers its buoyant

completion and the timeless formal pleasure comes to fullness and exhaustion, something occurs which is equidistant from self-justification and self-obliteration. A plane is — fleetingly — established where the poet is intensified in his being and freed from his predicaments. (*Government of the Tongue*, xxii)

So too with the reader, I think Heaney would argue. This moment of freedom is not intended to be simply masturbatory, but is seen as having some political efficacy in the face of oppression or violence. In this respect Mandelstam is an exemplar in that Heaney sees him as an example of the attainment of an 'inner freedom' (*Government of the Tongue*, xvii). In fact Heaney has turned increasingly to Eastern European exemplars to justify poetry as a means of individual redemption, as his recent prose indicates. As early as 1974, though, he said in a review of Mandelstam's *Selected Poems*:

Whether the world falls into the hands of the security forces or the fat-necked speculators, the poet must get in under his phalanx of words and start resisting. (*Preoccupations*, 217)

In *The Government of the Tongue* Heaney relates a story of how he and a friend were on their way to a studio to record a programme of poetry and music one evening in 1972. On their way they heard explosions followed by the sirens of fire engines and ambulances. Heaney says:

The very notion of beginning to sing at that moment when others were beginning to suffer seemed like an offence against their suffering. (*Government of the Tongue*, xi)

He and his friend packed up and went home. Yet, he argues, that was perhaps the wrong thing to do, citing the example of a poet like Zbigniew Herbert as one who has sung through the catastrophe:

I am inclined to think that if Herbert had been with us in the studio he would have encouraged us to stay and make the tape. (*Government of the Tongue*, xix)

And Mandelstam, too, 'singing in the Stalinist night' (*Government of the Tongue*, xix), becomes an image of poetic resistance. A confidence in poetry as a response to political conditions is evident throughout *The Haw Lantern*, and 'Alphabets', particularly in its concluding images, suggests something of Heaney's strategy of resistance in the volume.

A number of poems explicitly consider the act of writing. 'From the Frontier of Writing' (6) uses the real border between North and South metaphorically. Heaney's actual behaviour at the border:

a little emptier, a little spent
 as always by that quiver in the self
 subjugated, yes, and obedient

is balanced against his conduct as the physical frontier becomes metaphorical:

So you drive on to the frontier of writing
 where it happens again.

This sense of the Ulster border as 'the frontier of writing' relates to Heaney's sense that today's world-defining poets are the 'heroic names' who write under tyranny (*Government of the Tongue*, 39), that the political urgency of the North may be invigorating and strangely liberating:

And suddenly you're through, arraigned yet freed . . .

This is an ironic reversal of the description of the South as 'my free state of image and allusion' in 'Sandstone Keepsake' from the previous volume (*Station Island*, 20). Yet the frontier also suggests a similar liberating possibility to that offered at the end of 'Alphabets':

In repeating the experience of political oppression, the poem effects, even if only for the poet, a temporary release from it: at the literal frontier Heaney is 'as always . . ./subjugated, yes, and obedient'. But at the frontier of writing he suddenly breaks 'through, arraigned yet freed'.⁵

The frontier motif perhaps owes something to Auden's 'frontiers', as Blake Morrison suggests.⁶ Particularly important for the volume is the frontier as a 'symbolic judgement place, where the poet must be scrutinised and cleared'.⁷ There is a great emphasis on conscience in the volume (in the poem Heaney is 'arraigned' as well as 'freed'), notably in the longer allegorical poem 'From the Republic of Conscience' (12) and the title poem 'The Haw Lantern' (7). The second of these explores the small space which writing occupies, the image of the haw berry 'burning out of season' suggesting poetry's tiny existence amongst the numerous opposing forces and competing discourses. The following image is remarkable in that it combines the Joycean sense of poetry as forging 'the uncreated conscience' of the nation⁸ with a thoroughly modern sense of poetry as minority discourse:

a small light for small people,
 wanting no more from them but that they keep
 the wick of self-respect from dying out,
 not having to blind them with illumination.

The small illumination (the 'meagre heat' of the sparks in 'Exposure' at the end of *North*) is central here. Having considered poetry's role as maintainer of conscience, the poem moves, in the second stanza, to consider the poet's own conscience. The concern with the poet's conduct which governed *Station Island* continues in *The Haw Lantern* but there is a greater emphasis on moral accountability in the more recent volume. In this poem Heaney uses the image of Diogenes with his lamp seeking one honest man to scrutinise his own conscience. The haw berry had been an image for poetry in the first section, particularly in its function of keeping 'the wick of self-respect from dying out', and in the second section Diogenes's scrutiny of Heaney by the light of the haw berry suggests that the poet's conscience must be scrutinised by the light, the evidence, of his/her own work:

so you end up scrutinised from behind the haw
 he holds up at eye-level on its twig,
 and you flinch before its bonded pith and stone,
 its blood prick that you wish would test and clear you,
 its pecked-at ripeness that scans you, then moves on.

Heaney 'flinches' before the berry's 'bonded pith and stone' ('stone' referring both to the berry's pip and its symbolic status as unyielding), and the references to stone which abound in the volume reflect, I think, a new sense of moral exactitude in Heaney. If poetry is a force of resistance, however small, it is imperative that the poet's conscience be clear. Perhaps this kind of thinking led Heaney to publish 'From the Republic of Conscience' (12) in an Amnesty International Pamphlet in 1985. His profound uncertainty about his own conscience is suggested by Diogenes's moving on at the end of the poem.

The longer allegorical poems are in many ways the volume's highpoint, as they represent a departure from Heaney's conventional mode, and a new means of resistance to political events. He has been, for the most part, a poet very much rooted in the here and now, particularly in the extreme physicality of his earlier poetry, notable examples being his opening poem 'Digging' (*Death of a Naturalist*, 13), the advice of the longship in 'North' to 'trust the feel of what nubbed treasure/your hands have known' (*North*, 20), his quoting of Pound's advice 'Go in fear of abstraction', his identification of himself with Antaeus in Part One of *North*, and the poetry/landscape identifications of *Wintering Out* and *Field Work*. From such a poet, the shift towards an allegorical mode is particularly interesting. The poems are experimental, and pay the price for this at times in being obscure.

Heaney was, no doubt, encouraged in his move towards the allegorical by the parable poems of the post-war Eastern European

poets whom he mentions in his T.S. Eliot Memorial Lecture on Auden (*Government of the Tongue*, 114–115). The extreme defamiliarisation techniques of the so-called Martian poets (particularly Craig Raine, with whom Heaney did a reading tour) probably also influenced him. Raine's 'A Martian Sends a Postcard Home' is especially relevant:

Only the young are allowed to suffer
openly. Adults go to a punishment room

with water but nothing to eat.
They lock the door and suffer noises

alone. No one is exempt
and everyone's pain has a different smell.⁹

In a poem like 'Parable Island' (10) Heaney uses a similar defamiliarising technique in considering allegorically the self-delusion of modern society, in particular contemporary Ireland. Richard Wilbur appears to have been another important influence. His poem 'Shame', though evidently not a typical poem, is too close to Heaney's mode to be fortuitous:

It is a cramped little state with no foreign policy,
Save to be thought inoffensive. The grammar of the language
Has never been fathomed, owing to the national habit
of allowing each sentence to trail off in confusion.

Compare the following lines from Heaney's poem 'From the Republic of Conscience' (12):

At their inauguration, public leaders
must swear to uphold unwritten law and weep
to atone for their presumption to hold office . . .

A variety of countries is presented in the poems: a 'parable island'; the 'republic of conscience'; and the 'land of the unspoken'. 'The Mud Vision' (48) seems, more specifically, to be set in Ireland, although its significance is not limited to that country. It is important, though, that one avoid rushing from text to world, for the various worlds presented in the poems are not simply Ireland disguised. Rather, in considering these various allegorical worlds, Heaney offers illuminations relevant to modern Ireland. The allegorical is not a literary disguise but an investigative mode.

'Parable Island' (10) is a poem about self-deception and about meaning-systems, particularly as the two are related. The theme of self-deception is established in the opening stanza:

Although they are an occupied nation
and their only border is an inland one
they yield to nobody in their belief
that the country is an island.

The following stanzas go on to point, in an almost Saussurean way,
to the gap between language and referent:

Somewhere in the far north, in a region
every native thinks of as 'the coast',
there lies the mountain of the shifting names.

The occupiers call it Cape Basalt.
The Sun's Headstone, say farmers in the east.
Drunken Westerners call it The Orphan's Tit.

The variety of names given to the mountain by the occupiers, the farmers and drunken Westerners suggests a variety of different languages or meaning systems. The Derridan concept of logocentrism is combined with the mythical notion of the central Truth in the final stanza of the first section, as the self-deceiving natives wish for some point of fixity though pretending not to believe it:

Meanwhile the fork-tongued natives keep repeating
prophecies they pretend not to believe
about a point where all names converge
underneath the mountain and where (some day)
they are going to start to mine the ore of truth.

The second section of the poem continues this idea of the 'point where all names converge' in presenting the original unitary deity ('one bell-tower', 'single note', 'one-eyed all creator'). Yet this is undercut in the second stanza as the biblical phrasing ('In the beginning . . .') gives way to a more discursive, academic language:

At least this was the original idea
missionary scribes record they found
in autochthonous tradition.

The suggestion enters the poem here that mythical origins may be just that. This is made explicit in the following stanzas as the concept of rewriting history, of artificially recreating the past to justify the present, is introduced:

you can't be sure that parable is not
at work already retrospectively,
since all their manuscripts are full

of stylised eye-shapes and recurrent glosses
 in which those old revisionists derive
 the word 'island' from roots in 'eye' and 'land'.

The following section develops this theme, as the attempts to 'gloss the glosses' give rise to various other archaeological languages. These have political importance, as Heaney's simile suggests:

like the subversives and collaborators
 always vying with a fierce possessiveness
 for the right to set 'the island story' straight.

In the final section of the poem, this unreality is shown to have permeated the psyche of the inhabitants of the island, even the conventionally wise 'elders'.

This extended investigation of the creation and revision of meaning systems and their delusory potential has great importance for contemporary Ireland, and the 'Island' of the poem's title seems to point towards this. Social divisions in Ireland are supported by religious/political/symbolic/mythical structures and societal texts, often involving a revision or glossing of history to support these divisions. This is an element of every country's social matrix, yet in a country like Ireland, or South Africa, for that matter, these societal grammars are particularly powerful. (Ideology and its support systems are the most powerful examples of societal meaning systems that we have.) In pointing to the delusory nature of such meaning systems in the context of the allegorical island on which the poem is set, Heaney suggests the necessity of jettisoning such ideologies in contemporary Ireland.

Corcoran describes these allegorical poems in his review of *The Haw Lantern* as 'diagnostic, analytic, dispassionate, admonitory, forensic and post-mortem'.¹⁰ This accurately captures their tone, yet in 'From the Republic of Conscience' (12) this ostensibly diagnostic and analytical approach increases the poem's very personal import:

You carried your own burden and very soon
 your symptoms of creeping privilege disappeared.

The volume is, as I mentioned earlier, very concerned with conscience, and Heaney's becoming a 'dual citizen' suggests his sense of the stringent scrutiny of his conscience which he must undergo as person and writer. The other nationality which he holds in addition to that of the Republic of Conscience I take to be both Irish and literary. Heaney's recent work has increasingly prized

isolation,¹¹ and the closing lines of the poem suggest that conscience, particularly, must be personal rather than collective:

Their embassies, he said, were everywhere
but operated independently
and no ambassador would ever be relieved.

Not to push a point, Heaney's being a representative of the Republic of Conscience suggests specifically also his sense of the necessity to 'keep the wick of self-respect from dying out' through his work as poet.

'The Mud Vision' (48) I find the most difficult of the allegorical poems, largely because the symbolic significance of the vision is rather obscure. It suggests, I think, a wish for salvation in an almost 'deus ex machina' way, which is inevitably disappointed. The images of complacency and somnambulism of the first section ('wafted', 'sleepwalked') give way to the fundamental energisation which occurs when the vision appears:

but we were vouchsafed
Original clay, transfigured and spinning.

The nation is described as a 'generation who had seen a sign', and the religious connotations of this and the previous image suggest some sort of divine intervention to restore humanity to a state of grace. The inability to act which characterised the people before the vision (the image of the 'man on the springboard/ Who keeps limbering up because the man cannot dive') is replaced by a great potential for action and transformation:

only ourselves
Could be adequate to our lives

and:

Yet we presumed it a test
That would prove us beyond expectation.

The final section of the poem presents the disappearance of the vision. The people's desire to make it into a revelation rather than accept it as the opportunity for change results in their wasting its potential:

experts
Began their 'post factum' jabber and all of us
Crowded in tight for the big explanations.

The poem's conclusion suggests both that such wishes for divine intervention are merely wishes, and that people need to take control of their own lives. As such it is extremely relevant to contemporary Ireland. The fundamental potential of the vision, its positive possibility, is wasted as the people return to a state of alienation and complacency, though they are plagued by a sense of loss:

Just like that, we forgot that the vision was ours,
 Our one chance to know the incomparable
 And dive to a future. What might have been origin
 We dissipated in news. The clarified place
 Had retrieved neither us nor itself — except
 You could say we survived. So say that, and watch us
 Who had our chance to be mud-men, convinced and estranged,
 Figure in our eyes for the eyes of the world.

The poem is perhaps the best example in the volume of Heaney's moving into a more international mode while yet remaining an Irish poet. It is set, I think, in Ireland, as the references to 'punks with aerosol sprays', 'popes' and 'mummers' suggest. The vision is also not a great portent ('the comet's pulsing rose': 'Exposure': *North*, 73) but a 'mud vision', a more deliberately local revelation. Yet the poem's significance reaches beyond modern Ireland to include the whole of modern society, for the sense that the all-encompassing 'Answer' is not possible is vital, as is the assertion that people need to take control of their lives in order to bring about change in society.

Morrison speaks of 'the burden of spokespersonship' which Heaney carries in the allegorical poems,¹² and this is particularly evident in this poem (the pronouns are all first person plural). Heaney has, for the most part, shied away from speaking as a representative, in fact listing as one of his reasons for leaving the North in 1972 his finding himself being interviewed more and more as a spokesperson for the Catholic minority.¹³ This is not to make too large a point from what are, after all, allegorical poems, but simply to suggest that the move towards expressing a more collective experience is interesting and suggests a greater ease with the problems of poetic conduct.

While the allegorical poems may be the volume's highpoint formally, emotionally the elegiac sonnet sequence 'Clearances' (24) is the highpoint. It gives personal and particular expression to themes dealt with more generally in the volume, and offers moving insights into the relationship between mother and son. Yet it is less innovative than a number of other poems in the volume, and is consequently less interesting in terms of the present discussion.

Heaney tries out a variety of forms in the volume's course, some of which, like the allegorical poems, spread their influence throughout the volume, while others seem simply to be occasional poems. 'The Song of the Bullets' (42) is one of the most interesting of these occasional poems, in that Heaney attempts, very successfully, the dialogue form. The poem is obviously influenced by Blake's 'The Clod and the Pebble' and perhaps also by Yeats's dialogue poems. The visionary has, as I suggested earlier, become increasingly important in Heaney's recent work, and here combines with the dialogue form as Heaney considers whether weapons innocently reflect human aggression or actively promote it. The slightly archaic, Blakean diction increases the visionary element of the poem as it estranges the reader, setting the poem in some indefinite time:

I watched a long time in the yard
 The usual stars, the still
 And seemly planets, lantern bright
 Above our darkened hill.

This is compounded by the almost surreal transformation of the stars into tracer bullets. Into this setting the debate is introduced as one of the tracers puts the case for weapons innocently reflecting human aggression:

Our guilt was accidental. Blame,
 Blame because you must.
 Then blame young men for semen or
 Blame the moon for moon dust.

The counter-argument is put by the 'other fireball' which suggests that arms actively promote aggression:

The soul's cadenced desires
 Cannot prevail against us who
 Dwell in the marbled fires

Of every steady eye that ever
 Narrowed, sighted, paused:
 We fire and glaze the shape of things
 Until the shape's imposed.

No conclusion is offered, and, despite the second voice's having final say, I do not think the debate tilts either way. Weapons imagery has, as one would expect from a poet from Northern Ireland, been extremely common in Heaney's work from 'Digging' ('Between my finger and my thumb/The squat pen rests; snug as a

gun': *Death of a Naturalist*, 13) through to poems like 'From the Frontier of Writing' (6) in this volume ('eyeing with intent/down cradled guns that hold you under cover'), and questioning the nature and psychological import of those weapons is, I think, part of the larger project in *The Haw Lantern* to analyse events in Ireland rather than simply reflect them. The allegorical poems are obviously an essential part of this project. This is an important development in Heaney, for although there have been analytic elements in his previous work, these have particular prominence in this volume.

'From the Canton of Expectation' (46) is another of the poems which do not fit into any particular category; rather it straddles a number of them. It is one of the most successful poems in *The Haw Lantern*, combining many of the thematic or formal elements which run through the volume: the allegorical; the analytical; the foregrounding of language and meaning systems; the scrutiny of conscience; and the activity of writing. The title suggests that the poem is set in a hypothetical state, as are most of the allegorical poems, this time the Canton of Expectation. Yet the opening line ('We lived deep in a land of optative moods') indicates that the Canton of Expectation is a psychological state, and the references to 'the brotherhood' (the Irish Republican Brotherhood) and 'militiamen on overtime at roadblocks' set the poem in Northern Ireland. The allegorical is thus not the chief mode of the poem but simply an important element in it.

The poem considers the change in political thinking which has happened amongst Catholics in contemporary Ulster, from the 'resignation' of section one to the 'imperatives' of section two. In section one the spirit of political resignation is objectified in the language spoken by the people: theirs is 'a land of optative moods', characterised by the 'rustle of loss' in the phrases with which they console themselves. More than simply objectifying a particular political outlook, language is seen as playing a determining role in maintaining it:

where children sang
songs they had learned by rote in the old language.

This mood of resignation is reaffirmed by the whole ritual of 'enumerating' the 'humiliations/we always took for granted', ironically usually a call to action but here not regarded as such even by the speaker. These ironies continue as the whole ceremony simply 'confirms' the people in their acceptance of their situation, and the 'rebel anthem' signals not a mobilisation but a dispersal as the participants 'turned for home and the usual harassment/by militiamen on overtime at roadblocks'.

In the second section there is a complete change, and the imagery is again grammatical (the pun on 'change of mood'). Here the optative and conditional are rejected ('they would ban the conditional forever') in favour of 'a grammar/of imperatives, the new age of demands'. The references to 'Books open in the newly-wired kitchens' and 'intelligences bright and unmannerly as crowbars' suggest the importance of technology and educational reforms in breeding a new spirit of militancy in the youth. This situation has direct parallels with South African democratic movements, a poem like Njabulo Ndebele's 'The Revolution of the Aged' considering a similar radicalisation of the younger generation. In fact the tension between the more passive old guard and the more militant youth seems to be a world-wide phenomenon in political movements. The older Catholics (himself amongst them) were criticised for the feebleness of their optative resignation in section one, yet Heaney describes the imperative youth too in critical terms, as the strong connotations of words like 'impervious', 'anathema' and particularly 'crowbar' suggest.

In section three Heaney's passivity as a member of the optative generation ironically becomes threatening to him:

These things that corroborated us when we dwelt
under the aegis of our stealthy patron,
the guardian angel of passivity,
now sink a fang of menace in my shoulder.

Both sections one and two were presented in the past, and the shift to the present tense suggests an 'expectation' of change, a sense of the inadequacy of his own previous response in the face of present events. The moral duplicity of the attitude of the older Catholics is evoked in the phrase 'stealthy patron'. The image of Noah as one who has remained true to his conscience supplies the resolution, a grammatical mean between the optative and the imperative being found in the indicative:

I yearn for hammerblows on clinkered planks,
the uncompromised report of driven thole-pins,
to know that there is one among us who never swerved
from all his instincts told him was right action,
who stood his ground in the indicative,
whose boat will lift when the cloudburst happens.

The indicative is offered as a middle road between the self-confirming liberal protestations of the older Catholics and the militant demands of the youth, a way of remaining true to one's conscience by stating 'truths' directly. Ironically even this conclusion is offered in something like the optative ('I yearn

...'),¹⁴ and in the act of trying to move beyond the passivity of his own generation without exchanging its faults for those of the youth, Heaney is aware of his own limitations, of the difficulty of standing one's ground in the indicative.

Conscience has been a major concern in the volume, and its being linked in this poem with the indicative relates to Heaney's admiration of the Eastern European poets for still speaking in the indicative rather than retreating into the conditional as so much recent poetry in English has done. These poets, he says:

constitute a shadow-challenge to poets who dwell in the conditional, the indeterminate mood which has grown so characteristic of so much poetry one has grown used to reading in journals and new books . . .
(*Government of the Tongue*, 39)

There is a sense of his own failure in his admiration for these poets for facing up to tyranny in the indicative, for he himself has grown up under oppression.

Although very much a volume in its own right, *The Haw Lantern* also has the feel of a transitional work, an experimentation with new modes and forms. Heaney has a reputation, with many people, for being a traditional poet, both in his views on poetry and his earlier set-piece nature poems. *The Haw Lantern* is, however, a thoroughly modern volume, particularly in its metafictionality and its foregrounding of language and meaning systems. In the volume Heaney seeks a mode which responds to the demands both of contemporary Ireland and the international literary community, a move away from the more strictly local fidelities of his earlier work. *Station Island* was characterised by a concern with the role of the poet within society, and it would appear that in *The Haw Lantern* Heaney has a new sense of the value of poetry as discourse and of the role the poet can play.

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NOTES

1. References to works by Heaney are made by volume title and page number, except for *The Haw Lantern* where only the page number is given. All volumes are published by Faber. Titles and publications dates are as follows: *Death of a Naturalist* (1966); *Door into the Dark* (1969); *Wintering Out* (1972); *North* (1975); *Field Work* (1979); *Station Island* (1984); and *The Haw Lantern* (1987). Heaney's two prose volumes are *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-78* (1980) and *The Government of the Tongue: The 1986 T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures and Other Critical Writings* (1988).
2. Frank Kinahan, 'Artists on Art: An Interview with Seamus Heaney', *Critical Inquiry* 8 (3), (Spring 1982), p. 406.
3. Striking examples are:

The tawny guttural water
 spells itself: Moyola
 is its own score and consort

bedding the locale
 in the utterance

('Gifts of Rain': *Wintering Out*, 25)

and:

Vowels ploughed into other, opened ground,
 Each verse returning like the plough turned round

('Glanmore Sonnets': 2: *Field Work*, 34)
4. Edward Mendelson, 'Poetry as Fate and Faith', *Times Literary Supplement*, (July 1-7 1988), p. 726.
5. Neil Corcoran, 'From the Frontier of Writing', *Times Literary Supplement*, (28 June 1987), p. 682.
6. Blake Morrison, 'Clearing the Old Ground', *The Observer*, (28 June 1987), p. 23.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
8. The penultimate sentence of *Portrait of the Artist*.
9. Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion, eds, *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982, pp. 169-70.
10. Neil Corcoran, 'From the Frontier of Writing', p. 681.
11. Since his move to the South in 1972 Heaney has begun, particularly in *Field Work* and the volumes following it, to suggest that it may be necessary for the artist to disengage from the tribe.
12. Blake Morrison, 'Clearing the Old Ground', p. 23.
13. James Randall, 'An Interview with Seamus Heaney', *Ploughshares* 5 (3) (1979), p. 7.
14. Although grammatically the mood is indicative, the sense is optative.

IDEOLOGY, LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

by SEUMAS MILLER

The notation of an ideology, and related notions of socially determined belief systems, have played an important role in the attempt to understand the nature and development of human culture. Such notions have had an especially prominent part in those models of society which have sought to explain individual thought and action in terms of collective practices and belief systems. Of course some — notably Marxists — have wanted to go on and explain in turn these collective practices and belief systems in terms of the political interests or purposes of some social group or other. Others, often of a more conservative political persuasion, have tended simply to take such collective practices as given, and explanatorially basic. And recourse to ideology and other related notions has in many instances yielded both knowledge and understanding. However there has been a tendency to try to make such notions do more work than they can possibly do, and to offer simplistic and underdeveloped renderings of them. This is especially the case in certain of the newly arrived 'disciplines' such as communication studies and literary theory, which have often uncritically taken over fairly crude and inadequate versions of theories and models in use elsewhere.

The account and deployment of the notion of ideology in much Marxist-informed theorising about culture in general, and the mass media and literature in particular, is one such central case in point. Here what has often taken place is a crude attempt to explain the thought and communicative action of individuals in terms of some prior conception of ideology. The various strands of anti-humanist Marxism associated with Louis Althusser, and more recently the anti-humanist deriving from Michel Foucault, have been very influential in theorising about the mass media and about literature. The key move in such projects has often been to import a specific conception of language, namely that deriving from Ferdinand de Saussure, into the field in question, and use it to provide the key nexus between social or class interests and purposes on the one hand and individual thought and action on the other. Very roughly the picture which is then presented is of individual thought and hence action, being fundamentally conditioned by language, and of language in turn being fundamentally conditioned by ideology in the service of specific social or class interests. But if we turn to the opposite side of the political spectrum we find a similar kind of move being made. For it has been a feature of much conservative political and social theory, including that associated with the Nationalist Party and Christian National Education in this country,

that language has played a pivotal role in the (alleged) cultural construction of the individual. Here it is some notion of shared beliefs and practices, and not that of ideology, which provides the starting point, but the conception of a socially constructed self with language in the pivotal role, informs both conservative and radical — including Marxist — thought. One result of this general procedure, at least in its cruder forms, whether it is employed by Marxists or conservatives, is an impoverished conception of the individual; another is the crude caricaturing of creative artistic and intellectual activities and works as simply evidential of particular social or class practices and beliefs. A further result has been the deployment of this procedure in the construction of social theories which in turn have provided the 'intellectual' underpinning of political agendas be they racist 'white' Nationalism or anti-humanist Marxism.

No doubt there has been much theorising within the broad parameters of this conception which is much more sophisticated than my fairly rough characterisation might suggest. And no doubt there is considerable merit in some of it. But there is also considerable confusion and incoherence, and much of this goes unchallenged. At any rate I want in this paper to examine the general nature of the connections between ideology, language and thought, with a view to undermining at least many of the cruder versions of this conception as described above. Let me look firstly at the connection between thought and language. Here I want to suggest the order of explanation is principally from thought to language, rather than the reverse. Obviously in a paper such as this I cannot possibly do justice to this complex issue about which so much has been said. Rather I will content myself with presenting some of the main well-known considerations in favour of the position I am advocating.

In respect of thought we need first to remind ourselves of the variety of types of mental state. Thus we have sensations, perceptions, emotions, willings, desires, beliefs, to name only some central ones. Some of these states have a palpable, qualitative character e.g. the hurtfulness of pains, others such as beliefs do not; some have propositional content e.g. the belief *that the world is round*, others not; some can be unconscious e.g. desires, others not; some are complex states e.g. emotions, others are not; and so on. Now many of these mental state types, if not all, are *not* intrinsically linguistic. In particular those with a qualitative character are not e.g. sensations. For such states the order of explanation must run from the mental *to* the linguistic, and not the other way around. This is not to say that language does not impact itself in a variety of ways upon such mental states. Thus, to take a well-worn example, that Eskimoes have perceptual states as of

many different shades of white, whereas Australians and South Africans have relatively few, is partly to be explained by recourse to the different languages used by the different groups in question. The Eskimo language has terms which pick out many different shades of white whereas Xhosa, English, Afrikaans etc. do not; and Eskimos learn Eskimo, and Australians English. But it is clear that what is taking place here is that certain terms of a language are merely serving to draw attention to features of the environment which could be discerned by perceivers independent of knowledge of the terms of that language, or indeed of any equivalent set of terms of another language. A South African who wandered around the Arctic for long enough would presumably begin to attend to perceptual distinctions in respect of white objects, which he did not do when in the karoo, and make these distinctions without learning Eskimo. The general point here is that the perceptible world is very complex and to some extent vague, and we are only interested in some features of it, and those features to a limited degree of precision; language reflects that interest in so far as it is shared, but the interest is dependent, firstly, on the prior existence and causal efficacy of the environmental features in question, and secondly, on a prior capacity of the individuals to perceive the features in question, and to the requisite degree of precision.

Now the obvious inability of language to account for the character or existence of sensations or perceptions is sufficient to dispose of the crudest forms of the view that language fundamentally conditions thought. For there are at least some mental states, namely, sensations and perceptions, that are not intrinsically linguistic or wholly causally dependent on language; and while the main candidates for explanation in terms of language are the so-called propositional attitudes such as beliefs, these are clearly to some extent causally dependent on sensations and perceptions, and therefore not wholly susceptible of explanation in terms of language. But the less crude view would concede this much but hold that: (a) central propositional attitudes such as beliefs are at any rate intrinsically linguistic; and, (b) that with the exception of some beliefs and attitudes provided by pre-linguistic coarse-grained perceptions and sensations, the network of propositional attitudes possessed by any individual is fundamentally determined by whatever language that individual speaks. By 'fundamentally determined' it is meant that the pre-existing language used by an individual largely determines the *actual* set of propositional attitudes of that individual. It is not meant merely that one's present language constrains the *possible* beliefs etc. that one could have at a given time by requiring, for example, that the such beliefs be substantially expressible in the

antecedent language. On the latter view the *actual* sets of beliefs of two individuals sharing the same language could be very different, indeed contradictory, and the language itself could undergo change as a result of new discoveries, both factual and theoretical or conceptual, i.e. as a result of new thought.

Let us look first at the alleged intrinsically linguistic character of propositional attitudes. This claim, while somewhat unclear, has tended to mean that propositional attitudes, say beliefs, can be analysed as attitudes to sentences or as inner speech acts. The problem with such analyses has always been that of circularity. If beliefs, to take a key example, are attitudes to sentences in the indicative mood what is this attitude? The only coherent candidate is the attitude of belief in the proposition expressed by the sentence. So belief, which is to say thought, re-enters the picture as an unanalysed element. On the other hand if an analysis of belief as inner assertion is offered how are we to understand the notion of an assertion here made use of? To assert is at least to produce an utterance which has meaning in some language. However it is more than this, for the asserter must *know* what that meaning is. But in knowing that this meaning is, say, that the cat is on the mat, he or she truly *believes* that the utterance means the cat is on the mat. So once again belief re-enters as an unanalysed element.

So propositional attitudes are not analysable as linguistic states; are they nevertheless fundamentally determined by language? If propositional attitudes are not analysable as linguistic states, then the structure of propositional attitudes is presumably not principally given by language. For propositional attitudes are largely defined in terms of their structural properties. What makes something the belief that *p*, for example, is in large part the fact that it has certain relations of rationality with other beliefs and with desires and intentions. Thus I could not have the belief that the world is flat unless I had a whole network of rationally connected beliefs such as the belief that there is a world, and that the world is not round, and that it is not the case that the world is not flat and so on. And I could not intend to perform the action *a* on the basis of my desire that *s* obtain unless I had the belief that doing *a* will lead to *s*. Indeed the structure of language must to a significant extent reflect prior structural properties of propositional attitudes. For language is used to express propositional attitudes and could not do so if the structures of propositional attitudes and language were not to a large extent isomorphic. But if the defining structural properties of propositional attitudes, and hence possible networks of propositional attitudes, are not determined by language, then language cannot be said to fundamentally determine propositional attitudes. And this point is strengthened by the earlier mentioned fact that propositional attitudes are significantly causally

determined by perceptions and sensations. So the most that can be said is that language constrains and in important ways impacts itself on an individual's network of propositional attitudes. And there seems little doubt that this much weaker claim is true.

We have looked at the relation between language and thought in suitably general terms and concluded that thought is not fundamentally conditioned by language as envisaged by certain anti-humanist Marxists and by certain conservatives. And this result is sufficient to undermine their common argumentative strategy, and its conclusion, viz. the social, class, ideological constructedness of individuals and their thought processes. However let us now turn to consider the other key nexus of their argument, namely the alleged fundamental conditioning of language by ideology.

In respect of this connection between language and ideology I suggest that any given language is consistent with many competing ideologies and that therefore ideology is in general not intrinsically connected to some particular language. In order to establish this claim I need first to offer an account of the notion of an ideology.

Firstly, it is important to note that in order for something to be an ideology it must comprise a set of systematically connected beliefs, assumptions or claims. Moreover this systematically connected set of beliefs or claims must if it is an ideology be susceptible of instantiation; and if it is instantiated it must be instantiated in the minds of a group of people. Such a group must constitute a community and not simply a set of unrelated individuals. The notion of an (instantiated) ideology, then, is the notion of a shared set of beliefs and claims. Further, that the key constitutive elements of the system are beliefs and claims cannot be too strongly emphasised, since it is sometimes supposed that the key constitutive elements are actions, at other times appearances, and at still other times that these elements are words or concepts. But an ideology cannot consist of actions, social practices and the like since unlike beliefs or claims, actions are not *about* the world and are not true or false; but it is a constitutive feature of an ideology that it be about the world, and that it be true or (more likely) false. Nor can an ideology comprise appearances, even though the way the world appears to be may bring about false beliefs and indeed ideological beliefs. Here a perceptual analogy may be useful. A stick placed in water has the appearance of being bent and may cause the perceiver to believe that it is in fact bent. Yet from the fact that the world appears to a subject to be a certain way it does not follow that the subject believes that the world is the way it appears to be. We do not, for example, believe that the stick is bent, although it certainly appears to us to be bent. But if appearances are not necessarily accepted as true by a subject then

they cannot be constitutive of ideologies. For if someone adopts an ideology then the person accepts its content as being true. Again, it is surely clear that it is only beliefs and claims, as opposed to unitary items such as words or concepts, that constitute commitments to this or that view of the world, and as such can be true or false. By contrast words and concepts as such do not constitute such commitments and make no truth claims. Thus the word 'unicorn' is consistent with there being or not being unicorns; however the belief 'there are unicorns' is a *commitment* to the world being a certain way and is true if the world is that way and false if it is not.

Secondly, I suggest that for any systematically connected set of shared beliefs to count as an ideology it must have a certain kind of origin. In particular the existence of the ideology cannot ultimately be caused by the world's being as the ideology says it is. Thus a particular systematically connected set of beliefs (say liberalism) would qualify as an ideology on our definition if it were brought into existence not by the world being as liberalism says it is, but rather was fashioned as an expedient account of things by the economically ascendant classes.

Thirdly, I suggest that to count as an ideology a set of beliefs must serve some kind of social function. It might, for example, have the function of preserving the *status quo*.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a high probability that an ideology will be false, given that its causal origin cannot be the world being the way the ideology says it is, and given that it must serve some or other social function.

Having provided ourselves with an account of the notion of an ideology let us turn to the question of the relation between language and ideology.

We have seen that an ideology is composed principally of beliefs, and not linguistic items such as concepts or words. (And of course we saw earlier that beliefs are not themselves essentially linguistic items.) It would seem then, that we have broken any intrinsic connection between ideology and language. However, the matter is more complex than might appear at first. For it could be argued that the connection still obtains in virtue of the fact that possession of any concept entails possession of some belief or beliefs. (I owe this point and the following example to Philip Petit.) For example, possession of the concept of redness would entail possession of the conditional belief that if anything were red it would be extended. But of course our claim was simply that concepts as such cannot be the constitutive elements of an ideology since in themselves concepts are not commitments to the world being this way or that. Moreover while it is true that any given ideology presupposes a set of concepts, such a set will not uniquely determine any particular

ideology. You and I might have the concepts of 'conservative', 'communist', 'negation' and 'danger' in common and yet you be a conservative who believes that communists are dangerous and conservatives not, and I a communist who believes the reverse. Of course this is not to say that any such set of concepts will not determine some minimal set of beliefs. Rather my claim here would be that such a set does not constitute an ideology, and for two reasons. Firstly, this minimal set would be to some extent indeterminate. For example in virtue of possessing the concept 'democracy' one person might believe that in democracies government policy is determined by the citizenry; yet another person may believe that the citizenry merely determines which party holds office, rather than the direction of such policy. Secondly, and more importantly, while possession of a concept or set of concepts may well involve some minimal (indeterminate) set of beliefs, it also involves the possession of some other beliefs, but no other beliefs in particular. Thus if someone possesses the concept 'red' he must have some beliefs in respect of red objects, images, patches or whatever. He may, for example, believe that this object, x , was red and that object y was also red. Another person might likewise believe that certain objects, say, A and B , were red. But the second person may never be confronted by x and y , and therefore have no beliefs in respect of x and y , and in particular may not believe that x and y are red. Likewise the first person may not believe that A and B are red. Thus we have two people with a common set of concepts. But these people necessarily have some beliefs not fully determined by the possession of that set of concepts. It follows that a given set of concepts does not uniquely determine an ideology. And this point about the determination of beliefs also holds for words; that is, for a shared language. But a further point needs to be made in respect of language, namely that individuals with different languages can share an ideology. Thus it is that there can be English Marxists and French Marxists. In short, then, a given ideology presupposes a particular set of concepts, but not a particular language; but neither a set of concepts nor a language uniquely determines an ideology.

In this paper we have been concerned with the conception of ideology, language and thought, according to which ideology produces the thought of individuals via language. This view asserts the fundamental dependence of thought on language and the fundamental dependence of language on ideology. But we have seen that neither of these two strong connections can be maintained. It is therefore to be expected and is in fact the case, that many beliefs and claims are non-ideological, for example the belief that $2 + 2 = 4$ or that cars have wheels. Nevertheless

ideology is obviously an important social phenomenon and one that pervades the thinking of many if not all individuals, and does so via the chief public form for communicating thought, namely language. It is thus also to be expected and is in fact the case, that many beliefs and claims are either constitutively ideological or impacted upon ideology in some way or other. In what remains of this paper I would like to present in a suitably qualified form a preliminary taxonomy of some of the main ways in which in fact ideology does impact itself on thought and on language.

Aside from the constitutively ideological we have ideology impacting itself causally, by way of permeation, by implication, and by being presupposed. Examples of each of these follow.

An instance concerning a house might be as follows. A white South African Mr Heunis may in virtue of his apartheid ideology come to believe of a particular black man, Mr Mhketo that he lives in a three- or four-bedroom house which has electricity and running water; that it is a wholly adequate and comfortable, albeit a modest house. In fact Mr Mhketo may live in a tin shack. But of course the point is that this belief about Mr Mhketo and his house is not even in part constitutive of the apartheid ideology, though in this instance it is *caused* by it.

A further kind of example might involve the statement 'That is a fine car'. Here there may be an (as it were) non-political-ideological core belief: the conviction that in virtue of its being mechanically sound and fuel-efficient the car is fine. However in addition to this non-ideological core belief, and overlaying it, may be ideological beliefs, such as the belief that the car is fine not simply in virtue of being mechanically sound but also in virtue of being prestigious. Here a core of non-ideological meaning is *permeated* by ideological meaning.

A third kind of example involves a distinction between implicit and explicit claims. Here there may be an explicit claim that is non-ideological in character, but that at an implicit level is ideological. Let us take an example provided by R.B. Freadman. In an advertisement for BMW cars the Australian cricketer Ian Chappell is said to 'treat his car mean'. Here the explicit claim is simply that he drives his car fast and in mechanically taxing ways; but the implication, trading as it does on an analogy between men's treatment of their cars and their treatment of women, is that it is acceptable and indeed impressive to abuse women. This sexist *implication* is ideological in character.

One further kind of example entails the notion of a presupposition. Consider for instance the statement, 'all commies breathe air'. Here there is a crude ideology presupposed, viz. that the world is divided up into communists who are loathesome and non-communists who may not be, yet the belief has a manifest non-

ideological component in the form of the predicate. Thus this belief cannot be a constitutive ideological belief, even though it *presupposes* an ideological element.

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