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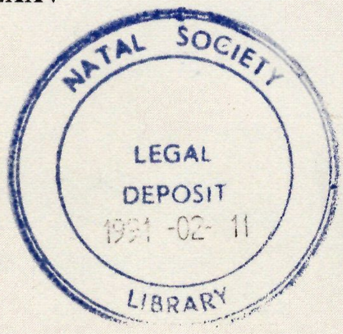

May 1990

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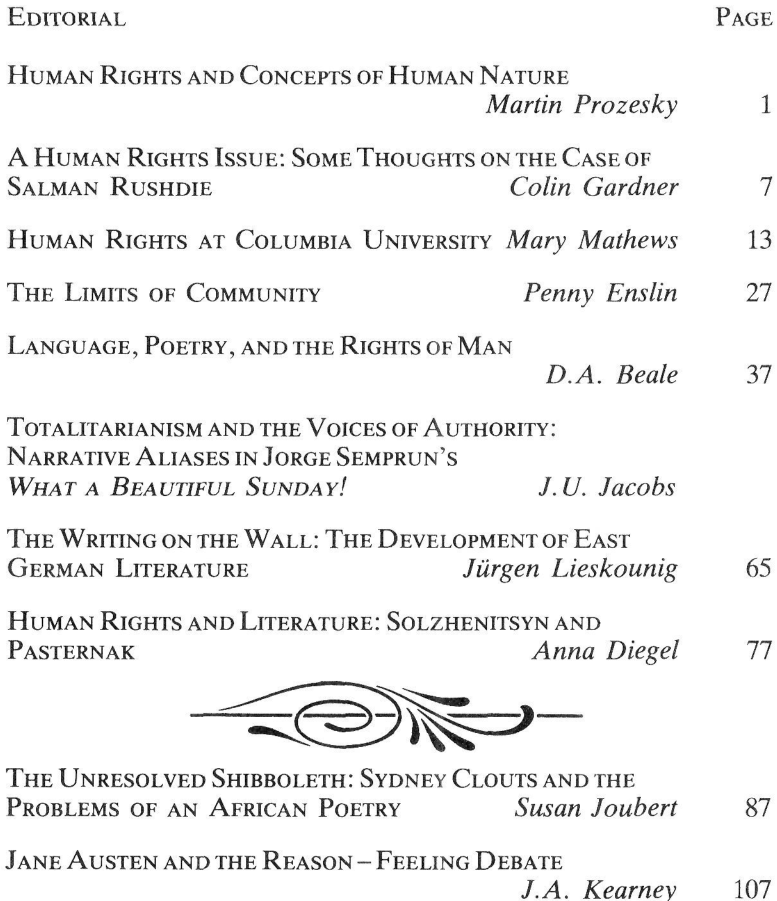

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EDITORIAL

A friend of ours, someone genuinely concerned about the future of *Theoria*, expressed misgivings about the topic Human Rights, when it was first suggested for the present issue. He seemed to feel that it was the kind which produces pious sentiments and conventional rhetoric, rather than fresh thought. We did our best to make the topic widely known, hoping that a range of contributions would dispel suggestions of routine utterance. The response to our efforts was not at first encouraging but gradually material began to accumulate which demonstrated that, though a central issue like human rights may seem in danger of being hackneyed, it is in fact inexhaustible.

Martin Prozesky's article opens the discussion by showing how mistaken it would be to assume broad agreement in South Africa on human rights. He argues that significant constituencies, theists and Marxist–Leninists, must have serious reservations about the Western liberal conception of human rights. Colin Gardner reinforces the effect of the opening essay by demonstrating how carefully the issue of human rights needs to be approached in a difficult actual case, the Rushdie affair. The two articles which follow raise challenging questions, affecting our topic, which will have to be faced in a post-apartheid South Africa. Mary Mathews in the course of her comprehensive account of a conference at Columbia University indicates that, though measures to prevent incitement to racial hatred may seem desirable in South Africa, any permanent restrictions on freedom of speech carry real dangers. Penny Enslin discusses the appeal of a strong or constitutive conception of community, warning however that such a conception formed part of the burden of our recent past. At first glance Jürgen Lieskounig's essay may not seem to have a direct bearing on our theme. However the ironies evolving around the ideal of a humane society as held by leading writers of the GDR should not be ignored by those concerned with human rights in a future South Africa. A number of essays follow which bring out the significance of Thomas Paine, Jorge Semprun, Solzhenitsyn and others in the context of the theme of this issue.

We asked the printer to create a device for our table of contents which would effectively separate the essays so far mentioned from two others on subjects not directly associated with our special

topic. In publishing them in this issue of the journal we hope to demonstrate that thematic arrangement is not our only concern. Susan Joubert addresses herself to the new problem of an African poetry, whereas Jack Kearney deals in a literary context with the perennial tension between reason and emotion.

It remains for us to thank Audrey Cahill for her invaluable work, during her time as editor, in developing *Theoria* and at the same time ensuring the maintenance of the high standards of the past.

THE EDITORS

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HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONCEPTS OF HUMAN NATURE

by MARTIN PROZESKY

Politically progressive people often agree that the extension of human rights is essential for greater humanization in South Africa. What they do not always recognize is that some of our best-intentioned people find the very idea of such rights problematic and that there is potential disagreement even among its supporters. Thus, while these supporters might agree that a right in broad terms signifies a just claim or entitlement (Feinberg 1980: 155), some of them interpret the concept individualistically while others emphasize communal considerations; some construe it theologically whereas others do so in secular terms. What looks on the surface like broad agreement thus turns out in practice to be a situation with considerable potential for disagreement and confusion. In this situation religio-philosophical analysis can promote human enrichment in South Africa by clarifying some of the issues and presuppositions involved, so facilitating a more informed and sensitive discussion — an essential precondition for successfully extending human rights in our society.

The issue elucidated in the present essay is the dependence of understandings of human rights on understandings of what it means to be human. Things are complicated in this regard by the high degree of religious affiliation in South Africa because the country's believers are themselves deeply divided, nor are all of them likely to support prevailing ideas about human rights. Some conservative Calvinists, for example, have regarded this notion as resting upon essentially secular foundations and thus impermissible for those who believe in God. But there is also an important island of consensus in this potentially troubled sea, as the present discussion will reveal by means of an analysis of some prominent standpoints concerning the topic. To achieve its objectives, this article reviews some relevant thought patterns in what could justifiably be regarded as the three most influential conceptual communities whose ideas have a following in South Africa, namely secular liberalism, theism, and socialism of a Marxist–Leninist kind.

The Western liberal conception of rights

In view of its great influence let us consider firstly the view of human rights contained in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a view going back to the enlightenment period (Hobbes 1968: 189; Paine 1969: 61ff) when it emerged partly in

reaction to despotic monarchs. Let us therefore call it the western liberal view of human rights.

Basic to this view is a belief in the inherent dignity and freedom of all people and their equal entitlement as autonomous beings to certain basic claims, freedoms and benefits, for example the right to life, liberty, property, well-being and the security of the person. A right is conceived of here as a capacity or benefit to which people must be deemed inherently entitled if they are to function effectively together as fulfilled, autonomous beings. According to some theorists in this tradition, the justification for restricting individual sovereignty by means of some kind of external authority is precisely the benefit this ensures for the individual, which also shows just how strongly this tradition emphasizes the interests of the individual. (Mill 1960: 73) It is important to notice that since there is nothing to compel anyone to hold this view of humanity, it rests on a free act of judgement in preference to other possible views, for example that people are essentially the creations of a deity or the consequences of their genetic heritage. On a purely biological view of human nature it is thus doubtful whether we could speak meaningfully about people having these rights, since such rights cannot be adequately specified in physical terms. Rights are thus categorically different from physical properties like mass, volume or genetic configuration, but they are just as essential to the notion of an autonomous, self-fulfilled being as these physical properties are to the concept of a biological organism which talks, walks upright and has an opposable thumb.

Consequently, anyone who rejects this view of human nature or to whom it has never occurred would see nothing contradictory in curtailing the capacities and benefits which the concept signifies. Free speech and movement are validly describable as inherent rights only within the logic of a judgement of human beings as sovereign individuals. Thus for western liberals a right is not a privilege, validly removable by whoever bestows it; nor, indeed, can rights consistently be regarded as bestowed; instead they must be held to belong inherently to those who possess them. Clearly, therefore, the western liberal view of rights is inseparable from a particular view of human nature. Furthermore, this view appears to be somewhat secular in its implications because the idea of humans as genuinely sovereign resorts ill with the belief that they are first and foremost the children of a diety.

Theism and the concept of human rights

Since most South Africans are theists it is important to consider next how they would interpret the question of human rights, given a consistent application of their religious beliefs. The relevant

theistic assertion in this connection is that human nature is the result of divine creation so that people exist in ultimate dependence on God whose intention is that they should serve him and relate morally and lovingly to one another. This belief results in some important differences from the western liberal position concerning human rights.

First of all, theists cannot consistently affirm the notion that a right is an *inherent* entitlement belonging to people as independent, sovereign entities. If our existence is the result of a divine act of creation then any entitlements we may enjoy will have been bestowed on us by the creator. It may even be objected that the term rights is somewhat unnatural in a theistic context, where it would be more theologically meaningful to talk of life, liberty and property (for example) as divine blessings or gifts of grace. This difference stems from different understandings of human nature. Certainly a theist could consistently speak of rights as just entitlements or claims conferred on us by God, but there can be no question of those claims being the inherent entitlements of sovereign human agents. Theism precludes such a conception of human nature, reserving sovereignty for God alone. To the extent, therefore, that the discussion of human rights in our society has taken on the implicitly secular assumptions of the western liberal view, so that the very term rights is understood as an inherent, sovereign entitlement, it will be rejected by believers in God as involving a fundamentally mistaken conception of human, existence, assuming that such believers reason consistently and are aware of the conceptual tension outlined above.

Some theists might object even more strongly, for example Calvinists, who hold the doctrine of total human guilt and depravity and regard people as utterly dependent on divine grace for anything good in their lives. It seems incongruous for them to regard humanity in the positive light implied by the very notion of rights, which on a minimal definition means a just claim to exercise certain powers. A totally depraved and guilty being has no just claims, only just deserts. As Donnelly has observed, 'Human rights theorists are committed to denying original sin and its secular analogues.' (Donnelly 1985: 43) Once more, therefore, there is a significant connection between a conception of human nature and an attitude towards human rights.

Other theists for whom the concept of an autonomous right would be logically incongruous are those who believe in divine control over our lives, a belief held by some Muslims and some Calvinists. It is difficult to separate the concept of a right from the idea that people are capable of some degree of autonomous thought and action. But what place is there for belief in human autonomy in a theology which teaches that God alone, as absolute

sovereign, determines the course of our lives? Muslim reactions to Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* appear to be a case in point, and we would be very unwise to be blind to the degree of difference that exists in the ways our various conceptual communities think about human existence, each of them consistently following out the implications of their own presuppositions.

Given their distinctive anthropologies, theists in general and some Christians and Muslims in particular are thus likely to find fault with important aspects of the western liberal position concerning human rights. On the other hand there are also areas of agreement stemming from other theistic doctrines. Thus theists also teach the goodness of God and his/her will that people should relate humanely to one another in order to achieve the fulfilment s/he desires for them. Therefore God must also desire that people have whatever is necessary for the path s/he wills, such as life, physical security, a just social order, at least a modicum of material possessions, and the freedom to follow that path. Moreover the doctrines that all people are in like measure the creations of God, or in like measure fallen into sin mean that theists bring a basic egalitarianism to their view of human existence, and this would also coincide with western liberalism. Hence some believers in God could agree with the kind of benefit which a document like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regards as a right, while disagreeing with its theoretical underpinnings. This is the island of consensus mentioned at the start of the present essay. It is important because it concerns the practical side of the human rights question, whereas the disagreements I have outlined tend to be about conceptual and theoretical matters.

Marxism–Leninism on human rights

The connection between views of human rights and views of human nature can be further illustrated by a brief reference to the 1977 constitution of the USSR, which specifies a large number of rights for Soviet citizens, most of them ones which western democracies also regard as rights. The key differences are the rejection of private ownership of the means of production, and the subordinating of all specific rights, including freedom of speech and assembly, to the prevailing socialist system of that country. Citizens are thus held to have a basic duty to promote the interests of that system, and their rights exist in order to serve this overriding purpose. This rests in turn upon the belief that human fulfilment is genuinely possible only in a materialist and communist order of society, a basic conviction from which no right of dissent is recognized and which is fully consistent with Marx's well-known rejection of the western liberal concept of human rights as a typical

bourgeois delusion, falsely setting forth a view of individual sovereignty whereas people are in fact, so he held, essentially *Gattungswesen* — social beings. (Marx and Engels 1975: 162, 325)

Once more the decisive factor in the construal of human rights is the underlying view of human existence, this time in the form of a materialist and collectivist conviction which necessarily repudiates the concept of individual sovereignty, though not the secularism of the western liberal position. For a Marxist–Leninist a right means an entitlement or capacity that is consistent with a communist social system, not an inherent, personal liberty, for it is the collective, socialist order that is sovereign, not the individual.

Conclusion

Behind the widespread use of the term 'human rights' there is thus considerable disagreement about its meaning, arising from important differences in the way human nature and fulfilment are understood. Some emphasize the individual, others the community; some are secular, others are religious; some assign sovereignty to each person, others to this or that collective, yet others to a deity. For South Africans, among whom all these differences are present, advocacy of human rights can easily engender serious conceptual differences, and a wise policy for anyone involved in this issue would be to bear that in mind and seek a better understanding of the various anthropologies and world-views in question. While this complicates the matter theoretically, we may draw encouragement from the indications that all parties agree that people are justly entitled to seek well-being provided they do not harm the same entitlement in others, which surely means that conditions favourable to that entitlement must also be ensured. Commitment to human enrichment through the extension of equal rights to all is thus inseparable from commitment to creating the kind of society whose structures make those rights possible and durable.

The practical implication of this essay is therefore that in South Africa, where objections to prevailing ideas about human nature arising from the western liberal tradition may well be forthcoming, it will be wisest to emphasize the *necessary conditions of egalitarian human well-being* rather than traditiional human rights terminology. What matters is our pressing need for greater humanization, not the idiom in which it is expressed. However small, this is an island of consensus from which to attempt to cross the tricky seas of the problem of human rights in South Africa.

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A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE CASE OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

by COLIN GARDNER

The Salman Rushdie case is remarkable and disturbing. A book written in his characteristically challenging magical-realistic style by one of the world's major contemporary novelists has stirred up a conflict which has far-reaching legal, religious, cultural, political and philosophical implications. In the last few months the matter has sunk from the headlines (no doubt those opposed to Rushdie have found it impossible to maintain the pressure, while those who support his cause hope that the whole ghastly episode may begin to be forgotten), but a central fact remains: Rushdie has been condemned to death by a powerful and determined section of Islam, and his life has been deprived, perhaps permanently, of that freedom, normality and variety which every person has a right to and which a novelist supremely needs.

Most Muslims would deny that Rushdie's discomfiture is the central fact. He after all, they would argue, has begun to get what he deserves: if not actual death, then the lesser death of deprivation and isolation. But for such Muslims the crucial facts are the scandal of Rushdie's blasphemies inscribed in *The Satanic Verses* and the further scandal that in many countries the book, instead of being banned, prosecuted or burned, is printed and reprinted and is freely available everywhere. Many Muslims feel (though it is also true that some of them have been partly invited or even incited to feel) that their beliefs have suffered an affront which is quite as serious as, indeed distinctly more serious than, the affront to society represented by, say, murder or rape. The holy Qur'an has been besmirched, and by a person who is in some sense a Muslim; the sanctity of God's words, and of that central part of the believer's being that is inspired by these words, has been trampled on. For people who see all human life as sacred, what crime could be worse?

The dilemma is a profound one, then. But both main sides in the dispute deny this and assert that, on the contrary, the issue is perfectly clear and that the correct and inevitable conclusion is not difficult to discern. Such displays of confidence simply underline the intractableness of the whole problem.

Looked at in terms of twentieth-century conceptions of human rights, which we may take as fairly represented by the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaraion, the pro-Rushdie arguments must seem to be the stronger. In fact it might be asserted that the very notion of human rights focuses particularly on the plight of the

individual (such as Rushdie) who is subjected to unregulated pressure by a powerful grouping (such as that large section of Islam which has proved responsive to the views of the Iranian Ayatollahs). The 1948 Declaration emphasises that 'Everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him' (Article 10) (this is a point that some Muslims have seen as enjoined by Islamic law too), that 'No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks' (Article 12), that 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion' (Article 18), that 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers' (Article 19), and that 'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community ... and to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author' (Article 27).

An opponent of Rushdie in this dispute would obviously wish to argue in terms of the Qur'an and Islamic law rather than in the light, the supposed light, of the clearly secular criteria advanced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nevertheless such a person might point out, grudgingly, that certain 'human rights' might be invoked against Rushdie's argument. For example, if one were allowed to give a certain religious colouring to Article 8, it might become applicable: 'Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law'. Then it could be argued that Article 12 is applicable to faithful Muslims rather than to Rushdie: 'No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour or reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks'. Similarly a Muslim might well feel that if the implications of faith in the Qur'an are taken seriously, and if freedom is interpreted in a defensive sense, it would be reasonable to invoke Article 18 ('freedom of thought, conscience and religion') and Article 19 ('freedom of opinion and expression').

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is hardly adequate, then, as an instrument for solving the dispute that we are considering. Perhaps, however, we should concentrate especially on another of the articles which both sides might wish to adduce.

This is the second section of Article 26: 'Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace'. Those who support Rushdie would seize on the notions of human rights and tolerance; those who oppose him might stress understanding and perhaps peace.

If there is truly to be peace and friendship, understanding and tolerance — and, more particularly, if the impasse over Rushdie is ever to be resolved — something has to change or to give way. I would argue, as many would, that in the twentieth century religious belief has to be embodied in modes of thought and action that are rather different from what was possible and indeed normal in the past. Religious and other beliefs and customs used to be distributed around the world in broadly geographical clumps or clusters. Most believers of most creeds lived in societies where their beliefs were either dominant or at least well known and understood. In these circumstances it was natural that the social implications of creeds were often expressed in the laws and the conventions of the societies in which those creeds flourished. In the late twentieth century things are on the whole very different. People of different beliefs (I count agnosticism and atheism as forms of belief) often co-exist in a single society, and with the expansion of the various facilities for communication the world has become much smaller. If endless holy wars and cultural clashes are to be avoided, it has become necessary for believers of every kind to be tolerant in the sense that their approvals and disapprovals can no longer reasonably be expressed in terms of concrete social action. This would mean, obviously, that disapproval could be expressed by means of criticism and even denunciation, but not by any interference in the lives of individuals or in the processes of society.

Many readers will find this a thoroughly satisfactory conclusion. Indeed the only criticism of it might be that it is rather trite. But many Muslims would find the conclusion quite unacceptable. The main reason for this is that Islam makes no distinction between sacred and secular, or between inward spiritual belief and the outward physical and social manifestations of belief. The differentiation between personal religious convictions and a broadly consensual secular society is one that has been developed in the West, within Christianity and in the aftermath of Christianity. It was to a large extent this way of seeing society and social relationships which made possible the drafting of the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations at a time when western nations were still dominant in that forum.

The suggestion that human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration may constitute a mainly western concept carries with it the implication that this may appear to be yet another locus of illegitimate western hegemony. And of course ever since the time of the Crusades Islam has felt itself to be a victim of Christian arrogance. There can be little doubt that the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was seen by many people, not only Muslims, as a unique instance of a non-Marxist counterblow to western dominance.

A sad irony in all this is that Salman Rushdie, who is apt now to be associated by many Muslims with the arrogant West (after all, besides having committed what is regarded as blasphemy, he lives in Britain, writes in English, and has been defended and supported mainly by western people), has always seen himself, very justifiably, as a spokesperson for the best in Third World values in opposition to that which is hegemonically complacent, intellectually narrow and crassly materialistic in the values of the First World.

What deductions can we produce out of these complex and entangled considerations? Are we to conclude that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — like so many previous declarations that have claimed universality — is merely one more attempt to impose a set of intellectual and legal norms upon people who are bound in the end to reject them?

I do not think so. I hope not. One would certainly like to think that all the main thrusts of the Universal Declaration have a validity which reaches beyond the specific strands of western thought which gave them birth. Nor indeed is everything in the Declaration exclusively western in origin.

But perhaps the Declaration should be seen as grounds for debate and discussion rather than as a set of cold legal formulations handed down from on high. Maybe the discussion, which might now be thought of as having concluded a little too rapidly in 1948, ought to be thrown open once again, so that there can be a real exchange of religious, cultural and indeed political insights, preoccupations and preconceptions. It seems to me very unlikely that any of the items in the Universal Declaration would be abolished or seriously altered; but there would probably be modifications, refinements and additions that the world would be the richer for. And, above all, the discussions, the conferences, the attempts at genuine inter-religious, inter-cultural and political exchange might add significantly to the general fund of awareness and confidence with which we might all voyage into the twenty-first century.

That ringing peroration is all very well; but it points hopefully into the future. What of the present fate of Salman Rushdie himself, as he moves miserably about Britain, from safe house to safe house, under constant police protection?

He lives in a cloud of immediate legal controversy. Many Muslims complain that Britain is unwilling to extend to Islam the blasphemy laws which apply only to Christianity. But the British Government is more likely to repeal the blasphemy laws (as of course it should, if my previous arguments about a consensual secular society are correct) than extend them into new areas. A common Islamic reply to this is that, if this is its intention, it should go ahead and do so. Probably the British Government has not acted on this because it does not wish to seem to be affected in any way by the wave of anti-Rushdie feeling; but the Islamic argument on this point seems to me to be unassailable.

Meanwhile Rushdie himself has complained that the British Government has not prosecuted those who have openly threatened his life. His point seems valid. One assumes that the Government has done nothing because it does not wish to inflame feelings any further. The whole situation is very awkward and unsatisfactory.

Is there any way of breaking out of the impasse? Are there any notable people who might be asked to intervene, to intercede — to appeal to the leaders of militant Muslims to commute the death sentence to something less fierce and less final? Might Gorbachev be approached, or the Pope, or some bold leader within Islam? Could Rushdie, at the same time, elaborate his explanation and partial apology?

One hopes that some solution can be found. It would be a tragic and terrible fate if the life of an important writer were to be slowly destroyed, with the whole international community looking on.

It would, however, be unrealistic to hope that in the near future any considerable number of Muslims might be brought round to the view (which I hold) that in *The Satanic Verses* Salman Rushdie has raised questions and posed problems which religious believers, and others, ought to be prepared to confront.

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HUMAN RIGHTS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY*

by MARY MATHEWS

To attend a conference at the edge of Harlem, in the company of two-headed monsters on a topic denoting extinct entities in South Africa, you would have to be a daft cat whose curiosity outweighs its fear of being killed. The cat went and was surprised, enlightened and even amused.

The edge of Harlem was like any other crowded city street. The cab drive through Harlem, the only route from the airport to the venue, rendered up nothing more alarming than groups of churchgoers in their Sunday hats. The monsters turned out to be a mix of colleagues, former fellow students, old friends and rather pleasant new acquaintances. If one considers in just that sample the range of persons who were committing the crimes of being members of a banned organisation and furthering its aims, or who were just hobnobbing with these criminals, it is no wonder that F.W. de Klerk took the decision to unban the ANC with such apparent ease. The banning order and the laws enforcing it were patently ineffective.

The Centre for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University hosted the conference which was called 'Human Rights in the Post Apartheid South African Constitution.' It was a meeting of South Africans (both members and non-members of the African National Congress) and Americans. The broadly stated objective of the conference was to examine ways of establishing a constitutional framework in which there is government by the people for the people, in which the fundamental human rights of each and every South African are firmly guaranteed in a justiciable Bill of Rights and in which the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the country is tolerated and respected. More specific aims in the context of nation-building and overcoming the divisions of the past were to examine how to provide a legal context for measures that will correct as rapidly as possible the injustices and violations of human rights committed in the name of apartheid, such as forced removals, and eliminate the racially based disparities of wealth and income created by apartheid, for example the situation whereby the whites have eighty-seven percent of the land reserved to them by law.

It was a carefully constructed framework for the conference but a heavy charge indeed on delegates comprised of a few members of the (then banned) ANC, a few of the victims of apartheid, a few of the beneficiaries of apartheid — and Northern Americans whose

* A report on and assessment of the conference on Human Rights held at Columbia University, New York, September, 1989.

political, social and economic expertise ranged widely but who do not live in a divided society in a state of conflict, or at least in a society in a state of disarray in the human rights department. Obviously, this was not the conference at which South Africa's racial, economic, legal and social problems were going to be solved, but that was not the aim, and some important issues for a post-apartheid South Africa were raised and debated. The conference was conducted in an atmosphere of amiable co-operation with a strong emphasis on basic human rights for all South Africans, and the right to be the same without necessarily being identical. This was eloquently expressed by Albie Sachs[1] where he said:

> In broad terms we are all agreed on the need to end apartheid in South Africa and to establish a democratic society as generally understood throughout the world; such a society should recognise the equal worth and dignity of each and every citizen, and provide appropriate protection for his or her fundamental rights. More specifically, we recognise that in additiion to requiring periodic elections based upon the principle of universal and equal suffrage, a future constitution should contain provisions which establish fundamental rights and freedoms. Such basic liberties have to be acknowledged and respected by the legislature and the executive, however sizeable the majority might be at any moment in favour of ignoring them. Furthermore, these constitutional provisions should not be merely aspirational, but capable of speedy invocation through clearly identified and secure mechanisms. More concretely, citizens should have the right of recourse to an independent judiciary respected by the population at large and heeded by whatever government should be in power at the time. In a phrase, we favour a parliamentary democracy subject to a bill of rights.
>
> We are aware that in Britain a major debate is taking place over the desirablity or otherwise of adopting a bill of rights. Although we follow this discussion with interest, we note that in our country the theme of protection of individual rights has a special dimension which makes even those who would otherwise opt for majority rule pure and simple, favour the adoption of a bill of rights.
>
> The fact is that strong and clear protection of individual rights on a non-racial basis makes the protection of group rights on a racial basis not only objectionable but unnecessary. The argument that the minority that presently monopolises power in South Africa has everything to lose and nothing to gain by the extension of democracy thus loses its force. A bill of rights coupled with guarantees of an orderly transition to full democracy in fact provides far more security than racially based constitutional schemes which ensure that the racial principle remains the dominant feature of public life and that voters are forever mobilised on racial grounds. Once white South Africans can accept the simple fact that they are just people like everyone else, and not the lords and mistresses of

> anyone, they will in fact enjoy far more security under a bill of rights than they would living in the precarious constitutional laager of group rights.
>
> There appears to be general agreement amongst the broadest range of anti-apartheid forces as to the basic democratic context in which a bill of rights should be elaborated. It is not difficult to follow through with a number of substantive constitutional provisions materialising this basic accord. We do not at this stage have to dwell on the formulations in great detail. The uncontroversial is always less interesting than the controversial. Moreover, although we start with a clean slate, there is nothing to stop us from taking a peep at human rights documents that exist in other countries and on other continents. We all participate in an international human rights culture and share in the patrimony of human rights instruments.
>
> On the other hand, we do not need to look abroad for help in raising our human rights consciousness. Indeed, the frequent and massive violations of human rights in our country, taken together with a vigorous internal movement of contestation and considerable international attention, have produced on our part unusual sensitivity to and a passionate interest in the safeguarding of human rights. For those of us who have suffered arbitrary detention, torture and solitary confinement, who have seen our homes crushed by bulldozers, who have been moved from pillar to post at the whim of officials, who have been victims of assassination attempts and state-condoned thuggery, who have lived for years as rightless people under states of emergency, in prison, in exile, outlaws because we fought for liberty, the theme of human rights is central to our existence. The last thing any of us desires is to see a new form of arbitrary and dictatorial rule replacing the old.

The question which Sachs left open was whether second generation rights e.g. socio-economic rights, and third generation rights e.g. anti-pollution, should be included in a bill of rights. There were the usual kinds of arguments against including them viz. they are difficult or impossible to define or enforce effectively and their inclusion would render parts of the constitution inoperative. Effective enforcement led to a debate on who would be the custodians of a bill of rights in a post-apartheid South Africa. The ANC rejected, with some notable exceptions, South African judges currently in office. There are no black judges in South Africa, partly because accepting an appointment to the bench would mean accepting and applying all those laws which have kept the apartheid edifice in place for more than forty years. Suggestions that people could be trained in the American legal system and transplanted to the South African legal system were rejected as unworkable. A possible solution which presents itself is a constitutional court, which would hear appeals of people who believe that their basic rights have not been upheld by the ordinary

courts of the land. The judges in such courts should have good track records in the protection of human rights. Such people with suitable qualifications are thin on the ground in South Africa, but it may be a possible solution. It would also help if a doctrine of equity and a doctrine of fairness were formally established as part of South African law.

An important question which arose at the conference was whether, broadly stated, divided societies should adopt special measures to control conflict, and more specifically, whether post-apartheid South Africa should have any permanent restrictions on freedom of speech outside of an emergency situation.

The ANC view on this was that there should be laws dealing with incitement to racial hatred on a permanent basis and there should be permanent restrictions on parties or groups which try to revive or further racist ideologies, because of the history of racial oppression in South Africa.

Ronald Dworkin[2] took the first amendment approach (United States Constitution) which is that speech should not be restricted except when it is related to unlawful action; if the speech amounts to an incitement to violence it could lead to prosecution or restriction, otherwise it should be unrestricted.

A view similar to Dworkin's but somewhat more purist was expressed by Stephen Ellman[3] who said that there should be no special measures at all and no emergency powers either. He did make the concession that if such powers became absolutely necessary, then there should be very few. He cited the United States Constitution as having almost no provison for exercise of emergency powers; it basically provides for the suspension of *habeas corpus.*[4] Notwithstanding this, special measures have been used when necessary. He mentions, for example, riots in the cities and he cites court validation of curfews and bans on meetings.

Broadly the two sides of the argument can be stated as follows. Those opposed to permanent special measures say that they will be misused and abused and that they should always be confined to emergency government, which is a short term and strictly limited phenomenon which exists because of special circumstances. On this view, outside of genuine emergencies there would be full protection of basic rights. The other view, in favour of permanent special measures, is that in societies divided by conflict it is wishful thinking to imagine that one will be able to maintain the distinction between normal peace time rule with full observance of basic rights and short term emergencies during which basic rights are qualified. What in fact happens in these societies is that you have a lapse into permanent emergencies. The argument would run, therefore, that to prevent this from happening, one adopts limited, clearly defined, tightly controlled special measures to control conflict even

in non-emergency circumstances. By doing this one could prevent wholesale abrogation of rights such as is found under emergency rule. Thus runs the argument, but there is of course no guarantee that these tightly controlled, clearly defined special measures will not come to be regarded as a medicinal compound like grandma's physic, which when a little works well, a lot is likely to cure.

A problem which arises out of the ANC view is that the ANC guidelines in effect prohibit racist ideologies, but they are not drawn tightly enough to preclude a new form of victimization or oppression of people who disagree with the ANC or the new government, whatever that may be. This could happen because the prohibition is on belief systems. One could argue that the thoughts people harbour frequently determine the way in which they behave unless there is some restriction. One could equally argue that restrictions on belief systems can only be effective if they constitute a policing of people's thoughts. This is impossible, so it is better to place the control at a point where it will be effective, such as on conduct, because you will never stop a right wing lunatic from thinking in the way he does but you could stop him from behaving as he does. A better way of formulating the prohibition may be to prohibit incitement to racial hatred which is likely to result in unlawful conduct against the vilified groups.

Dworkin's view amounts to a prohibition on certain types of conduct, and on this view one could legally laud and applaud Nazism or any racist ideology as long as one did not link it to 'imminent lawless action' (the words of the Supreme court in *Brandenberg v Ohio*[5]). If it can be linked to imminent lawless action, one's own or that of other people, the prohibition will have been contravened. Whichever view one accepts as being the lesser of two evils, it is important that any restrictions must be framed in terms of criteria which are acceptable in a democracy.

For South Africans these issues are not merely of academic interest. The oppressive regime with which we have lived for more than forty years makes it imperative that the decision, either in favour of or against restrictions on our freedom of speech, be based on informed consent to such restrictions. This requires awareness of the nature of the restrictions which have been imposed on South Africans and which are collectively known as 'security legislation'; and the effect of the application of these restrictions by the courts. One of the most invidious restrictions is the declaration of general states of emergency because of their potential for being used as a means of total political control. The State President lifted the general state of emergency on Friday 8 June 1990. We now have a limited state of emergency applicable to Natal only, but the legacy of political, social, economic and legal damage remains and can probably never be computed.

South Africa has had five states of emergency since 1985,[6] and like people living in a desert whose children have never seen rain, there are children growing up in South Africa who have never known freedom. Freedom was not taken away from South Africans with the declaration of a general state of emergency in 1985. There had been up to that time a gradual and steady erosion of fundamental rights. Emergency legislation usurped the place of the ordinary laws of the land and displaced the rule of law. The emergency regulations, both those with general applicability and those which were specifically designed to control the media[7] read like a funeral oration for the demise of human rights in South Africa.

For example, the first of the security emergency regulations[8] declares its purpose with a charming lack of subtlety. It gives authority to any member of the security forces, from the rawest recruit to august persons in brass pips, to use lethal force to disperse gatherings of people or to halt any conduct. The authorized person is the sole judge of whether such force is necessary in the circumstances. This is a blatant concession to kill. By comparison the law on lethal force contained in the Internal Security Act,[9] which has variously been described as harsh, draconian and outrageous, now seems tame. This more 'ordinary' law authorizes a police officer of or above the rank of warrant officer to use only so much force as is necesssary to disperse a gathering, to prevent damage to property[10] and injury or death of persons.[11] It certainly permits policemen to take pot shots at the public, but it enjoins them to do so with 'reasonable caution' and 'without recklessness or negligence'. The framers of this law (in the words of Clive of India) now probably stand aghast at their own moderation.

The emergency regulations generally contain measures and confer powers similar to those of the Internal Security Act, but it is clear that the emergency regulations were designed to extend the powers of the State to a point where the activities of its authorized officials are no longer governed by law. Dare one suggest that a law like section two of the emergency regulations would only be passed by a legislature with its back to the wall and its goolies well and truly caught in the political mangle.

The emergency regulations are effective because they have a brutal simplicity which frustrates attempts to interpret into them principles of law which would mitigate the harsh consequences of their application. They were also designed so that each provides an alternative means of dealing with 'subversive' conduct. An example of this is regulation three,[12] which is less tidy than regulation two but equally effective. It allows any member of the security forces[13] to arrest persons for purposes of detention. The

arresting officer need only 'form the opinion' that the detention is necessary for public safety, public order or the termination of the emergency. This regulation limits the detention to thirty days at which point one would expect the detainee to be charged or released. Unhappily this is usually the moment at which the quality of life deteriorates rapidly for the detainee. The Minister of Law and Order can extend the thirty day period for six months at a time without prior notice and the ancient and basic principle of justice which requires that both parties must be allowed to have their say need not be honoured. The detainee may be held in isolation and interrogated (this isolation has recently been qualified by the right to see a lawyer on bona fide legal business). Apart from authorized government officials who are allowed access to him, no one is entitled to information from him or about him. The emergency regulations do not explicitly prohibit him from getting information about the world outside his place of confinement, but internal prison regulations are usually applied to this end.

The effect of being almost totally cut off from the world and the knowledge that no one on the outside knows at any given moment what is happening to one, and the anxiety of not knowing what is happening to one's family is apparently impossible for the uninitiated to imagine.

Two authors, a legal writer and a professor of psychology[14] have described some of the effects of solitary confinement. In a laboratory experiment, most of the subjects, who were free to end the experiment at any time, found it unpleasant and stressful. About one third found it intolerable and demanded early release. None was able to tolerate it for more than three days. Some of the observed effects were mental confusion, disorientation, inability to concentrate. This was accompanied by anxiety, gloom and changes in recorded brain impulse patterns. In the real world of solitary confinement, in state prisons, the authors established that in prisons where this used to be practised in America, the insanity rate was twenty times higher than in other prisons. It was also found that in some cases suicide was the preferred alternative to continued solitary confinement. Similar observations are reported by Fine in an article which examines the question of the competence of witnesses who have been held in solitary confinement.[15]

People in the past have been in solitary confinement for periods varying from fourteen days, to ninety days, to one hundred and eighty days to indefinite detention. The terms for which people can now be held vary from fourteen days, six months, the duration of a criminal trial, to indefinite detention.[16]

The longest recorded period of 'indefinite' detention is, it seems, that of Harold Nxasana[17] who was held for over 500 days.

Nxasana's own account of what was done to him is given by Fine.[18] 'He told the court he had been tortured in detention. He said a cloth was put into his mouth and a sheet wrapped around his neck and lower face. "A policeman rolled what looked like a shot-putt into a cloth so there would be no scratches on my face for the doctor or magistrate to see." '

It is not unreasonable to say that most Western democratic legal systems operate with the maxim that justice must be seen to be done, but that in South Africa justice must be seen to be believed.

Since F.W. de Klerk's historical parliamentary 'reform' speech,[19] the position is as follows in respect of security legislation. The Media Emergency Regulations have been repealed except for the prohibition on publication of visual materials relating to unrest or security force activities. This is now part of The Security Emergency Regulations of 1989,[20] which are still in force, but are applicable in Natal only. The Internal Security Act is still in force.

Prior to the lifting of the general state of emergency, the arguments against lifting it were couched in terms of the violence, particularly in Natal, and in terms of possible attempt to railroad negotiations for a peaceful settlement. The first of these arguments had on the facts, some merit. But the necessity for a blanket state of emergency for five years is questionable, indeed suspect. The Public Safety Act[21] authorises declarations of emergencies relating only to the areas experiencing violence, and this has finally been done, but the emergency regulations remain the same and are no less unacceptable in that they now have limited application. The regulations should be framed along lines of democratic principles with due regard for the rule of law. They should furthermore be applied objectively and only be used to protect life and property.

The State President's historic speech must be seen in the light of the continued application of these national security laws and, more importantly, in the light of recent amendments to the Security Emergency Regulations. A.S. Mathews reports as follows:

> If the changes to emergency detention are used as a criterion, the grip of the securocrats is far from being broken under the De Klerk interregnum. The 'improvements' which the State President dangled before a bemused parliament in his now historic speech take on an illusory quality when examined in the cold light of the day thereafter. The new regulations do put an outer limit of six months on an emergency detention but they permit re-detention without limitation. The detention may not be idefinite but it is indefinitely renewable. This is scarcely something that will be hailed as an advance in the human rights lobby. Then again, the exemption of private doctors from the 'no access' clause permits such medical practitioners to treat the detainee only on the recommendation of the official prison medical officer, thereby continuing to deny the

> detainee a *right* to private medical attention. However, lawyers do have a right of access if they are assisting the detainee on a 'bona fide legal matter' in which he or she has a 'real interest'. The exemption in favour of both doctors and lawyers does not apply if they are currently restricted (i.e. banned) under the Internal Security Act or the emergency regulations. Another questionable improvement is a new clause introduced into the regulations which declares that the Minister *may* appoint special advisers to visit detainees with power to investigate and report on their treatment and to transmit representations to the Minister and reports on illegal treatment to both the Minister and the Attorney-General. The value of this addition to the detention regime will depend on whether the Minister does appoint the advisers and on whether the persons chosen will have the necessary independence and dedication to the detainees' interests to make the office an effective one. The previous history of advisers on matters relating to detention is not an encouraging one.
>
> Though the changes just mentioned hardly constitute a charter of rights for the emergency detainee, one might have been tempted to acknowledge them with what Damon Runyon so aptly called a 'weak hello'. Any such temptation is instantly obliterated by a new emergency provision which the government sneaked into the regulations at the same time as it was ostensibly improving them. The effect of this provision is to require courts to accept *as conclusive proof* an allegation by the minister made on affidavit that, when ordering the detention of the detainee, he held the statutorily required opinion that the detention was necessary for the safety of the public, the maintenance of public order or the termination of the emergency. The clear purpose of this new measure is to remove court jurisdiction to question, and where justified, to set aside a detention order on the basis that the minister did not exercise a proper discretion in ordering it. The new provision raises a number of legal questions to which the answers are not quite clear; for example, would it protect the minister where he has acted in bad faith in ordering a detention? If it does remove the normal common law grounds for challenging a delegated discretion, is this removal not invalid as an improper exercise of the powers conferred by the Public Safety Act? Whatever the answers to these questions may be, this sneaky addition to the detention regime speaks volumes, about the government's attitude to the courts and the rule of law.[22]

It is apparent from this that the National Party has continued to appreciate the value of security laws. South Africa's neighbours, the so-called 'homelands', Transkei, Ciskei and Venda have taken the lesson well. Their security laws are based on South Africa's and case laws reveal that they have been applied in much the same way, and to similar ends.

There is a clear danger in having laws like the Internal Security Act and the emergency regulations as a permanent part of our legal

system, because they are effective measures for political control. There would be an even greater danger in placing them in a constitution or a bill of rights because the rights enshrined in such documents are traditionally regarded as sacrosanct.

If there is any doubt that these laws have been used as a means of political control, one only has to look at Radebe's case.[23] He went to a school and tried to persuade the pupils to boycott. The pupils sjambokked him and took him to the staff room where an argument ensued and he was stabbed by a teacher. He was taken to hospital and was later charged with Subversion.[24] A requirement for the crime of subversion is that the accused must have put a population group or the inhabitants of a particular area in fear. The appellate division decided that a school was neither of these. So it altered the charge to Sabotage[25] which required (*inter alia*) only that the accused must have committed an act which might interrupt education. Radebe was convicted and sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment suspended for five years. His assailant was subsequently found not guilty of assaulting him with a knife.

There is no guarantee that similar laws would not be used in the same way in a post-apartheid South Africa. The parties to the 'negotiations', 'freedom struggle', 'armed combat' to end apartheid are politicians operating in a political arena for the acquisition of political power. Whatever injustices have been suffered in the past, sentiment should not be allowed to sink sound common sense in the framing of the protection of basic rights for all, and the framing of controls over the architects and custodians of those rights.

Another important issue raised at the conference was that of the fate of the South African economy in a post-apartheid South Africa. One of the hard lessons the ANC learnt in Mozambique is that there really is no future in being free to starve to death. Albie Sachs put it in quite a moving way. He said it was a great victory and they were all proud to be there, but then the disillusionment set in because there was no food and people were starving. The ANC's line on the South African economy was that it must not be destroyed. They did not take an obvious Marxist or pure socialist line on the post-apartheid South African economy, and there was no talk of nationalizing the banks and the mines as was suggested by Nelson Mandela soon after his release.

This reticence may have been due to the fact that the ANC was still a banned organisation at the time with no immediate prospects of constitutional opportunies to acquire political rights for its members.

One of the impressions that emerged from this debate was that the fairly moderate views being expressed could be a result of ANC leaders either considering or consulting the interests and aspirations of their members in South Africa and finding that these

were at that time inconsistent with the tenets of Marxism or pure socialism. Professor Jack Spence, head of the Department of Political Studies at Leicester University, at a recent College Lecture at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg,[26] speculated that the experience of most black South Africans of capitalism was not one which would convert them to the support of a capitalist economy. One of the answers to this could be that black South Africans have not experienced capitalism as such but have had the experience of living within it, contributing to it and being largely excluded from its benefits. Nevertheless the name 'capitalism' may be unacceptable in a post-apartheid society because of its associations with political oppression, but its fruitfulness could be acceptable as opposed to the poverty of Eastern Marxist/Socialist regimes. A possible way of stating this would be — why should black South Africans want to exchange a state of disenfranchised poverty in a capitalist state for enfranchised poverty in a Marxist/Socialist state (when there has been a clear failure of existing models of the latter) when instead they could have enfranchisement and a fair share in a thriving capitalist economy. A fairly common retort to this is that the failed Marxist/Socialist regimes were corrupt and cannot be used as examples. Well, capitalism is not without its corruptions and it is always used as an example and placing the two in the scales, it would appear that corrupt capitalism feeds more people than corrupt Marxism/Socialism. Perhaps capitalism would be acceptable if it includes an element of social welfare to take account of persons who would otherwise become casualties of a purely capitalist regime — in other words, a sort of social democratic setup. It is not necessarily recommended, it is merely pointed out.

The hard questions which should have been debated at the conference were, how the ANC proposed to break the white monopoly on wealth in South Africa and how that wealth would be redistributed amongst all South Africans. This would include the question of how quickly it could feasibly be done, or conversely, how much time could be taken to achieve it. The expectation that a large sector of an under-privileged majority will spend a number of years acquiring a suitable education or developing the appropriate skills to enable it to earn enough to buy its way into a fair share of the South African economy is unrealistic. It is not unreasonable to say that when relief from hardship and deprivation is in sight people become impatient and unnecessary delay could mean disaster.

The economic infrastructure in South Africa is still largely intact but daily newspaper reports of strikes by workers for higher wages and better working conditions clearly indicate that these structures are inadequate to meet the burgeoning needs and aspirations of the

community. The concept of nationalization still hovers over the South African economy. It is difficult to determine exactly what is meant by nationalization, especially in respect of the mines. Precious metals and minerals in South Africa vest in the State. Mineral rights are made over under contract to mining companies whose shares are purchased and held by members of the public. Shareholding in these companies appears to be limited to a small percentage of the white elite, but in spite of this, within the ordinary meaning of the word 'nationalization', the mines are in fact nationalized. One can only speculate that 'nationalization' means something different to members of the African National Congress who have proposed it. The meaning could range from increasing the already heavy tax burden on the mines, though appropriating the dividends generated by the mining companies, to a hands-on takeover of mine management and shares. The outcome of any of these options is at best uncertain, and while this uncertainty exists, foreign investors are likely to remain cautious, and to the extent that they do, economic growth will inevitably be hampered. Without economic growth, South Africa cannot hope to meet the needs of its community, especially those living in impoverished circumstances.

Land ownership in South Africa was carefully placed on the conference table like a bomb primed and set to explode. It turned out to be a rather woolly sort of device with some unmemorable but vaguely familiar historical facts, until Essy Letsoalo who has written a book on the question of land ownership in South Africa[27] started her brief but telling account by saying that she had been listening to all this talk of ownership of land in South Africa and the truth of the matter is that black people in South Africa do not own land. They simply occupy 13 % of the land.

There are pockets of land owned by blacks in South Africa, for example, Cornfields which is 27 kilometres north-east of Estcourt in Natal. But such ownership is minimal as there are only 276 registered landowners in Cornfields.[28]

Views of delegates in the discussion ranged from — expropriation at a fair value and subsidised resale at an income related value, to — 'we will take the land we need'. There was at least general recognition of the value of agricultural land and its importance in preserving the economy, and a recognition that redistribution of land would be one of the most problematic to negotiate.

The Olivier[29] Report, a law commission investigation into group and human rights, received an honourable mention but there was an outburst from one of the delegates to the effect that nothing good could come out of it. The delegate in question can in the context perhaps be forgiven because one of his fellow ANC

members had just told the other delegates of his horror at coming face to face with his torturer at a meeting between South Africans and the ANC in Lusaka. He probably has nightmares about white South Africans with horns and forked tails.

Every conference is open to criticism and at least one can reasonably be made of this one. No leading Southern civil rights lawyers were invited. It became apparent in some of the discussions that it is difficult for persons who have not lived in a divided society to appreciate fully the problems of such a society.

There are enough points of similarity between the American South and South Africa for the Southern civil rights lawyer to be able to provide possible answers or solutions to problems in South Africa. His own experiences[30] appear to give him an immediate grasp of apartheid laws which were conceived by fierce patriarchs who stalked this land with the Bible in one hand and the sjambok in the other; laws which were then framed, honed and enforced by generations of their descendants who believed in the Divine Right of White. It also appears to give him an immediate grasp of the damage done by such laws and the difficulty of repairing the damage. It appears that the absence of such persons at the Columbia conference was the cause of serious lacunae which appeared in the debates from time to time.

It is ungracious to end on such a negative note and so it must be added that there is far more that can be said in praise of the Columbia conference than can be said in criticism of it. Our hosts were generous, well-organised and apparently unphased by the arrival of a four year old girl. The conference programme was thoughtfully constructed to promote participation of all delegates. The interest and concern which led the Centre for the Study of Human Rights to hold the conference was appreciated by every South African who attended it.

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NOTES

1. Albie Sachs, A Bill of Rights for South Africa: Areas of Agreement and Disagreement, Paper number 3, pp. 9–10.
2. Ronald Dworkin, Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford University and Professor of Law at New York University.
3. Stephen Ellman, Associate Professor of Law, Columbia Law School, New York.
4. Habeas corpus. 'In England, a prerogative writ for securing the liberty of the subject, affording an effective means of securing release from unjustifiable detention in prison, hospital, or private custody. It originated in a command to a person detaining another to have that person brought before a court, or sometimes to bring an accused person before a court.' David M. Walker, The Oxford Companion to Law, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1980.
5. Brandenburg v Ohio 23 Led 2nd 430.
6. 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989.
7. The Security Emergency Regulations Proc. No. 97 of 1988, The Media Emergency Regulations Proc. No. R99 of 1988.
8. Regulations 2, Proc. No. R97 of 1988.
9. Internal Security Act No. 74 of 1982, sec 48, which authorises the use of force, and sec 49, which restricts the use of firearms and other lethal weapons.
10. The language of the statute is so wide that it includes any damage, even breaking a window.
11. Further on lethal force: see Nicholas Haysom, Licence to Kill, South African Journal on Human Rights, 3, 1987, p. 202.
12. Proc. No. R97 of 1988.
13. The police force, the defence force and the prison services.
14. A.S. Mathews and R. Albino, 'The Permanence of The Temporary: An examination of the 90 and 180 day detention laws,' SALJ 1966 p. 16.
15. D. Fine, 'Re-examining the Validity of Detainee Evidence: A Psyco-Legal Approach'. SACC, 1984, p. 156.
16. Internal Security Act No. 74 of 1983 sec 31 and sec 29; Proc. No. R97 of 1988, regulation 2.
17. *Nxasana v Minister of Justice* 1976 (3) SA 745 D.
18. Op. cit. p. 162; original source — *SAIRR Security and Related Trials in South Africa* 1976–7, pp. 64–67.
19. February 2, 1990.
20. Regulation 6A.
21. Public Safety Act No. 3 of 1953, sec 2.
22. A.S. Mathews: 'A Backward Step Forward'. *Lawyers for Human Rights News Bulletin*, June 1990.
23. *S v Radebe* 1988 (1) SA 772 (A).
24. Internal Security Act No. 74 of 1982, sec 54, subsec 2.
25. Ibid, sec 54, subsec 3.
26. J. Spence, 'Politics in Transition: Eastern Europe and South Africa', March 7, 1990.
27. Essy Letsoalo, *Land Reform in South Africa. A Black Perspective*, Scotaville Publishers 1987.
28. See further: *Forced Removal in South Africa, The Surplus People's Project Reports*, Vol. 4, Natal. Citadel Press, Cape Town, January 1983.
29. *South African Law Commission Working Paper 25. Project 58: Group and Human Rights 1989*.
30. The specific reference is to F.N. Baldwin Jr, an active civil rights lawyer and Professor of Law at the University of Florida.

THE LIMITS OF COMMUNITY

by PENNY ENSLIN

In South African political discourse the notion of community is regularly invoked — from a variety of positions on the political spectrum.[1] The discourse of progressive organisations rightly, as I shall assume for the purposes of this paper, appeals to the notion of community as both an organisational and a moral concept. This it does by emphasising the importance of local grassroots organisation in the struggle against apartheid, and in calling on individuals to show their solidarity with others dedicated to this cause by placing personal interests second to their duties to the cause of the oppressed. But, disturbingly, the defenders of the present order appeal to community too in justifying their actions. Apartheid discourse invokes the notion of community, purportedly under the rubric of 'promoting the development of all of South Africa's communities'.

Yet, in spite of such claims, apartheid has been a destroyer of communities. It has broken up old, established, rural and urban communities by physically uprooting and relocating their members. The impoverishment of rural areas has destroyed community life as families have been broken up by migrancy. South African society as a whole has been systematically prevented from acquiring a broad sense of community; apartheid policies have hindered the development of a sense of a common history and identity, of mutual interdependence, shared beliefs, and commitment to one another's welfare, which could be said to be among the characteristics of a nation as 'community'.

As the dismantling of apartheid approaches, South Africa's lack of community and the problem of how to promote community in a systematically divided society, become pressing issues — especially for education. Just as schools have been used as instruments to prevent the development of a common sense of community across the society as a whole, so they can be institutions which play a central role in healing the divisions of the past and in fostering the growth of community in the post-apartheid era. But given the history of the idea of community in South Africa, before considering how institutions like schools could play such a role, we need to face the more fundamental problem of what is meant by 'community'.

In recent years there has been considerable interest in the notion of community among American philosophers and sociologists (MacIntrye, 1981; Walzer, 1983; Taylor, 1985; Raywid, 1988; Bellah, 1985). One notable attempt to give an account of community is that of Michael J. Sandel in his *Liberalism and the*

Limits of Justice (1982). In common with other communitarian writers, Sandel challenges liberal perceptions of the self or person and of her location in relation to the rest of society, regarding liberalism as fatally flawed by its 'individualism' and the emphasis it places on justice and rights. Communitarians, including Sandel, prefer to emphasise the self's rootedness in a community whose practices and traditions constitute her as the person she is. Sandel defends a 'constitutive' conception of community against the 'sentimental', liberal notion of community, which John Rawls defends in *A Theory of Justice* (1971).

On reading Sandel it is likely that those concerned with problems of transforming South African society and its educational system will find the constitutive concept of community attractive. This paper sets out to warn against adopting a constitutive notion of community in efforts at social and educational reconstruction in South Africa. In order to pursue this goal, after noting the central features of Sandel's treatment of the notion of community, I will show how apartheid education is rooted in just such a notion of community. My primary aim is to argue that Sandel's constitutive notion of community is not an appropriate conception of community for South Africa. My secondary aim, which will not be pursued in depth, is to identify a conceptual muddle in public philosophy in South Africa: that liberalism is discredited because it is 'individualistic'. My concern in this paper is less to defend Rawls than to challenge Sandel.

Three concepts of community

Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) is the most significant contemporary defence of liberalism. Rawls's claim for the primacy of justice, of the right over the good, requires a certain conception of the moral self and an accompanying notion of community. According to Sandel, one of the central mistakes in Rawls's deontological liberalism (by which Sandel means a theory which asserts that the right is prior to the good and that justice is the primary moral and political principle) is the claim that we can define the personal identity of the self independently of social ends. Rawls's theory of the person, the philosophical anthropology of the self in the original position, posits an 'antecedently individuated subject'. The self is a distinct individual prior to its ends. Sandel writes:

> For justice to be the first virtue, certain things must be true of us . . . We must stand at a certain distance from our circumstance, whether as transcendental subject in the case of Kant, or as essentially unencumbered subject of possession in the case of Rawls. Either

> way, we must regard ourselves as independent: independent from the interests and attachments we may have at any moment, never identified by our aims but always capable of standing back to survey and assess and possibly to revise them . . . (Sandel 1982: 175)

Sandel discusses three conceptions of community, the first two of which are distinguished by Rawls. The instrumental account of community is 'based on conventional individualist assumptions which take for granted the self-interested motivations of the agents . . . and evokes the image of a "private society", where individuals regard social arrangements as a necessary burden and co-operate only for the sake of pursuing their private ends' (Sandel 1982: 148). On the 'sentimental' concept of community, on the other hand, which Rawls defends, the subjects share certain ends and regard co-operation as intrinsically a good thing. Their ends are often complementary and mutual, rather than antagnositic. While the good of community on the former account consists only in the benefits which individuals are able to derive from co-operation in the pursuit of self-interest, on Rawls's sentimental account such good 'consists not only in the direct benefits of social co-operation but also in the quality of motivations and ties of sentiment that may attend this co-operation and be enhanced in the process' (Sandel 1982: 149).

In opposition to these two conceptions of community, Sandel defends what he calls the constitutive or strong conception of community. Here:

> the sense of community would be manifest in the aims and values of the participants — as fraternal sentiments and fellow-feeling, for example — but would differ from Rawls's conception in that community would describe not just a *feeling* but a mode of self-understanding partly constitutive of the agent's identity. On this strong view, to say that the members of a society are bound by a sense of community is not simply to say that a great many of them profess communitarian sentiments and pursue communitarian aims, but rather that they conceive their identity — the subject and not just the object of their feelings and aspirations — as defined to some extent by the community of which they are a part. For them, community describes not just what they *have* as fellow citizens but also what they *are*, not a relationship they choose (as in a voluntary association) but an attachment they discover, not merely an attribute but a constituent of their identify. (Sandel 1982: 150)

For Sandel, while the instrumental notion of community is individualistic in that it assumes individuals to be selfishly motivated, it is not the motivation of the self reflected in the sentimental account of community — which may be benevolent or

selfish — which is at issue. Sandel describes the sentimental account of community as individualistic on the grounds that, like the instrumental notion of community, it assumes the 'antecedent individuation' of the self; it makes the metaphysical assumption that persons who become involved in co-operative arrangements are individually defined as the persons they are independently of their membership of a community.[2] And the individualism of the deontological self fails to offer a plausible account, according to Sandel, of some vital aspects of our moral experience, which he eloquently describes:

> But we cannot regard ourselves as independent in this way without great cost to those loyalties and convictions whose moral force consists partly in the fact that living by them is inseparable from understanding ourselves as the particular persons we are — as members of this family or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history, as sons and daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic. Allegiances such as these are more than values I happen to have or aims I 'espouse at any given time'. They go beyond the obligations I voluntarily incur and the 'natural duties' I owe to human beings as such . . . [They are] more or less enduring attachments and commitments which taken together partly define the person I am. (Sandel 1972: 179)

If we interpret education as the constitution of persons, we can deduce from the three conceptions of community and its value three conceptions of education. Schooling on the instrumental model of community teaches students to employ reason in pursuit of selfish ends, to determine what actions will best serve these ends and to discern when co-operative arrangements will be conducive to them. I assume that most would recognise with regret that its subject is a familiar product of many schools. The education of Rawls's moral self also consists in developing the capacity for rational choice, while at the same time encouraging her to pursue her ends in co-operation with others and to value the ties of sentiment accruing from such co-operation. In a recent paper Rawls observes that:

> political liberalism . . . will ask that children's education include such things as knowledge of their constitutional and civic rights . . . Moreover their education should also prepare them to be fully cooperating members of society and enable them to be self-supporting; it should also encourage the political virtues [which include tolerance, reasonableness and fairness] so that they want to honor the fair terms of social cooperation in their relations with the rest of society. (Rawls 1988: 267; parentheses added)

On a constitutive notion of community we derive a notion of education which will take the ties of sentiment which Rawls's

moral self elicits from co-operation as its starting point. Here education is fundamentally a matter of helping the student to understand her identity as a member of a particular community whose members' common history and its accompanying ties of sentiment make them what they are.

Community in apartheid education

My claim is that the constitutive notion of community is not one which should be embraced too readily, as we rush from 'liberal individualism' in search of an alternative conception of self and society. In raising doubts about this notion of community I will focus on a familiar discourse of community. This is the discourse of Afrikaner nationalism, a cornerstone of which is a constitutive conception of community.[3] I will examine it as reflected in the educational discourse of apartheid.

Understanding apartheid's educational discourse requires attention to the dominant approach to educational theory in South Africa. This is Fundamental Pedagogics, which has entrenched itself at most Afrikaans-medium universities and colleges of education, as well as most of the black universities and colleges. Fundamental Pedagogics can be regarded as the equivalent of philosophy of education, the epistemological underpinning of the other branches of educational theory. Its proponents claim that it is a science of education which uses 'the phenomenological method' to engage in 'radical reflection' on the phenomenon of education in order to describe its essence as a universal occurrence.

Central to the Pedagogicians' description of the phenomenon of education is the claim that the aim of education is adulthood. Criteria and aspects of adulthood are posited as universal conditions for adulthood. But, as we are told, in the actual event of education different communities give specific meaning to adulthood, in the light of their particular 'philosophies of life'. 'Adulthood is reached when man identifies himself completely with a specific way of life and the demands of propriety which it upholds' (Griessel 1985: 68).[4]

> An adult's choices and his subsequent acts are characterised by an *unconditional commitment* to the demands of propriety which are inherent in life-compelling values, values which he feels compelled to realise. The values are manifested in his philosophy of life, i.e. that which he considers to be of greatest value in his life of choice and action. The adult is capable of maintaining a consistent obedience to his philosophy of life and the demands of propriety which result from it. (Ibid.)

The constitution of the adult as a person requires a commitment to

the values expressed in a philosophy of life. This adult 'is man-in-community ... Only in and through the community can man properly respond to his individual calling and give proper shape to his humanness' (Griessel 1985: 73). The emphasis in this account of adulthood on connectedness, on 'co-existing self-realisation' is clearly indicative of a constitutive conception of community. Each community's idea of adulthood embodies the very idea of humanness, stipulating 'what man ought to be to qualify as a human being' (Griessel 1985: 79).

There are strong echoes in this notion of adulthood, as embeddedness in a particular community, of the criteria of the constitutive conception of community cited by Sandel. For the adult's very understanding of herself as the person she is is inseperable from her perception of herself as a member of a community, nation or people which bears a certain history, and from her loyalty to her community's values. In terms of this view of adulthood-in-community education is a process in which the child, who is helpless and dependent, is taken by the hand and led to adulthood, as it is defined in her community. Thus far this example of a concept of education which reflects a constitutive conception of community may appear fairly innocuous, even compelling. We must now examine some of its further features, which are not precluded by Sandel's account. These must be viewed in the broader context of apartheid society.

In terms of apartheid's doctrine of education: 'Different cultural communities make different demands of adulthood, corresponding to the history of the community, its own national ideals and prevailing social forms' (Griessel 1985: 78), and so each community must have its own schools, in order to preserve its social form. Segregation in education is regarded as a non-negotiable aspect of state policy.

Apartheid education does not allow for the possibility that members of a particular community could hold a plurality of views.[5] The educator 'is engaged in accompanying the child on the way to self-realisation, but this realisation must be in accordance with the demands of the community and in compliance with the philosophy of life of the group to which he belongs. In this way the South African child has to be educated according to Christian National principles'. (Viljoen & Pienaar 1971: 95)

The metaphor for education which arises out of such stipulations is one of *moulding*, intellectual and spiritual. Within the doctrine in question this is matched by a strong emphasis on the importance of authority in education. The concept of authority is unpacked primarily in terms of obedience; the child must be obedient to the adult educator, who in turn is to be obedient to the values of the community. It might be observed that the schooling of white South

Africans, modelled on these presuppositions, has been tragically successful, moulding its subjects to unquestioning obedience to their political authorities.[6]

It is salutary now to turn back to Rawls's brand of liberalism and its notion of education. Rawls's conception of the self and well-ordered society implies a particular concept of liberal education. Capable of autonomous judgement, but with concern for the rights and welfare of others, this moral self is located in a community in the sense of being committed to the good of others. But she has the capacity to submit the dominant values of this community to critical scrutiny — including interpretations of the common history of the community's members. She will be committed to the principle that there is a plurality of persons and a plurality of ends held by different persons, but that justice, or rights, are primary.

In apartheid's communitarian social and educational doctrines, a specific notion of the good, that is of the self-determination of different groups, predominates. The discourse of rights is all but absent, except that it is invoked by oppositional groups, and except that the hegemonic discourse makes much of the notion of the right of *groups* to self-determination. There is no conceptual space allowed for individualism, in the sense that education must not attempt to reconcile or disregard the 'fundamental opposition' between the individual and the community (Christian National Education Policy 1948). The moral preoccupations of the individual constituted by this conception of community do not include those liberal principles that Sandel regards as problematic — justice, fairness and individual rights. They do, however, make a place for alternative principles cited by Sandel — benevolence, altruism and fraternity — but for a restricted moral community. By making community its fundamental ontological, moral and political category, apartheid circumscribes the body of persons eligible for benevolent, fraternal and altruistic treatment. A citizen of one of the 'independent' states sliced out of South Africa's territory is as remote a candidate for such moral principles as a citizen of Bangladesh.

Conclusion

The constitutive conception of community is reflected in the discourse of apartheid. Presumably, in a post-apartheid society we will not wish to retain this notion of community. But does rejecting constitutive community in favour of the sentimental concept of community commit us, equally perniciously, to 'liberal individualism'?

Sandel's communitarian critique of the Rawlsian self assumes that individualism is a necessary component of liberalism. Rawls

(1975) has responded to the suggestion that the original position as specified in *A Theory of Justice* is opposed to communitarian values and biased in favour of individualism. His argument against this interpretation denies that the subject in the original position is motivated by self-interest, individualistically pursuing a desire to be wealthy as a primary good. Nor does the original position assume the doctrine of abstract individualism, of individuals whose goals exist independently of or prior to society.

I contend that communitarian, and other, critics of liberalism have yet to demonstrate that individualism is indispensable to liberalism. The work of John Dewey is an instructive example. Dewey both defended liberalism,[7] emphasising the need to understand its ambiguities in their historical context — including the advocacy of abstract and economic individualistic doctrines repudiated by Dewey — and defended the notion of community as an ontological, moral and political concept (Dewey 1927: 151, 154; 1935: 3, 54). Dewey saw as an obstacle in the path of discussion of social matters the idea 'that the outstanding question is to determine the relative merits of individualism and collective or of some compromise between them'. (Dewey 1927: 186)

Critics of liberalism who either assert or assume that 'individualism' is a necessary feature of a liberal political or educational theory tend to treat individualism as a term carrying a single meaning, rather than an historically complex set of basic or unit-ideas (Lukes 1973), some of which are now incompatible with a defensible liberal position. Hence, Dewey and Rawls dissociate abstract and economic individualism from the brands of liberalism which they wish to defend. Other notions from the 'individualist' tradition, like that of the dignity of the individual and the ideal of self-development, are widely regarded as necessary elements of contemporary liberal accounts of the good society and its educational discourse.

While accepting that individualism is a problematic and complex issue in education, the burden of my argument has been to show that Sandel's constitutive conception of community lies at the heart of apartheid. Of course I do not believe that Sandel would wish to support any aspect of apartheid society. Rather, I have set out to show how Sandel's moral self could be interpreted in these terms, and that this should prompt us to be sceptical of the constitutive notion of community as analysed by Sandel.

Viewed in the context of current American political philosophy, if Sandel's communitarianism is to retain its appeal it needs modification, or at least a degree of qualification. Indeed, while the self of the constitutive community as described by Sandel is compelling, we are not told very much about her. The upshot of my

discussion is that a communitarian view of education should be tempered in some way by elements of liberalism, possibly of the Rawlsian sort. I do not propose to deal here with the question of how one might thus produce a coherent theory. A crucial flaw in communitarian critiques of liberalism is the choice they offer us: either we accept the insights of a communitarian view of self and society or we defend liberalism. Such a dichotomy should be rejected.[8] If it is not we can do little more than acknowledge that the communitarian argument is as limited as might be the liberal concept of justice so elegantly challenged by Sandel.

As for the question of how we might formulate a notion of community appropriate to a future South Africa, here too we should resist the temptation to assume that there is a simple choice on offer between liberalism and another doctrine — in this case communitarianism. South African society does indeed lack genuine community, the development of which is crucial to the possibility of a peaceful post-apartheid era. But we also lack liberties called for by apartheid's opponents in their defence of freedom of expresson and association, individual rights, and the rule of law — which happen to be central to liberalism of the type defended by Rawls. If our post-apartheid institutions fail to recognise this we may rob ourselves of the opportunity to develop a genuine sense of community in South African society.[9]

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NOTES

1. See Thornton & Ramphele (1988) for a discussion of the usages of 'community' in South Africa.
2. The accuracy of Sandel's critique of the Rawlsian self has been questioned. See for example Doppelt (1989), Gutmann (1985) and Rorty (1988).
3. I do not want to suggest that all possible instances of constitutive community would be morally objectionable, or that there could not be examples of sentimental community which have moral defects. My intention is to warn against a conception of community present in South African public philosophy which we should avoid perpetuating.
4. This textbook is representative of texts widely prescribed in education courses in teacher education institutions where Fundamental Pedagogics is the hegemonic discourse.
5. Ironically, apologists for apartheid defend it on the grounds that it recognises and protects different values held by different cultural groups.
6. Events since 1976 have proved the effects of bantu education on black students to be quite different.
7. Callan (1981) argues that Dewey inadequately appreciates the value of individuality, which he undervalues in favour of social cohesion, and that this is evidence of an illiberal philosophy of education. While I accept that there are such illiberal tendencies in Dewey's work, I take his defence of liberalism (1935) as sufficiently warranting a description of Dewey as a defender of liberalism.

8. Here I share Gutmann's view (1985) of what she calls the constructive potential of communitarianism.
9. Buchanan (1989) argues, against the communitarian complaint that liberalism undervalues and undermines community, that liberal individual rights protect community.

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LANGUAGE, POETRY AND THE RIGHTS OF MAN*

by D.A. BEALE

'The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction'[1]
(Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 9, l.5)

Perhaps there is something especially appropriate about engaging with the theme of the Rights of Man in this time and this place. At one level, we are within two months of commemorating the bicentenary of the fall of the Bastille during a French Revolution that provoked Burke's influential *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), itself provoking a host of responses, many focusing in their titles on various forms of human rights, the most famous of all, perhaps, being Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, published in two parts in 1791 and 1792.[2] Equally, this week is fifty years on from the outbreak of World War 2, and we, coming after, must face George Steiner's uncompromisingly bleak injunction:

> We cannot act now, be it as critics or merely as rational beings, as if nothing of vital relevance had happened to our sense of the human possibility, as if the extermination by hunger or violence of some seventy million men, women and children in Europe and Russia between 1914 and 1945 hasd not altered, profoundly, the quality of our awareness. We cannot pretend that Belsen is irrelevant to the responsible life of the imagination.[3]

Closer still, we are within a week of a racist 'general' election, conducted in the face of sustained MDM defiance on the part of some thirty million people disenfranchised because of race and colour. And even closer yet, we are gathered here under the conference theme of 'Enlightenment and Emancipation?' (with its unsettling, self-questioning irresolution) on a campus on which, just over a week ago, police opened fire on students and non-students alike. To re-iterate, here and now, the issue of the Rights of Man presses with compelling urgency.

Indeed, with the exception of the French revolutionary rallying cry of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity', possibly no phrase from the late eighteenth century reverberates still so resonantly as that simple 'Rights of Man'.[4] That this should be so is due in large measure, of course, to the enormous impact of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, using that very phrase as his title without any qualification, not even the definite article. In brief, the first part, dedicated to George Washington, was a sustained attack on Burke's

* This is substantially the text of a paper delivered at the University of Natal Conference: 'Enlightenment and Emancipation?' — September, 1989.

Reflections, the second part, dedicated to Lafayette, offering a new programme of reform 'through the abolition of privilege and primogeniture (on which hereditary rights were based), the reform of taxation, and the setting up of what we should now call a welfare state'.[5] It has been estimated that both parts sold some 200 000 copies between 1791 and 1793 alone: further, 'in 1802 Paine estimated the sale of both parts at four or five hundred thousand, and in 1809, at 1 500 000, a figure which includes foreign translations'.[6] Such figures are speculative, of course, but sales and readership were clearly phenomenal, so much so that, in 1797, T.J. Mathias was to lament that 'we no longer look for learned authors in the usual places, in the retreats of academic erudition, and in the seats of religion. Our peasantry now read the *Rights of Man* on mountains, and on moors, and by the wayside'.[7]

Earlier in 1783, Paine had argued: 'It was the cause of America that made me an author',[8] with his pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776) in mind, with its unprecedented success in terms of sales, and in exerting an extraordinary unifying force amonst the American colonists opposing British rule. But, in the face of Burke's hostility to the French Revolution and his defence of the British constitution and the British status quo, Paine's taking up the very cause of all mankind itself helped make him the momentous writer *Rights of Man* clearly reveals him to be. For here, he attempted to speak to and for all men anywhere and everywhere, demystifying politics in general and Burke's prose style in particular, engaging with great issues and events in readily accessible language, and assuming, thereby, without question, that such matters were everybody's inalienable right to investigate, evaluate, consider.

Both *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man* are shot through with Paine's acute sense of the historical significance of his own time, and with the irreversible consequences of the issues with which he is concerned. Roughly equidistant in time between them, in his *Letter to the Abbé Raynal* (1782), Paine wrote:

> The present condition of the world, differing so exceedingly from what it formerly was, has given a new cast to the mind of man, more than what he appears to be sensible of . . . Our style and manner of thinking have undergone a revolution more extraordinary than the political revolution of the country. We see with other eyes; we hear with other ears; and think with other thoughts than those we formerly used . . .[9]

In other words, seven years *before* the French Revolution and the commanding mythic amplitude it was to assume (to Shelley, for example, it was 'the master theme of the epoch in which we live'[10]), Paine was already arguing, on the basis of the American

experience, for a revolution in consciousness, in the interiority of mankind, as possessing a significance as great, if not greater, than the external revolution. And when Paine comes to write *Rights of Man*, it is with this sense of a fundamental shift in human inwardness as having been already accomplished, concerning what it might mean to be and to become human and free. To see, hear, and think differently is to make possible, to make imaginable, to bring into being a new world and a new sense of human possibility in that world.

But, to be able to see, hear, and think differently at all involves something else too, a radical shift in linguistic possibility that must entail different, differing, even conflicting perceptions of 'reality'; differing, perhaps competing *representations/re-presentations* of 'reality', so different in their mutual rivalry in fact as to be able to claim of another's *representation* that it is a *misrepresentation*. Paine (and Burke, for Burke is alive to this also) is located at a crucial moment of crisis that brings together into collision the problem of *representation* as regards language and world, and *representation* as regards parliamentary representation and the possession and exercise of political rights.[11] In her fine analysis, Olivia Smith argues:

> Ideas about language and ideas about suffrage shared the central concern of establishing which groups of people merited participation in public life. Civilization was largely a lnguistic concept . . . Radicals had the difficult task of not only justifying the capabilities of the disenfranchised, but also of redefining the nature of language.[12]

Furthermore, as her study reveals, prevailing notions of language

> did not account for the possibility of an intellectual vernacular speaker, nor did literary values account for the possibility of an intellectual vernacular prose.[13]

It is part of Paine's achievement in *Rights of Man* to have forged such an 'intellectual vernacular', to have reached (perhaps also helped to create) a wide audience, to have extended that reading audience, even to have, by his example, inspired otherwise and hitherto non-writers to write also and thus make their contribution to a debate that had to do, centrally, with their role in society. And yet, while he succeeded in inspiring many, Paine was demonized by others, tried for seditious libel (in absentia) and burned, hanged, and shot in effigy many times.

Clearly, part of what energizes Paine's language in *Rights of Man* is the sheer force of Burke's own verbal manner in

Reflections. Whatever departures Burke might make from habitually acceptable class usage,[14] the fact remains that Burke's language fetishises the kind of political power exemplified by the British constitution, the monarchy, and the aristocracy, and the world and ways in which such forces legitimate themselves and are themselves legitimated. Seizing on words such as 'nature', 'natural', and 'feeling', for example, Burke constructs a world seemingly unchallengeable. Part of Paine's strategy is to appropriate just this vocabulary, while, at the same time, employing a style which can engage a hitherto excluded body of the people as 'readers' involved with language and writing, and as people involved in crucially central matters of state.

As various recent scholars have shown, the 'intellectual vernacular' that Paine forges derives, in part, from the political disputes of the English revolutionary period of the previous century.[15] But Paine, I think, is not only recovering a voice: he is evolving and discovering another voice, one capable of uncovering the mendacities of Burke (as Paine saw them), one capable of revealing the inhuman reality behind 'the decent drapery of life'[16] as Burke venerates it. Equally, too, he is offering to the dispossessed, the 'voiceless', and the voteless a mode with which to understand their world and the tricks of verbal hegemony that underpin it, so that they might come to withstand its blandishments. Further still, it is a mode by which such an audience could itself articulate its understanding of its oppression, the nature of that oppression (linguistic and otherwise), the legitimacy of its own demand/desire to participate in political life, and the illegitimacy of its exclusion from it.

It was all very well for Burke to dismiss claims for the Rights of Man as 'abstract'. Paine challenges 'abstraction' to show that what is designated 'abstract' refers to the substantial lived experience of unmitigated suffering for the poor and disenfranchised. Hunger, for example, is not an abstraction to the hungry, as Shelley too was to show later in the ballad vernacular of *The Mask of Anarchy* (1819), written in response to the massacre of Peterloo, whose anniversary (16 August 1819) is vitally close to this conference. Indeed, when Shelley there offers his graphic 'fleshing out' of slavery as an appallingly lived, suffered, endured human, yet inhuman, reality, his words reach from 1819 to any and every later present moment of speaking, or reading them:

> 'Tis to see your children weak
> With their mothers pine and peak,
> When the winter winds are bleak, —
> They are dying whilst I speak.
>
> (ll.168.171)[17]

They are still dying as *I* speak/write and as *you* listen/read — and perhaps Paine's verbal manner made something of this style and impact possible for Shelley too.

Moreover, Paine attempts to show that what Burke defends is itself both abstract and abstracting, not least the British Constitution itself which lacks any text to give it substantive reality. Titles too, in Paine's view, are themselves empty abstractions:

> Through all the vocabulary of Adam, there is not such an animal as a Duke or a Count; neither can we connect any certain idea with the words. Whether they mean strength or weakness, wisdom or folly, a child or a man, or the rider or the horse, is all equivocal. What respect then can be paid to that which describes nothing, and which means nothing? Imagination has given figure and character to centaurs, satyrs, and down to all the fairy tribe; but titles baffle even the powers of fancy, and are a chimerical nondescript.[18]

Paine arrives at this denunciation via one of his best known formulations, which deserves quoting at some length. Having argued that by doing away with titles, 'the *peer* is exalted into MAN', Paine argues this:

> It is, properly, from the elevated mind of France that the folly of titles has fallen. It has outgrown the baby-clothes of *Count* and *Duke*, and breeched itself in manhood. France has not levelled; it has exalted. It has put down the dwarf to set up the man. The punyism of a senseless word like *Duke*, or *Count* or *Earl* has ceased to please. Even those who possessed them have disowned the gibberish, and as they outgrew the rickets, have despised the rattle. The genuine mind of man, thirsting for its native home, society, condemns the gewgaws that separate him from it. Titles are like circles drawn by the magician's wand, to contract the sphere of man's felicity. He lives immured within the Bastille of a word, and surveys at a distance the envied life of man.[19]

'The Bastille of a word' — now *there* is 'the prison-house of language'[20] with a vengeance! Hence Paine's resistance to the power of language to bind us at all, still less 'for EVER', or 'to the end of time'. Rather for him, 'every age and generation must be free to act for itself, *in all cases*, as the ages and generations which preceded it'. Against Burke's claims for the dead and the unborn, Paine is 'contending for the rights of the *living*', Burke's dead and unborn being two more abstractions, 'two non-entities' as Paine calls them.[21]

Given all this, one can see why the American Revolution was so momentous to Paine when he wrote to Raynal (as mentioned

earlier): it *had* produced a written constitution contingent upon the active participation and consent of the governed. As he argues, famously, in *Rights of Man*: 'The American constitutions were to liberty, what a grammar is to language: they define its parts of speech, and practically construct them into syntax'.[22] Clearly, this conjunction of constitution and language is deliberate rather than fortuitous, a manifest consequence of the new eyes, ears, and thinking. In the 'Preface' to Part 2 of *Rights of Man*, Paine makes it very plain that he was himself aware of breaking new ground linguistically, when he speaks of having 'wished to know the manner in which a work, written in a style of thinking and expression different to what had been customary in England, would be received . . .'[23] And it was in relation to its style that much hostile reaction came. Horace Walpole, for example, regarded Paine's style as 'so coarse, that you would think he means to degrade the language as much as the government', and Sir Brooke Boothby discerned 'a kind of specious jargon, well enough calculated to impose upon the vulgar': and elsewhere he speaks of Paine as writing 'in defiance of grammar, as if syntax were an aristocratical invention'.[24] Given the arguments about language during the eighteenth century, as explored by Olivia Smith and John Barrell, for example, syntax was *not* a neutral given at all; indeed Barrell pointedly and appositely cites John Clare's embittered perception: 'grammar in learning is like tyranny in government — confound the bitch I'll never be her slave'.[25] (It is difficult for any English teacher, myself included, to correct student work, with a comment like that sitting on one's shoulder!)

There is no time/space here to pursue the gathering emergence into literary respectability of common, 'vulgar' English, as argued for, for example, by Wordsworth, famously, if not canonically, in the *Preface to 'Lyrical Ballads, with Other Poems'* (1800).[26] Rather, I wish to turn from an author who sought, reached, indeed created a vast audience for his work, to one who was comparatively hardly known, William Blake, who moved in Paine's London circle, helped Paine escape arrest, and was, like Paine, deeply influenced by popular/populist movements in the seventeenth century.

At one level, Blake's respect for Paine is unquestionable. Defending Paine from Bishop Watson's attack on Paine's *The Age of Reason* (1794), Blake asks: 'Is it a greater miracle to feed five thousand men with five loaves than to overthrow all the armies of Europe with a small pamphlet?' Unquestionable, yes, but not unquestioning, for even as he argues that 'Tom Paine is a better Christian than the Bishop', Blake insists on this: 'The Bishop never saw the Everlasting Gospel any more than Tom Paine'.[27] And, in a way, this is a, perhaps the, crucial point: if the Rights of Man *are* at

issue, then what it means to be human is at the very core of the debate. As we have seen already, writing to Raynal, Paine had argued for an already accomplished, fundamental and irreversible, revolution in human awareness. Yet, in espousing Reason, Commerce, Deism (and a concomitant Providentialism), Paine, for Blake, had conceived of human possibility as dispiritingly less than it might be. He had not gone far enough. By way of analogy: Keats was to apprehend in Wordsworth a quantum advance on Milton, who 'did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done', for Keats, proof positive of 'a grand march of intellect'.[28] One might profitably turn this around in the present case, and argue that Paine did not think into the nature and complexity of humanness as Blake did. It is the difference, perhaps, between arguing for and about the Rights of Man at the level of argumentative claim and counter-claim, as opposed to a thoroughgoing exploration of, and confrontation with, what it might mean to strive to become and be fully human. As Blake puts it clearly in *The Four Zoas*:

> All Love is lost: Terror succeeds, & Hatred instead of Love,
> And stern demands of Right & Duty instead of Liberty.
>
> (Night the First, ll.36–7)

It is the difference, simply, between sight, seeing *with* the eye, and seeing *through* the eye, which is insight, or what Blake calls 'vison'.[29] And even at the level of the language problem, Blake goes — quite literally — to the very ground-base itself:

> . . . English, the rough basement
> Los built the stubborn structure of the Language, acting against
> Albion's melancholy, who must else have been a Dumb despair.
>
> (*Jerusalem*, 40, ll.58–60)

In this context, consider, for example, this sequence as regards the word/notion 'reflection' (*pace* Burke's *Reflections*). Like Paine to Raynal, Burke speaks of 'a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions'. From this, he attempts to appropriate and monopolize the natural and the human, 'the common feelings of men':

> Why do I feel so differently from the Reverend Dr. Price, and those of his lay flock who will choose to adopt the sentiments of his discourse? — For this plain reason — because it is *natural* I should; because we are so made, as to be affected at such spectacles with melancholy sentiments upon the unstable condition of mortal prosperity, and the tremendous uncertainty of human greatness; because in those natural feelings we learn great lessons; because in

> events like these our passions instruct our reason; because when kings are hurl'd from their thrones by the Supreme Director of this great drama, and become objects of insult to the base, and of pity to the good, we behold such disasters in the moral, as we should behold a miracle in the physical, order of things. We are alarmed into reflexion . . .[30]

Burke, here, is lamenting 'the atrocious spectacle of the sixth of October 1789' at Versailles concerning the French royal family. Paine, in turn, appropriates Burke's terminology, but deploys it to defend those here designated 'the base' against Burke's elitism. More specifically still, he tactically resituates the activity of 'reflection', whether from Burke's title, or that condition into which Burke claims 'we are alarmed'. Conceding the violence of the events, Paine goes on:

> But everything we see or hear offensive to our feelings, and derogatory to the human character, should lead to other *reflections* than those of reproach. Even the beings who commit them have some claim to our consideration. How then is it that such vast classes of mankind as are distinguished by the appellation of the vulgar, or the ignorant mob, are so numerous in all old countries? The instant we ask ourselves this question, *reflection feels* an answer. They arise, as an unavoidable consequence, out of the ill construction of all old governments in Europe, England included with the rest. It is by distortedly exalting some men, that others are distortedly debased, till the whole is out of nature . . .[31] (My italics)

Smith is quite right, I think, to see this as one of those occasions when 'Paine dramatically breaks out of the standard relationship of an author and his audience . . . This is an intense moment, when readers self-consciously share the thought and feelings of someone else'.[32] But there is more going on here as Paine strategically undermines Burke's premisses while using Burke's own terminology, not least, to re-iterate, that increasingly contested terrain of 'nature', and 'feeling', as well as Burke's mode of utterance and/or alarmed experience as 'reflection'.

At one level, of course, Paine is displaying a kind of exuberant 'flyting' skill, duelling with weapons chosen by his opponent. But with Blake, the situation is very different. In contrast to Paine's delighted, if robust, playing on the word 'reflection', Blake uses it hardly at all. One example (of the few) must suffice (though all are telling!):

> Thus was the Covering Cherub reveal'd, majestic image
> Of Selfhood, Body put off, the Antichrist accursed,
> Cover'd with precious stones: a Human Dragon terrible

And bright stretch'd over Europe and Asia gorgeous.
In three nights he devour'd the rejected corse of death.

His Head, dark, deadly, in its Brain incloses a reflexion
Of Eden all perverted . . .

(*Jerusalem*, 89, ll.9–15)

The 'Covering Cherub', Blake's terrifying figure of the malevolent Selfhood, removes 'reflection'/'reflexion' from the informal unfolding of a well-informed mind, from 'alarmed' response to moral admonition, from simple, if moving, sympathy. What Blake diagnoses here is an encrusted, self-locked, self-affirming arrogance that can corrupt even Paradise itself and four-fold vision into something horrific and inhuman.

By contrast, Blake offers a vision of the human that is grounded in an imaginative capacity to re-organise the given, 'to see a World in a Grain of Sand',[33] to forgive sin rather than judge and punish, to acknowledge the infinite, the unique, and the holy in every thing from a particle of dust to the intrinsic divinity of a redeemed humanity where each 'minute particular' is liberated from the imprisoning 'generalization' that seeks to choke and enfold it — 'One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression'.[34]

There is a curious paradox here, for while Blake shares Paine's abhorrence of monarchy, priestcraft, war, poverty, and human suffering of all kinds, he sees deeper than Paine into their ultimate source. As Mark Schorer has argued:

> Kings and Priests and their laws were restraints, to be sure, but they were not the source of restraints; they were the representation of some human fallacy that established and tolerated them . . . What Blake set himself to show was that kings and laws are not merely external facts, but impulses perversely generated in human nature itself. It was the announced end of the [French] Revolution to free the physical being of man from oppression, and the mind from superstition and the folly of ignorance. Before the Revolution was well under way Blake discovered for himself the source of both social and mental restraint in that very reason by means of which the revolutionists hoped to escape restraints'.[35]

And this is where the paradox closes, for, in Schorer's view:

> Blake's correction of liberal thinking is analagous to Burke's correction of conservative thinking. Both turned away from abstract, mechanical conceptions of man and society, and insisted that to be effective political ideas must find their roots in the complexities of psychological fact.[36]

To me, this is some of the most acutely perceptive, though

unaccountably neglected, comment on Blake that we have, though we must beware of any temptation to believe that Blake would be in sympathy with Burke's position. Far from it! Blake's damning exposure of the brutal and appalling disguises of ideological hegemony should give the lie to any suspicion of that:

> Listen to the Words of Wisdom,
> So shall [you] govern over all; let Moral Duty tune your tongue.
> But be your hearts harder than the nether millstone . . .
> Compell the poor to live upon a Crust of bread, by soft mild arts.
> Smile when they frown, frown when they smile; & when a man looks pale
> With labour & abstinence, say he looks healthy & happy;
> And when his children sicken, let them die; there are enough
> Born, even too many, and our Earth will be overrun
> Without these arts . . .
> (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Seventh (a), ll.110–122)

Yet, if Urizen's inhuman calculation is a way of exposing Burke, in Orc's response Blake is equally critical of Revolutionary violence and its equally cruel indifference to living humanity:

> And Orc began to organize a Serpent body,
> Despising Urizen's light & turning it into flaming fire,
> Receiving as a poison'd cup Receives the heavenly wine,
> And turning affection into fury, & thought into abstraction,
> A Self consuming dark devourer rising into the heavens.
> (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Seventh (a), ll.151–156)

Orc, here, lies within the same spectrum as the Covering Cherub and his perverting 'reflexion' earlier, for Orc is no energy liberating into new possibility, but a mirror image (a grotesque 'reflection'!) in fiercely and tragically ironic congruence with the savagely oppressive tyranny of Urizen which he seeks to supplant.

Since the issue of what the human might be, become, and involve must be at the centre of any debate over the Rights of Man, we have a conflict in political prose debate between Burke and Paine, and, at the same time, a gulf between both of them (for very different reasons) and an artistic imagination expressing itself in poetry and (sometimes) visual illumination, as Blake diagnoses and exposes central inadequacies in both Burke and Paine.

And yet, given Blake's respect for Paine (notwithstanding his reservations over 'the Everlasting Gospel'), this fissure with Paine has a special poignance, if only because Paine's enthusiasm in *Common Sense* — 'We have it in our power to begin the world over again . . . The birthday of a new world is at hand'[37] — Blake shared. But again, unlike Paine, Blake came to know that any way of

beginning anew had to begin within, by acknowledging and then surmounting those aspects of the self (as imaged in Orc, Urizen, and the Covering Cherub, for example) that construct an anti-human world. And the poignance goes deep. Paine had concluded the opening section of *Common Sense* with this ringing exhortation:

> O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is over-run with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa, have long expelled her. — Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.[38]

Sixteen years later, in the 'Introduction' to Part II of *Rights of Man*, Paine argued this, now in the assurance of America's achieved independence:

> The revolution of America presented in politics what was only theory in mechanics. So deeply rooted were all the governments of the old world, and so effectually had the tyranny and the antiquity of habit established itself over the mind, that no beginning could be made in Asia, Africa, or Europe, to reform the political condition of man. Freedom had been hunted round the globe; reason was considered as rebellion; and the slavery of fear had made men afraid to think.[39]

Africa, America, Europe, Asia — the very project of Blake's 'Bible of Hell', the Lambeth Books (1793–95): yet Blake is pressing away from Paine in his repudiation of reason *per se*, in his deepening engagement with the dark places of consciousness, and in his growing discovery of the redemptive power of the imagination as *the* human and humanizing faculty. Indeed, the confident conclusion to *Rights of Man* (Part II) with its quiet conviction 'that the spring has begun' (itself to echo hauntingly and equivocally in the concluding if inconclusive irresolution of Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' (1819) — 'If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?') also makes plain another vital disjunction between Paine and Blake. Paine's assurance is rooted in the cyclic unfolding of 'the vegetable sleep' of winter.[40] And for Blake, that kind of nature, the vegetable world, was *not* man's true home. Rather for him, unable to rest

> from my great task!
> To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
> Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity
> Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination . . .
> (*Jerusalem*, 5, ll.17–20)

that true home was a world fully humanized by the transforming power of an imagination restlessly striving to realise its own human potentiality, where, 'in Visions/In new Expanses', there can be

> All Human Forms identified, even Tree, Metal, Earth & Stone: all
> Human Forms identified, living, going forth . . .
> (*Jerusalem*, 9, ll.1–2)

So, at one level, Paine's *Rights of Man*, in style and content, makes possible (and accessible) a view of human reality and human possibility that represents a direct liberating challenge to the orthodoxies of Burke and the old world. But at another, it is almost as though the very qualities that made Paine's achievement possible themselves contributed to an inevitable foreclosure of human possibility. In this sense, one can read the Lambeth Books (repeated, tormented 'raids on the inarticulate' in the face of the French terror and the apparent failure of revolutionary energy to bring a humanly affirming liberty) as Blake's immediate dialogue with both Burke and Paine, to be refined as his mythopoeic endeavour developed and unfolded.

But this, too, is a matrix of paradoxes. Paine reached (and influenced) millions of readers via *Common Sense* and, especially, *Rights of Man*; Blake hardly any. Indeed, while Paine remains accessible, one wonders just who reads Blake, for much writing *about* him today employs yet more 'languages', increasingly delphic and arcane, and so alien to common usage as to make Blake even more remote from those capable of a functional 'intellectual vernacular'. And to immure him in today's equivalents of Mathias's 'retreats of academic erudition', surely does a profound disservice to both his art and the complexities of becoming fully human to which that art was dedicated.

It is not a question of setting Blake against Paine as to who is the 'greater' (whatever that means!). It is, rather, a question of recognizing that each makes central a vision of human possibility, that each develops appropriate, and revealingly individual, modes and styles to articulate that vision, and that each recognizes as crucial to any exploration and affirmation of 'the Rights of Man' the intractable problematics of language itself. There is a moment in Wallace Stevens which is particularly pertinent here:

> To say more than human things with human voice,
> That cannot be; to say human things with more
> Than human voice, that, also, cannot be;
> To speak humanly from the height or from the depth
> Of human things, that is acutest speech.
> ('Chocorua to Its Neighbour', XIX)[41]

From the French Revolution to the dehumanizing barbarism of our own time, two centuries which are characterised by sustained hostility to, disregard for, or equivocation about 'the Rights of Man'. Given the vitally humane imperatives at the heart of Paine and Blake (to go no further), is it that that humanly 'acutest speech' has yet to be spoken, or, more frightening, that it has not been acutely heard, attended to, responded to? Maybe we must all acknowledge an inescapable (if unregarded) tension between our insistently clamorous demands for 'Freedom of Speech', and a reciprocal, as well as awesome, responsibility to listen and respond as humanly, as acutely as possible. And yet, even the acutest ear cannot distinguish in sound between 'Rights', 'Rites', or even 'Writes': the distinction between 'Rights' and 'Rites', which we 'write' visibly on the paper, we 'write' even larger in the nature of the conditions in which men, women, and children have their being. We have to earn the right to 'write' 'Rights' as opposed to 'Rites', to hear the rich amplitude of 'Rights' uncontaminated by the lethally shrunken and formulaic 'Rites', and that remains an enduring, perhaps the enduring, human challenge.

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NOTES

1. All quotations from Blake are taken from *Blake: Complete Writings*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).
2. For a very thorough discussion, see James T. Boulton, *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* (repr. Westpoint, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975): the appendix offers a full chronological survey of responses to Burke. Useful collections of some of this material can be found in *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and *The Debate on the French Revolution, 1789–1800*, ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Kaye, 1950).
3. 'Humane Literacy;, in *Language and Silence* (Harmondsworth: (Penguin Books, 1969), p. 22.
4. It's worth noting that the merchant ship from which Billy is impressed into the British Navy in Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor*, is called 'Rights-of-Man', because her 'hardheaded Dundee owner was a staunch admirer of Thomas Paine, whose book in rejoinder to Burke's arraignment of the French Revolution had then been published for some time and had gone everywhere.' Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories*, ed. Harold Beaver (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 326.
5. This conveniently concise summary is taken from *William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism*, by Jonathan Wordsworth, Michael C. Jaye, Robert Woof, with the assistance of Peter Funnell (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987 — Co-published with The Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, England), p. 18.
6. Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791–1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 58. I must acknowledge a pervasive debt to this book, and also to Boulton's cited above.
7. Quoted in Smith, op. cit., pp. 58–59.
8. 'The American Crisis', No. 13, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. M.D. Conway, 4 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 2nd printing, 1972), Vol. 1, 375.
9. *The Thomas Paine Reader*, eds Michael Foot and Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 161–163. To be fair to Paine, even before the outcome of the American War of Independence was known, he was enthusiastically claiming, in *Common Sense*, 'a new era for politics is struck; a new method of thinking has arisen'. *Common Sense*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 82. (Hereafter, in notes, abbreviated to *CS*.)
10. To Byron, 8 Sept. 1816, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones, 2 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), Vol. 1, 504.
11. For a lucid exploration of some aspects of these matters, see David Simpson, *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982). The demands of Sheffield radicals are precisely apposite here: 'we demand equality of rights, in which is included equality of representation; . . . We are not speaking of that visionary equality of property, the practical assertion of which would desolate the world, and replunge it into the darkest and wildest barbarism; but that equality we claim is, to make the slave a man, the man a citizen, and the citizen an integral part of the state; to make him a joint sovereign, and not a subject'. Quoted by H.T. Dickinson in *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 255. See also the same author's *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789–1815* (Historical Association Studies) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985). For a detailed exploration of the whole period, the most comprehensive study is still E.P. Thompson's indispensable *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. repr. 1979).
12. Smith, op. cit., p. vii.
13. ibid., p. 35.
14. As well as Boulton and Smith, already cited, for a recent penetrating exploration of Burke's writings see Steven Blakemore, *Burke and the Fall of Language: The French Revolution as Linguistic Event* (Hanover and London: Published for Brown University Press by University Press of New England, 1988).

15. See, for example, David Powell, *Tom Paine: the Greatest Exile* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), and David A. Wilson, *Paine and Cobbett: the Transatlantic Connection* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill — Queen's University Press, 1988).
(A.J. Ayer's *Thomas Paine* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1988) is more concerned with Paine's thought than his stylistic means.) As regards the seventeenth-century, Blakemore makes equal claims for Burke: 'Just as Paine writes out of the tradition of Lilburne and the Levellers, Burke writes out of the tradition of Coke and Blackstone.' (op. cit., p. 21.)
16. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 171. (Hereafter, in notes, abbreviated to *RRF*.)
17. All quotations from Shelley's poetry are taken from *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).
18. *Rights of Man*, ed. Henry Collins (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 103. (Hereafter, in notes, abbreviated to *RM.)*
19. *RM*, p. 102.
20. Although the phrase has become a near cliché in currect critical discourse, that is, in large measure, due to Frederic Jameson's influential *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972).
21. *RM*, pp. 62, 63, 64, 65.
22. *RM*, p. 117.
23. *RM*, p. 175.
24. All quoted by Boulton, op. cit., pp. 137, 137, 147.
25. Quoted in John Barrell, *English Literature in History 1730–80: An Equal Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 112. Chapter 2, 'The language properly so-called: the authority of common usage', is especially pertinent to this discussion.
26. See Smith and Barrell as cited: also Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).
27. 'Annotations to Watson', *Blake: Complete Writings,* pp. 391, 396, 394.
28. To J.H. Reynolds, 3 May, 1818, *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 96.
29. See, for example, 'Auguries of Innocence', ll. 125–132.
30. *RRF*, p. 175. Shortly before this, Burke had attcked 'the politics of revolution' and those who supported such measures by uniting his abhorrence of abstraction/theory and his claims to 'the natural': 'This sort of people are so taken up with their theories about the rights of man, that they have totally forgot his nature . . .' (*RRF*, p. 156).
31. *RM*, pp. 80–81.
32. Smith, op. cit., p. 53.
33. 'Auguries of Innocence', l. 1.
34. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plates 22–24.
35. *William Blake: The Politics of Vision* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), pp. 191–192.
36. ibid., p. 192.
37. *CS*, p. 120.
38. *CS*, p. 100.
39. *RM*, p. 181.
40. *RM*, p. 295.
41. *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (London: Faber and Faber, Fourth Impression, 1971).

TOTALITARIANISM AND THE VOICES OF AUTHORITY: NARRATIVE ALIASES IN JORGE SEMPRUN'S *WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SUNDAY!*

by J.U. JACOBS

In his opening statement at the 1981 Toronto Conference on *The Writer and Human Rights*, Thomas Hammarberg, secretary-general of Amnesty International, gave as reason for that gathering of writers from all over the world the crucial test faced by human rights at the beginning of the decade. The right to dissent, he said, was under attack in country after country: 'torture and murder, abduction and imprisonment — often sactioned at the highest levels of government — are systematic practices in nations of widely differing ideologies . . . In many countries, imprisonment on racial, religious or political grounds is being prolonged indefinitely.'[1] Given this scenario of the widespread denial of human rights, the question arises of what role *writers* can play. To 'speak on behalf of those who cannot', he suggests, becomes the responsibility of the writer. (p. 5)

Just how difficult is the task of writers to document, analyse and counter totalitarianism with the kind of authority that is uniquely theirs, emerges from the range of testimony offered at the Conference by or on behalf of writers from countries under governments as different as those of Hungary and the host country Canada itself, Turkey and Cameroon, Vietnam and South Africa, Argentina and Czechoslovakia, Chile and India, Togo and the USSR. No authoritarian ideologies are to be trusted. Josef Škvorecký argues: 'neither fascists nor communists can live with democracy, because their ultimate goal, no matter whether they call it *das Führerprinzip* or the dictatorship of the proletariat, is precisely the "absolute despotism" of which Thomas Jefferson spoke.' (p. 117) Writers who do not contradict such governments, Natalya Gorbanevskaya points out, risk nothing; but there are many other writers who have fallen foul of despotism:

> Today those writers who end up in the camps and prisons have wanted to sin against the total and totalitarian ideology. They have used their freedom of speech and creation as if this ideology were not all-powerful, as if it were not the owner of their freedom and of their souls, of their pens and of their typewriters. They have violated the ideological and even psychological monopoly of the state. (pp. 202–203)

That there is a grave obligation on the novelist in particular, is expressed in the dictum that Milan Kundera once formulated

during an interview: in totalitarian states it is the task of the novel to expose 'anthropological scandals'.[2] This term goes beyond merely the outrage with which we register the excesses of a political regime; it involves the question of what people are capable of. The communist system and its bureaucracy that has given birth to gulags, political trials and stalinist purges and with which he is concerned, can do no more, Kundera maintains, than the human beings in it: 'A system exists around the limits of what human beings can do . . .' Behind the political question there is always the anthropological one — 'the question of what man is capable of'.

And nowhere has the extent of what man is capable of been more shockingly revealed, Jacobo Timerman reminds in his contribution to the Toronto Conference, than in the unmatched ideological excesses and unprecedented tyranny of the Nazi regime in Germany and the subsequent realisation of a crime against humanity so horrible and so unusual in history that there was no name for it nor any legal approach to it. This was, he says, the only new crime that appeared in our century: 'After the war, the Western countries found that the Nazis had invented the destruction of whole populations. Not knowing what to do with this kind of crime, they convened a group of lawyers that in 1948 created the notion of genocide. It was described by these laywers as a crime against humanity'. (p. 79)

The name *holocaust fiction* given to the body of writing dealing with this crime against humanity signifies its enormity. In *Atrocity and Amnesia*, his study of the political novel since 1945, Boyers defines holocaust fiction more specifically:

> In the main, the focus of this literature has been Hitler's war against the Jews, most especially the sufferings experienced by Jews who were exterminated or by other Jews who survived and were forced to consider the meaning of their survival. The best of this literature is rich in philosophical implication and in the grave precision of its historical reconstruction. Several notable holocaust works also ask questions that go beyond the specific causes and immediate consequences of the Nazi period, and several go so far as to dwell reflexively on the inadequacy of fiction and of language itself to do justice to the subject.[3]

In attempting to deal with the holocaust, the literary imagination is continually confronted by the truth of Elie Wiesel's often-quoted words: 'at Auschwitz, not only man died but also the idea of man'.

In his novel about genocide, *What a Beautiful Sunday!* (Quel beau dimanche!, 1980), Jorge Semprun employs narrative both as a mode of perception and as a mode of cognition in a work in which he not only records his own imprisonment in a Nazi death camp but

tries to understand this experience within the larger framework of his lifelong involvement with totalitarianism — as its victim and also as its agent. And by exploring the metafictional notion of the death of the author he endeavours through literary postmodernism to approach the concept that Wiesel speaks of: the death of the idea of man.

'I persist in demanding names', Semprun quotes André Breton as epigraph to *What a Beautiful Sunday!*, 'in interesting myself only in books that one leaves ajar like doors and for which one does not have to find the key . . .'[4] However, it is precisely the Proper Name, Barthes claims, that can no longer be written: 'What is obsolescent in today's novel is not the novelistic, it is the character'.[5] The death of the character modelled on the traditional view of man with its basis in a belief in the stability of the ego has become a commonplace. Contemporary metafiction, Waugh points out, aims to focus attention precisely on these alibis of narrative operation and the problem of reference.[6] In metafictional novels the authorial presence is exaggerated. Crossing the ontological divide, the Real Author frequently breaks into the world of his fiction in order to draw attention to the naming of a character, or to flaunt proper names in their seeming arbitrariness or absurdity — his own included — or else to insert real historical personages into an overtly fictional context. By entering the text as its visible machinator, the author discovers that his own reality is also called into question, leading, as Waugh points out, to the familiar concept of the 'death of the author': 'It is a paradoxical concept . . . the more the author appears, the less he or she exists. The more the author flaunts his or her *presence* in the novel, the more noticeable is his or her *absence* outside it'. (pp. 133–134) Or, the more elaborate the fictional inscription of the author through his characters into the text itself, the more cryptic his existence outside of it.

Calculated release of narrative selves into the world of the text is of course as old as the novel itself, but perhaps nowhere have the fictional fragmentation and multiplication of self been so brilliantly shown as in Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*. In the chapter entitled 'In a network of lines that intersect' the narrator introduces himself via the concept of a speculum: 'Speculate, reflect; every thinking activity implies mirrors for me . . . I cannot concentrate except in the presence of reflected images . . .'[7] Reflection is a way of expanding as well as concentrating the self; the proliferation of one's own image is equally a centripetal activity: self-projection as a form of self-protection. This section of Calvino's novel ends, however, on a note of existential uncertainty when the narrator, eventually locked into the ingeniously mirrored world of his own construction, suspects that he might even have

been kidnapped by one of his own images cast into the world that has taken his place and relegated him to the role of reflected image: 'I am lost', the author of illusions cries at the end, 'I seem to have lost myself'. (p. 168)

Advertised by the conventional Publisher's Note as a work of fiction, Semprun's novel *What a Beautiful Sunday!* is equally coded as autobiography, spanning as it does the events of the author's own life: his childhood and exile from a Spain disrupted by the Civil War; his participation in the French Resistance; imprisonment in Buchenwald; his role in the struggle against Franco; and his eventual expulsion from the Communist Party because of his expression of his growing disenchantment and protest after the revelations of Stalin's crimes, especially with the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*. *What a Beautiful Sunday!* is Semprun's confessional fiction (the mode defined by Westburg as 'a self-conscious narrative of personal development[8]) which also confesses itself as a fiction about fiction making, being a rewriting of the experience still tacitly articulated according to a communist vision of the world in Semprun's earlier book *The Long Voyage* (1963). The 'true ethical dimension of fiction', Westburg reminds, 'derives from the ability of narrative to demystify itself by means of self-commentary'. (p. xviii) When Semprun's narrator in *What a Beautiful Sunday!* is one day called by a name referring not to his real name but to one of the many political aliases by which he had been known, he reflects on the ontological dilemma of all people who present themselves under assumed names, who inscribe themselves into other characters and turn their own life into fiction:

> It's as if I were no longer myself and have become a character in a novel. As if I were no longer the 'I' of this narrative, and have become a mere Game, or Stake, a He. But which He? The He of the Narrator who holds the threads of this story? Or the He of a mere third person, the character in the story? In any case, I'm not going to allow myself to be led, since I'm the cunning God the Father of all these threads and all these He's. The First Person by antonomasia, then, even when it hides itself in the Hegelian figure of the One splitting into Three, for the greater pleasure of the reader who enjoys narrative tricks, whatever opinion he may hold on the delicate question of the dialectic. (p. 65)

The tangle of fiction and truth (or *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, to evoke Goethe's autobiography here) is contained in the conceit with which Semprun begins his narrative: a concentration camp inmate's epiphanic vision of a snow-covered beech tree in splendid isolation, transcendent in its statement of continuing life. 'The Sanskrit word for knot', a character in DeLillo's novel *The Names*

maintains, 'eventually took on the meaning of "book", *Grantha*. This is because of the manuscripts. The birch-bark and palm-leaf manuscripts were bound by a cord drawn through two holes and knotted'.[9] The Greek word *puxos* (box-tree), he continues, suggests wood, and it is interesting that the word 'book' in English can be traced to the Middle Dutch *boek*, or beech, and to the Germanic *boko*, a beech-staff on which runes were carved. 'What do we have? Book, box, alphabetic symbols incised in wood. The wooden axe-shaft or knife-handle on which was carved the owner's name in runic letters'. *What a Beautiful Sunday!* is Semprun's *book* about *Buchenwald*, most personally his autograph and most publicly his account of the mind and methods of totalitarianism as well as his record of some of those who have lived and died under it. The book not only documents Semprun's own experience in the camp, but also imaginatively exploits the implications of the particular tree standing in a 'beech forest on the hill known as the Ettersberg, and which gives its name to the place in question, Buchenwald . . . a few kilometres from Weimar'. (p. 5) For since the Ettersberg, the site of Goethe's *Conversations* with Eckermann as recorded on September 26, 1827, could hardly in the light of its association with the life and works of Goethe and its proximity to Weimar, home of those other illustrious names in German culture, Cranach, Bach, Wieland, Herder, Schiller and Liszt, lend its name to the euphemistically called 're-education camp (*Umschulungslager*) in which the dregs of the earth would be assembled' (p. 10), Himmler had decided to call the camp K.L. Buchenwald/Weimar — home also at one stage of that unspeakable name in German culture, Ilse Koch. The tree in whose shade Goethe was so fond of resting on the Ettersberg and on whose trunk, it was said, had once been the carved initials of Goethe and Eckermann, had been spared for its cultural historical significance by the SS when they built Buchenwald. Set fire to by an American phosphorous bomb in August 1944, its charred remains are recalled by the narrator 'between the clothing stores and the showers'. (p. 89) In *What a Beautiful Sunday!*, his book of conversations with a host of others, Semprun's beech merges with Goethe's tree in a forest of texts about the universe of the concentration camp.

Semprun's account of Buchenwald is written in full awareness of the double problem formulated by Primo Levi in *The Drowned and the Saved* (1988).[10] The history of the lagers has been written almost exclusively by those who never fathomed them to the bottom; the survivors are not the true witnesses; their testimony can only be on behalf of third parties, the submerged. Furthermore since inside the lager, Levi says, on a smaller scale but with amplified characteristics was reproduced the hierarchical structure

of the totalitarian state, many of those who survived emerged from what he calls a grey zone of privilege and collaboration. Semprun rejects with horror the notion that he speaks by proxy: 'I'm speaking, of course, for myself, and for those of us who were still alive; nothing will ever give me the right to speak for the dead . . .' (p. 153) Nevertheless, the protection afforded him as an intellectual by the underground Communist Party organisation at Buchenwald in whose administration German communists occupied the key posts, was, he acknowledges, a crucial factor in his survival.

Semprun writes from the perspective of exile, his 'sleepless night of exile' (p. 71) having begun in late 1936 when at the age of twelve he first lost, together with his Spanish patrimony, the reassuring solidity of names, 'the signs of his identification with a nation, a family, a cultural world'. (p. 73) It continued through his exclusion from ordinary social relations because of his underground political activities, and into his later expulsion from the Communist Party with its ideal of an international identity. The central and controlling symbol for loss of connexion for Semprun is, however, his experience of Buchenwald, which represents his exile from any innocent sense of common humanity.

Totalitarianism, whether of the Nazi Stalags or of Stalin's Gulags, is presented in the novel with indelible impressions of universal and anonymous dehumanisation: the brutal induction ceremonies into Buchenwald, disinfection, shaving, naked procession; marching in line 'shoulder to shoulder, just one paw of some huge, stumbling, frightened insect' (p. 14); the image of 30 000 prisoners standing automatically to attention on the *Appellplatz*, 'having saluted their own deaths, bared their heads before their future corpses' (p. 77), their existence reduced to a purely mathematical subtraction of the dead from the living; the haunting image of the six hundred surviving Jews from the Polish camp of Czestochowa who had become a negation of their very being and with 'the adhesive shadow of death already visible in their staring eyes' (p. 181); the familiar and pervasive smell of death at Buchenwald; the smoke rising constantly from the crematorium chimney; the dance of death of the numberless, nameless survivors of the Nazi camps who later perished in Stalin's Gulags; and the image of thousands of 'stripped corpses, intact, trapped in the ice of eternity in the mass of graves of the Great North'. (p. 103) All these images result, Semprun realises, from the monolithic ideology of either the Reich, or alternatively of that other 'radiant entity whose name must not be taken in vain' (p. 88), the Party — a univocal discourse of death that either formulates myths of racial superiority or else dictates Correct Thought as '*das*

Ganze, the All, the Totality ... the voice of Absolute Spirit'. (p. 236)

Anonymity, Semprun has learnt in his political career, can be employed as a resistance strategy. And for the writer of political novels, the deliberate exiling of self from the centre of his own world by the multiple characters of his own creation can be a fictional ploy. It is against the closed totalitarian consciousness that Semprun exploits what Bakhtin calls the heteroglot possibilities of the novel, centrifugal and subversive. 'To confront this problem of freedom in all its depth and complexity', Semprun's narrator concludes, 'what one needs is true dialogue, that is, a plural, multi-vocal discourse, a dialectical confrontation'. (p. 209) In this fictional palimpsest, Semprun recounts a particular Sunday in Buchenwald in 1944, his recollection overlaid by a Proustian memory of a journey from Paris to Prague in 1960 that took him through Nantua, Geneva and Zurich, with several halts of indeterminate duration in his memory. Not only does he unpack the various aliases that have contributed to his composite political identity, but by foregrounding all the different names by which he has been known — names officially bestowed, names arbitrarily chosen, names admitted to and names disowned — this exercise in self-naming becomes a complex act of metafictional distancing and self-regarding.

In the voice of the first-person 'I' a political and literary career corresponding to that of the actual Jorge Semprun unfolds, its details mediated elsewhere through reference to the third-person 'Narrator of this story and of other stories that always return, obsessively ...' (p. 73) Out of this imagination other names for himself emerge: 'the Spaniard' to his fellow prisoners in Buchenwald; and to the SS Command, prisoner '44 904' further identified by an isosceles triangle of red material with a single black S (for *Spanier*) in indelible ink on it. From the world of political aliases come other names that both identify and falsify: his Resistance *nom de guerre* of Gerard Sorel, occupation gardener, resurfaces together with that of Federico Sanchez ('the Spanish equivalent of Dupont or Smith', p. 21), his pseudonym in the Spanish Communist Party, as well as those of Camille Salagnac, Rafael Bustamonte (sometimes Artigas) and Ramon Barreto, Uruguayan businessman — names taken together with counterfeit passports from the false bottoms of travelling bags for crossing various national frontiers on subversive activity. To certain names he has never been able to lay claim: his bourgeois background entitled him to the Party passwords of '*Kumpel*' or '*pal*', but disqualified him from being a 'prole'. The epithet 'survivor' of the death camps he rejects as grandiloquent and inexact, just as he has

come to deny 'Pyotr', the Soviet ideal of the new man of the future, as a bloody myth. In these many reflections of himself the truth of Jorge Semprun is both masked and paradoxically revealed, albeit fleetingly. To a Swiss landlord he is 'Monsieur de Saint-Prix', and only once in the text does he appear as 'Jorge' when his past is given substance in the reciprocal memory of a former fellow inmate of Buchenwald. The name that is most significant to Semprun, however, is that of Fernand Barizon — a name by his own admission part truth and part fiction — the fellow communist and prisoner in the death camp whose consciousness he enters as his *alter ego* both to tell and be told about all those Sundays they had lived through in Buchenwald, and who functions as the Eckerman to his Goethe in their twentieth-century conversations on the Ettersberg.

Each narrative alias contributes a different voice to the ongoing discourse that his existence has turned into, 'proliferating through the years with a dangerously autonomous life'. (p. 185) In the guise of Leon Blum (himself the author of *Nouvelles Conversations avec Eckermann*) assuming the voice of Eckermann and recording the imaginary thoughts of Goethe on Blum himself during the latter's detention at the Falkenhof on the Ettersberg more than a century after Goethe, Semprun considers the idea of freedom and also the question of the relationship between the intellectual and politics. And in the tones of Jehova, his nickname for the young Jehovah's Witness who shared his Buchenwald experiences with him, Semprun debates whether the death camps could possibly have any religious significance. All these voices are held in a polyphony of upwards of thirty texts, each offering a variation on that of Semprun himself in what he calls an act of 'exorcism by means of narration' (p. 234) in becoming his own biographer, the novelist of himself. Among the texts on which he reflects and in which he is himself reflected (to change the metaphor) in this elaborate exercise in intertexuality are: the record of the show trial of Josef Frank in Prague in 1952; the songs of Zarah Leander coming over the Buchenwald loudspeakers; Joseph Kessel's *Belle de jour* which he remembers as having precipitated him into adolescence; Eugen Kogon's essay on the Nazi camps, *Organized Hell*; Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* with their disturbingly familiar account of the behaviour of the Russian peasants in Stalin's camps; the grotesquely ironic inscription in wrought iron on the monumental gates to Buchenwald, *Jedem das Seine* — 'To each his due'; the writings of Marx and Hegel and Trotsky; Arthur London's account in *The Confession* of the methods by which the accused were brought to confess the most improbable crimes against the Communist State; Zamyatin's prophetic novel *We* and Elisabeth Poretski's book *Our Own People* with their recognition that the

state in which Stalin's camps operated was, after all, a workers' state, their state; David Rousset's attempt at overall analysis beyond mere reportage of the Nazi camps in *L'Univers concentrationnaire* and the novel *Les Jours de notre mort*; the writings of Malraux and Artaud; Kruschev's Secret Report to the 20th Congress of the Soviet Party in 1956; Leon Blum's *Memoirs*; Semprun's own earlier books and the unfinished play *Les Beaux Dimanches* which was the genesis of *What a Beautiful Sunday!*; items from the very library of Buchenwald itself; and, above all, Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* which so radically changed Semprun's life in 1963 with its revelation that the country of the Gulag would never become that of socialism, and *The Gulag Archipelago* which, Semprun says, was thought out in masterly fashion 'with the minds of thousands of anonymous, crazed witnesses, said with the voice of thousands of witnesses silenced forever'. (p. 264)

In this forest of books — his *Buchen/wald* — Semprun repeatedly confronts the metafictional conundrum that his life is a construction constructing itself: 'My life is constantly being undone, perpetually undoing itself, growing blurred, going up in *smoke*'. (p. 234 — my emphasis) By inscribing his own actual and literary experiences into characters in a fiction he grows increasingly aware of his own unreality, of the dissolution of himself. However, although he cannot himself witness on behalf of all those who came to know the true meaning of the name of the death camps, it is paradoxically by making himself more present through narrative aliases in his book and thereby experiencing his own absence outside of his text that Semprun most closely approaches the truth of those forever absent.

Semprun's deliberate demonstration in *What a Beautiful Sunday!* of the way a writer dispossesses himself of his authority in order to find a fictional approach to the reality of those who have been dispossessed of their very humanity, illustrates a political use of literature that Italo Calvino advocates in his essay 'Right and Wrong Political Uses of Literature'. The totalitarian mind, he argues, is afraid of any language that calls the certitude of its own language into question. Literature, as one of society's instruments of self-awareness, undermines the authoritative discourse of totalitarianism by opposing monologue with structured dialogue; and it is especially postmodernist literature with its critical self-consciousness that counters ideological certitude. As Calvino expresses it: 'Politics, like literature, must above all know itself and distrust itself'.[11] Self-distrust, Jacobo Timerman concludes in *Prisoner Without a Number, Cell Without a Name*, his account of his own imprisonment and torture in Argentina, cannot be

accommodated by totalitarian authority: 'The chief obsession of the totalitarian mind lies in its need for the world to be clearcut and orderly. Any subtlety, contradiction, or complexity upsets and confuses this notion and becomes intolerable ... The power monopoly is at its disposal, and it employs this monopoly with utter ruthlessness in its compelling need to simplify reality'.[12] For the same reason, believes Milan Kundera, the novel as product of the West of the Modern Era cannot be reconciled to totalitarianism:

> As a model of this Western world, grounded in the relativity and ambiguity of things human, the novel is incompatible with the totalitarian universe. This incompatibility is deeper than one that separates a dissident from an apparatchik, or a human-rights campaigner from a torturer, because it is not only political or moral but *ontological*. By which I mean: The world of one single Truth and the relative, ambiguous world of the novel are molded of entirely different substances. Totalitarian Truth excludes relativity, doubt, questioning; it can never accommodate what I would call the *spirit of the novel*.[13]

The past decade has produced a number of postmodernist novels in which the single voice of authority is — to use Bakhtin's term — dialogised and thereby relativised and de-privileged. In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1980) Kundera hmself exploits the possibilities of fictional polyphony with its opposition to unilinear composition and with its ideal of the equality of voices. Consisting of ironic essay, novelistic narrative, autobiographical fragment, historical fact and flight of fantasy, the book ridicules the deadening certainties of the totalitarian mind in control of Czechoslovakia. 'The totalitarian world, whether founded on Marx, Islam, or anything else, is a world of answers rather than questions', Kundera maintains, whereas it is the novelist who teaches the reader to comprehend the world as a question rather than as a place of sacrosanct truths.[14] In *Shame* (1983) Salman Rushdie exposes so-called 'Islamic fundamentalism' as a myth imposed on Pakistan by an autocratic regime: 'This is how religions shore up dictators; by encircling them with words of power, words which the people are reluctant to see discredited, disenfranchised, mocked'.[15] In *The House of the Spirits* (1985) Isabel Allende analyses modern-day Chile under military dictatorship in a neo-baroque fictional construct in which she introduces a feminist discourse into the patriarchal colonial and post-colonial history of the country. And in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) Chinua Achebe fuses literary postmodernism with the African oral tradition in his fictional consideration of military dictatorship in an imaginary West-African state. The writer Ikem acts as his author's spokesman when he spells out the idea that 'storytellers are a

threat' because they 'threaten all champions of control, they frighten usurpers of the right-to-freedom of the human spirit — in state, in church or mosque, in party congress, in the university or wherever'.[16] Dialogues, Ikem advises his student audience, are infinitely more interesting than monologues: '. . . the unexamined life is not worth living . . . As a writer I aspire only to widen the scope of that self-examination'. (p. 158)

Like Semprun's *What a Beautiful Sunday!*, all these novels exemplify that principle of meditative interrogation — or interrogative meditation — on which Kundera says all his fiction is based.[17] More specifically, they are all, within the general context of post-modernism, also examples of historiographic metafiction. As Hutcheon argues in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, works of historiographic metafiction abandon any simplistic mimesis and problematize both what is conventionally known as the real, historical world as well as what is conventionally understood as fiction. By combining metafictional self-reflexivity with historical subject matter they compel recognition of the fact that so-called historical reality is discursive reality. The mutual critical impact of historiography and metafiction, Hutcheon says, serves to ironize the axiomatic truths of both. Historiographic metafiction problematizes the very notion of knowledge — historical, social and ideological — so as to question the basis of the power of such knowledge: 'Power is also, of course, a dominant theme in historiographic metafiction's investigations of the relation of art to ideology . . . The postmodern interrogates and demystifies those totalizing systems that unify with an aim to power'.[18] All these contemporary political novels, including Semprun's, have been written in response to master-narratives from the totalitarian mind in particular contexts and challenge any supposedly monolithic culture. They provide the ground for Milan Kundera's optimism when in his acceptance speech for the Jerusalem Prize he paid tribute to the role of the novel in the struggle for human rights:

> For if European culture seems under threat today, if the threat from within and without hangs over what is most precious about it — its respect for the individual, for his original thought, and for his right to an inviolable private life — then, I believe, that precious essence of the European spirit is being held safe as in a treasure chest inside the history of the novel, the wisdom of the novel.[19]

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NOTES

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THE WRITING ON THE WALL: THE DEVELOPMENT OF EAST GERMAN LITERATURE

by JÜRGEN LIESKOUNIG

In the history of literary development, one can often, with hindsight, discern prophetic qualities. There are many instances where literary works turn out to have anticipated significant social and political changes or ideological undercurrents; literary texts have time and again provided the sort of 'early warning system' that indicates very accurately and subtly the shape of things to come. This potential for foretelling and anticipation can, however, only be recognised after the event.

The literature of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) seems to be no exceptioin to this rule, as, long before the events of 1989 and the 'gentle revolution' in East Germany revealed the true extent of the bankruptcy of its regime (seemingly ossified in a ghostly time-warp), the literary development had constituted the invisible writing on the wall. And yet the exodus of GDR writers had started already in the later Seventies, providing an outward signal that there was 'something rotten' in this state. The literature produced during the Seventies and earlier Eighties itself provides an insight from within, as it were, as to why this 'worker and peasant state' had to fail sooner or later, even though it did not seem possible before the amazing events in autumn '89 when the East Germans remembered that *they* were the people (*Wir sind das Volk*).

One of the more exquisite ironies of recent German cultural history lies in the fact that today, after the 'gentle revolution', quite a few notable and even famous GDR authors are opposing the increasingly speedy unification of the two German states.[1] In 1947, however, before the formal creation of the two German republics there was a very different attitude towards a unified Germany: in that year the first and last writers' congress was held in Berlin, attended by authors from all four occupation zones — a circumstance which was not to be repeated. At that historically, socially and culturally critical and gloomy time following the excesses of Hitler's terror-filled regime it was these assembled writers who spoke out strongly against the imminent danger of a political division of Germany. The gathering of authors stressed then the need for a cultural unity of the Germans. The concept of a cultural nation in times of national crisis was not a new one, for the idea can be traced back to the German poet and thinker Friedrich Schiller who, nearly two hundred years ago, attempted to define the German nation through culture and language at another historically critical time when there seemed little hope for a unified

German nation-state. Given that precedent, it now seems almost inevitable that in 1947, in Germany's darkest hour, the writers and poets evoked the same common denominator of a shared culture in order to keep alive the idea of one Germany.

With the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in 1949 and only months later of the GDR under the auspices of the Allied Powers, particularly the USA and the USSR, the division of Germany reflected the global rift between East and West, between capitalism and socialism/communism. Yet for quite some years now it has been evident that the much-vaunted 'socialism with a human face' could not easily have evolved in the GDR, given its fundamentally stalinist and conservative (male-dominated) party-dictatorship system. As far as cultural and literary life was concerned, the very nature of the social, economic and political order in the two German states, which was from the outset so radically diverse, seemed to point to the formulation of equally different literatures and cultures in the years to come.

In West Germany most writers and intellectuals had from the start serious reservations about this new largely unwanted Federal Republic — they experienced grave difficultues in identifying with this Western version of a German state. To most of them the *provisional* nature of this Republic (a fact that is acknowledged even in the 'Basic Law', the constitution) made it all but impossible to develop any form of identification and, consequently, anything like a national identity.[2] But what aggravated these reservations was the extent of 'restauration' that was increasingly noticeable in the FRG. These strong restaurative tendencies (including the rearmament and NATO membership of West Germany) destroyed even modest hopes for a new start, a 'clean slate' after the furious 1945 Götterdämmerung finale of the false gods. It is no exaggeration to postulate that the majority of West German writers, including famous ones like Graβ, Böll, Enzensberger, and Martin Walser showed from the beginning a highly critical attitude towards this Federal Republic of Germany — an attitude that continued, if muted by frustration, right through to the Eighties.[3] Most of these literary authors represented, or at least perceived themselves as representing, the consciousness of the divided nation as moralists and humanist critics, but in truth they were marginalised right from the beginning, confined to the repressive tolerance of the literary industry and removed from any real public function.

Matters developed markedly differently in the GDR: from the outset the ruling party as well as most authors saw literature as an important political force and a socially relevant factor.[4] It was a serious attempt to correct the hitherto largely private and distinctly non-public rôle of writers and their literary productions that has

characterised the relationship between author and state in Germany for centuries — despite the high-sounding slogan of 'the land of poets and thinkers'. With such an objective the GDR placed itself quite consciously in the tradition of one of the primary beliefs of the Enlightenment: that literature plays a vital and effective part in helping to perfect the individual human being and, ultimately, human society. It seems only logical that the GDR's official policy regarding the goal of turning the country into an educated, literary nation meant in concrete terms that literary life in its entirety (including publishing, editing, distribution, paper allocations, etc.) was not to be left to the mercy of the anarchic and destructive market forces dictated by the profit-principle.

It is from this perspective that one must see the GDR's persistent claim to represent the 'better' Germany and to be the sole and legitimate heir of the German progressive and humanist traditions. However, in order to achieve its declared goals in the field of literature (together with a rather Germanic tendency to over-estimate the effect of literary texts) the party-state assumed from the beginning an all-embracing and active control over literary life within it. The inevitable inner contradictions and antagonistic forces of this kind of — however well intended — 'tutelage' by the system and its ideological base negated and distorted the 'enlightened' aims and eventually contributed decisively to the burning out of the GDR's literary and cultural life.

What makes the GDR literature such a fascinating phenomenon to study is the fact that the socio-political development of the country is so inextricably linked to its literary development. The nature of this connection is, however, not a simple reflection or a parallel correspondence (either affirmative or in opposition) but rather a complex dialectical one. Since literature (like art) was meant to be part of the 'life-praxis' in the GDR[5], it encompassed the problems and contradictions of society and the various reactions to these.

Especially through the earlier years of the GDR's existence and in fact even into the Seventies GDR literature had to meet certain 'realistic' parameters as far as the popular accessibility and intelligibility of the texts was concerned, thus excluding any 'formalist' and modernist experiments that were in obvious disagreement with the doctrine of 'socialist realism'.[6] In this centrally supervised and directed system of literary production the authors were expected to fulfil a social commitment through their writings — their task was to contribute to the construction of the 'real socialism' in the GDR. The vast majority of writers was organised (and in fact had little choice) in the unitary Writers' Association and it was not until the later Seventies that resignations and exclusions started to show an increasingly severe

impact on the organisation. Not surprisingly then, the constitution of the Writers' Association contained, as late as 1973, passages like the following:

> The members of the Writers' Association of the GDR recognise the leading rôle of the working class and its party in cultural policy. They declare themselves in agreement with the creative method of socialist realism.[7]

For the 'well behaved' and subservient writer who toed the line the system of rewards was quite considerable — the state and its institutions supported and sponsored literary authors to a remarkable degree, enabling most of them to lead a materially-sheltered, productive existence.[8] All this 'repressive generosity' with its implied co-option and 'carrot-corruption'-principle did not, however, prevent many authors from developing later on in the Seventies aggression and some very embittered emotions against that 'Ersatz-Übervater'-state. These were fairly prominent writers, such as Th. Brasch, J. Fuchs, S. Kirsch, R. Kunze, E. Loest, and K. Bartsch, who were either forced into exile to the FRG or were permitted to leave of their own accord, and most of them were part of the younger generation in the GDR's cultural life, who had grown up and developed as artists under the guidance and tutelage of the GDR state. This process of increasing alienation from the paternalistic and 'total' embrace of the regime was characterised in the case of some (S. Kirsch, Kunze and Fuchs) by the kind of fury and resentment disappointed children show when their precious dreams have been shattered. They either denounced the concept of socialism, judging it on the performance of a basically stalinist, conservative and inflexibly authoritarian system, or, insisting firmly on their socialist convictions, resisted equally furiously and in absolutist terms the party as the one and only obstacle standing before the final realisation of a utopian, solidarity-orientated, caring and above all *humane* society, where, in contrast to the capitalist West, man would neither exploit nor dominate his fellow man.

One cannot help noticing, in this kind of passionate belief in an ideal state, that the uncompromising absolutist thinking, intolerant of imperfection, does exhibit a striking 'German-ness', and it has played an enormously significant rôle in the German history of ideas going back to the Enlightenment and, particularly, to German Idealism, of which Hegel's *Philosophy of History* represents perhaps the most striking manifestation.

There were always elements and tendencies within East German literature that were critical (of society, the state, the system as such), and they became increasingly pronounced towards the

Seventies. The seeds of this dissent were however already contained in a hidden and muted form in works of earlier years: this time was the period of the first important GDR literary phase, the 'construction-literature' (Aufbauliteratur), marked by official 'socialist realism' and the almost obsessive stressing of increasing productivity as a 'national goal' that literature was supposed to serve and support.[9]

The year 1961 marked an important watershed in the history of the GDR: the Berlin wall was built ('anti-fascist protective barrier') and consequently East Germany entered a new phase of consolidation within and slowly increasing recognition without. One of the consequences of this process of consolidation which resulted in more self-isolation *within* the GDR was that East German literature began to focus significantly on internal issues and perspectives. This introversion in literary texts runs parallel to the GDR's resolute programme of self-sufficiency in order to defend itself against the (useful) enemy represented by the West German revisionist imperialism as well as nurturing the pretty illusion of living in a 'better', more protected and community-like German state, a state whose increasing economic power together with its disciplined and committed people would inevitably result in the eventual byzantine paradise of a prosperous socialism determined and controlled from above, egalitarian by decree, by the will of the party. At the same time this concentration on internal problems and phenomena shows, as far as the writers are concerned, a strong urge to participate in, intervene in, and help shape their socialist state that presented such a challenge as well as a unique historical opportunity. For the majority of authors the GDR was, at least until the Seventies, still the 'better' of the two Germanys, the more promising and more sincere attempt to fulfil the quest for a peaceful, humane and equitable society within the framework of socialism.[10] The power of this utopian ideal and its influence on GDR authors forms part of the very foundations on which the GDR was built as a result of Germany's most inhuman and barbaric years under Hitler. Its effect on the literary and intellectual scene cannot in my opinion be overestimated, especially considering the emotional and bitter negative reactions of the Seventies and Eighties when it became increasingly obvious that the dreams and hopes had turned sour.

The new literary developments in the Sixties exhibited a momentous new emphasis on the 'I', a rediscovery of the self which implied the self-realisation of the individual within society. A result of this was the tendency to focus on the tensions of the individual in society and the problematic of the relationship between the individual and society. This includes the difficulties of adaptation for the individual as well as at least some of the inherent

contradictions of a socialist society. So, in other words, the whole problematic of subjectivity (and the 'right' to encounter it) became an important issue both for the authors themselves and for the whole system of direct and indirect tutelage, censorship and spiritual control by the tentacles of the regime. Representative of these new tendencies in the early Sixties are works by Erwin Strittmatter (*Ole Bienkopp*), Erik Neutsch (*Spur der Steine*), Hermann Kant (*Die Aula*) and Christa Wolf (*Der geteilte Himmel*).

The critical tendencies that are exemplified to a greater or lesser extent by these books and many others that were to follow, and that formed one consequence of the shift of focus towards domestic problems and topics, must be seen in perspective: these criticisms do *not* as a rule constitute a genuine and comprehensive 'Systemkritik' — a critique of the whole socio-political system of the GDR. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of these mostly younger writers were at that historical stage and in many cases still into the Seventies firmly committed to and anchored in a socialist principle — even if not necessarily the kind of socialism their state represented. With more critical elements contained in the literary texts the number of books that could not be published in the GDR started to increase gradually during the Sixties. This in turn led to the rather peculiar and somewhat grotesque phenomenon that a number of texts that were written in the GDR could only be published in the Federal Republic.[11]

Starting in the Sixties in West Germany, there was a noticeable tendency to champion and 'celebrate' literary works from GDR authors that could be interpreted and exploited from a Western point of view as anti-communist and opposed to the GDR system.[12] That this signified and underlined, by implication, the 'obvious' superiority of the Federal Republic's socio-economic and political system was a welcome by-product for a liberal, 'free' and market-orientated society that had already irrevocably reduced even the most vociferous and sincere critical literary voices to the rôle of 'Vorzeigeidioten' (unwilling stooges), that Heinrich Böll spoke of with bitter sarcasm. That a chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany called these critical authors publicly 'little pipsqueaks' ('kleine Pinscher'), only confirmed their social and public impotence in the western country — a circumstance that would have been unimaginable in the GDR.

The year 1971 when the Eighth Party-Congress of the ruling SED (Socialist United Party of Germany) was held seemed at long last to herald significant changes in GDR cultural policy towards greater openness and liberalisation.[13] The background for this was provided by Federal Republic chancellor Willy Brandt's far reaching 'Ostpolitik' which resulted in a 'Basic Treaty' between the two German states and, consequently increased international

recognition of and respectability for the GDR which, together with Erich Honecker's assumption of power, helped to create a self-assuredness on the part of East Germany that had been absent thus far. Another factor that has to be taken into account for that period concerns the economic and management changes initiated in 1971. The GDR, having achieved relative prosperity by comparison with its Eastern neighbours, now aimed at imitating Western models as far as technology, industrial rationalisation, production of consumer goods and increasing consumption by the individual was concerned.

In 1971 East Germany appeared to be moving subtantially towards a more open phase at least in the field of culture and the arts when the new party chief, Honecker, declared publicly that '. . . if one sets out from the firm positions of socialism there can be no taboos in the field of literature and art'.[14] The selectively tolerant attitude of the regime resulted in more space and publicity for literature that revealed critical attitudes, as well as a diversity of styles and positions. A book by Ulrich Plenzdorf, *The New Sorrows of Young W.*, which appeared in 1972 and became a huge success in East as well as West Germany, exemplifies this apparent new shift towards liberalisation by the authorities and, at the same time, the critical tendencies of younger GDR authors. The young hero of the text, loosely based on Goethe's erstwhile European bestseller *The Sorrows of Young Werther* of 1774, does not and cannot adapt to the GDR society and its norms and values and thus displays distinctly critical attitudes.

It is not surprising then that the Seventh Writers' Congress in 1973 confirmed the new developments and changes of perspectives — it marks the 'official' end of the subordination of literature to politics and, consequently, the emancipation of literature from the party dictate and the programmatic task of fulfilling a leading rôle in the establishing of a socialist society.[15] It was a final farewell to the erstwhile dependency and submission under the party ideology, a farewell perhaps best expressed by Hermann Kant at that writers' congress: 'Literature is not responsible for the state of the world'.[16]

In practice the new selective openness and tolerance of the system showed, however, that under the surface the repressive structures of the system still continued — even if sanctions tended to be more hidden and subtle and differentiated. It was, after all, the regime that decided what the 'firm positions of socialism'' that Honecker spoke of, meant in concrete terms regarding specific authors. Poet and song-writer Wolf Biermann obviously did not possess that solid foundation, nor did Reiner Kunze and others.[17] Even prominent writers like Volker Braun, Rainer Kirsch and Heiner Müller suffered from censorship and the banning of certain

works.[18] Yet undoubtedly there was a more liberal atmosphere, and books appeared in the Seventies that could not have been published during the Sixties.[19] GDR literature became on the whole quite markedly 'modern' during the Seventies — showing complex, differentiated, reflexive, subjective and sceptical ways of writing that had been largely absent before.[20] But this type of repressive and ultimately cynical tolerance, which was essentially arbitrary and tactical rather than the result of a genuine change in thinking by those in power, eventually caused even more bitterness, resentment and hostility among the considerable number of GDR authors who, in the course of the Seventies, either defected or were driven into exile to the West. The apparent turning point and decisive signal was the case of Wolf Biermann in 1976, when after a concert tour in the FRG, he was refused re-entry into the GDR and had his citizenship revoked. In a shocked response strongly worded letters of protest were signed by most prominent and many lesser known GDR writers.[21] The consequences of Biermann's expulsion were quite significant and far reaching — a gradual estrangement from the regime on the part of a considerable number of writers. In a way this marked the beginning of the end for the willingness of these authors to defend or even tacitly approve the system. The seemingly benevolent and humanist face of the 'real existing socialism' had once again and decisively revealed the stalinist, anti-democratic and authoritarian features underneath.

In the following period the state machinery introduced more differentiated sanctions, including the granting of one-way visas to the FRG and stiff fines for authors who published in West Germany without prior permission by the GDR authorities.[22] Many of these new 'exiles', some of whom were openly anti-socialist (though many others were not), found the process of adaptation to life in the Federal Republic difficult and even painful. Often the literature they produced in the FRG tended to look back at the GDR.[23] What must be stressed in this connection is the fact that for most GDR writers, including many of those who stayed in the GDR but were also critical of the regime, this state had until now been the source of a substantial part of their social and cultural identity. Although many, if not most, of these writers had become increasingly disillusioned by the repressive, dogmatic and inflexible regime, the fundamental concept of a 'better' German state with a pacifist, caring and humane society was still powerful — especially if seen against the 'elbow' society of the consumerist and ethically corrupted Federal Republic. Even though they rejected it, and perhaps even especially because of this, the GDR provided a decisive obstacle and love–hate challenge against which many writers could grind in their literary

works. These forced or voluntary exiles and dissidents had previously formed an integral part of society in the GDR; they had mattered if only because the state would turn its repressive machinery against them in order to silence them. The regime showed that it felt threatened and challenged by their writings, thus confirming their public and social relevance. Again, one must recognise that at least a certain ideological agreement with the principles of the GDR formed a precondition for the writings of many authors. That this consensus in principle gradually came to be questioned and critically reflected does not diminish its formative and creative powers. In the Federal Republic of Germany, characterised by a liberal free-market permissiveness and consumerist tolerance, these GDR authors were quickly swallowed up by the literary industry and its seemingly unlimited capacity to absorb and neutralise even the most fundamentally critical and rebellious texts. Once the emigré writers' value as anti-communist propaganda had been exhausted, they became mere commodities in an over-saturated market.

A few of the more famous works by GDR authors who were critical of the GDR were, although written in the GDR, actually never intended to be published anywhere but in West Germany — in other words they were written specifically for the FRG. Reiner Kunze is a good example — while still resident in the GDR, he was hailed by the right wing media in West Germany as a martyr and champion dissident, having managed to market his image quite professionally, tailoring it to meet the reception-expectations of the literary scene in the FRG. Kunze, born in 1933, published from 1963 onwards in the Federal Republic yet only left the GDR as late as 1977.[24] When, in 1969, he published another volume of poetry in West Germany without even having tried to publish it in the GDR he received a total publication ban but was still able to publish in the FRG.[25] Kunze had realised at an early stage that his market value in West Germany would be greatly increased if he stayed on in East Germany, keeping his attractive dissident image intact. He even remained a member of the Writers' Association until his eventual expulsion in 1976, the year before his move to the FRG. It is quite interesting to note that Kunze has produced hardly anything of consequence since he left the GDR.

When one considers the circumstances of some authors who were received enthusiastically by the literary industry in West Germany in the Seventies and Eighties one cannot but perceive a certain schizophrenic irony: the critical quality and challenging sensibility of their works are rooted in the reality of the GDR with all its contradictions and disillusions, yet they were received 'adequately' only in the FRG.[26] These authors drew their motivation and commitment from the continuous challenge of the

GDR but at least some of their literary productions were 'effective' only in West Germany — and effective necessarily in a very different way.

Of tremendous, if indirect, importance for GDR literature was the increasingly noticeable development of East Germany along the lines of high-tech rationality and cost-effectiveness thinking that characterised the scientific technological revolution of some Western countries and the Federal Republc in particular. To many intellectuals and artists the GDR came to resemble more and more a (late) capitalist technocratic mass civilisation marked by ever increasing automation, the ideology of rationalization with its dictatorship of functional rationality, a very high degree of division of labour, state-supported development of a consumer expectation and the stressing of a career-orientated and competitive mentality, all of which seemed to be heading in the opposite direction to the goal of a non-exploitative, just and egalitarian society that the GDR had set out to achieve. Many artists — and the writers in particular — saw these developments as a proof that something was horribly wrong in their supposedly socialist state. It is small wonder then that many writers found increasing difficulty in continuing to define their own identity within a system in which they had little confidence — and yet to which they had no obvious alternative. East German literature of the Seventies and Eighties shows increasing irritation with and criticism of the blind belief in progress and technology of the scientific-technological civilisation, and thus reveals interesting parallels with West German 'counterparts'.[27] In the wider context, mistrust and denunciation of technological progress and scientific-rational thinking as something inhuman and quasi-metaphysically threatening, represents a very Germanic tradition in cultural life and the history of ideas . . .

All these developments are reflected in the GDR narrative prose as a sobering up, a wilting of hopes and an experiencing of bitter disappointment and disillusion. When East German author Karl-Heinz Jakobs declared in 1979: 'I can no longer see the system's ability to learn' ('Ich kann die Lernfähigkeit des Systems in der DDR nicht mehr erkennen'),[28] not only did he mark, probably unknowingly, the beginning of the end as far as certain literary endeavours and perspectives were concerned, but in addition he sounded the virtual death-knell of the regime's future — and this happened a full ten years before the people of the GDR realised their 'gentle revolution' in autumn 1989. Once again, literature constituted the writing on the wall early enough but no one seemed at that stage to be able to recognise it as such.

Some quite critical and defiant books continued, however, to appear in the GDR, among them important works by female

writers like Irmtraud Morgner, Christine Wolter and Christa Wolf. Characteristic of the literature of these years and well into the Eighties is the importance of imagination and of fantastic elements; there is also a tendency to write mostly negative utopias or to rewrite old myths, which only underlines the deep resignation and exhaustion of hopes of so many writers. As for many GDR authors now living in West Germany, the fact that the GDR was seen as beyond hope and repair did not stop them from insisting on some utopian form of socialism. Part of the dilemma for these authors was that while they regarded the country in which they lived and worked as 'foreign' and distant from their identity, yet they could not — and would not — return to the country they regarded as their own.

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NOTES

1. See for instance *Fachdienst Germanistik*, 4/1990, 4 and 3/1990, 1–4.
2. See also Horst Krüger 'Der Schriftsteller in der Opposition', *Literatur zwischen links und rechts*, Ehrenwirth: München 1962, 8–28.
3. See *Literatur zwischen links und rechts*, 8–28, and the anthology *Kein schöner Land*, Rowohlt: Reinbek 1979, which is severely critical of West German realities of the Seventies.
4. See also Fritz J. Raddatz: *Traditionen und Tendenzen*. Materialien zur Literatur der DDR, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt/M. 1972, 51–58.
5. *Traditionen und Tendenzen*, 51f.
6. See for instance Frank Trommler 'Die Kulturpolitik der DDR und die kulturelle Tradition des deutschen Sozialismus', *Literatur und Literaturtheorie in der DDR*, ed. P.U. Hohendahl und P. Herminghouse, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt/M. [2]1981, 61.
7. Quotations taken from *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, ed. W. Beutin *et al.*, Metzler: Stuttgart [2]1984, 403 (my translation).
8. See *DDR Handbuch*, Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik: Köln 1975, 528.
9. *DDR Handbuch*, 530 and 532.
10. Compare various conferences and congresses of the Writers' Association, see *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 450–468 and *DDR Handbuch*, 532.
11. For instance poetry by Reiner Kunze and Wolf Biermann, novels by Fritz Rudolf Fries, Manfred Bieler, Werner Bräunig and others.
12. See for instance Manfred Grunert's Résumé of Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* in the West German pocket-book edition (dtv: München 1973).
13. See *DDR Handbuch*, 491.
14. *DDR Handbuch*, 491 (my translation).
15. See *DDR Handbuch*, 530–531.
16. *DDR Handbuch*, 532 (my translation).
17. See *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 466.
18. *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 468.
19. *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 465–468.
20. See also *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 475, and *DDR Handbuch*, 530.
21. Compare *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 469.
22. See *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 470–471.
23. See also *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 471.
24. See *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 463.
25. *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 461–463.
26. For instance texts by Monika Maron, Heiner Müller, Christa Wolf and others.
27. Compare texts by Irmtraud Morgner, Christa Wolf, Thomas Brasch, Franz Fühmann, Monika Maron.
28. Quotation taken from *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*,476 (my translation).

HUMAN RIGHTS AND LITERATURE: SOLZHENITSYN AND PASTERNAK

by ANNA DIEGEL

Violations of human rights in the Soviet Union reached an unprecedented peak during the Stalin era from 1929 to 1953, and particularly during the great purge years beween 1934 and 1939. For millions of Soviet citizens, the concrete meaning of human rights abuses is expressed in the mechanism of imprisonment in jails and concentration camps. Though Stalin had been publicly declared an enemy of the people, abuses continued up to the present. Yet in the first decades after Stalin's death and during the years of cold war the question of violation of individual rights received little international attention. A turning point was the 1966 trial and condemnation to labour camps of the writers Sinyavsky and Daniel, which raised a storm of protest abroad, as it did in Russia. In 1975 Amnesty International prepared a 150 page document with evidence on the treatment and conditions of prisoners of conscience in Russia. During the last two decades the question of human rights in the Soviet Union has become the subject of relentless investigation and commentary abroad and the focus of the dissent movement among the *intelligentsia* at home.

One of the most important voices of protest since the late Sixties has been that of the Soviet humanitarian and scientist, Andrei Sakharov. He was a *glasnost*-oriented activist very much in the manner and spirit of the nineteenth century 'Westernizers' (as opposed to Slavophiles, the patriotic, religious-minded idealists who called for a return to the values of Russia's past) and he denounced the abuses in numerous letters and petitions and spelled out for the government the reforms necessary to achieve 'Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom'. Sakharov was subjected to years of persecution and exile. Since *perestroika* he was rehabilitated and even elected to the new People's Congress shortly before his death.

However, the concern about human rights abuses, and particularly about the arbitrariness and cruelty of the punishment of dissenters, was first voiced in the Soviet Union and abroad chiefly by literature: since the late Fifties personal accounts, novels, stories and poems have been read by Russians in *samizdat* (the underground press consisting of typewritten and carbon-copied scripts circulated among friends) and some of these texts have found their way abroad and been published there. Most of the dissident writers have met with harsh punishment, ranging from internment in psychiatric hospitals or labour camps to banishment. The reason for writers being so abominably treated in Russia is

paradoxical and has historical roots: in Russia writers, to a far greater extent than in the West, are *important*. They have traditionally been regarded as a source of knowledge and as moral educators, exposing social injustice or providing instruction for a better life. But more importantly, many Russian writers have been concerned not only with 'what is to be done', but with the ultimate question of 'what men live by'. Their subject is *pravda*, truth in an idealistic sense. They ask basic questions about the meaning of life and about man's function in the universe and thus remind readers that thinking about politics is inseparable from thinking about ultimate values. This is why they are considered dangerous and why their role, which is still taken seriously in Russia, is essential in the battle against the violations of human rights.

Less than ten years after the death of Stalin, during the first 'thaw' in the official attitude to literature instituted by Krushchev, two works were published which were to have a major influence on the dissent movement. Both of them are the works of passionate 'Slavophiles' — or at least, admirers of Russia's spiritual past. The first book was Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, published in Italy in 1957, to tremendous praise abroad. It is at first difficult to see why the novel was rejected by the journal *Novy Mir*, to which Pasternak first ingenuously submitted it for publication. *Doctor Zhivago* does not make any sensational revelations. It is not even a systematic attack on the regime in the style of the works of 'denunciation literature' in vogue during the 'thaw'. It seems to be a somewhat haphazard and fragmentary chronicle of events and situations which every Russian citizen who had lived between the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and the Second World War would have experienced: for example, the first decrees of the Bolshevik government, the New Economic Policy, fighting in the Carpathians during the second year of the Second World War. It describes the well-known experiences of economic hardship and rationing, or common sights such as charred fields and untended villages. Curiously, it contains hardly any mention of the Stalinist terror. Why then the uproar? *Doctor Zhivago* soon became one of the hottest *samizdat* properties in the Soviet Union, particularly after the famous 'Pasternak Affair' in 1958, when Pasternak rejected the Nobel Prize under threat of exile, a year before his death. Even though he was a 'cosmopolitan' writer steeped in European culture, he could not face the prospect of leaving his beloved Russia. *Doctor Zhivago* was published for the first time in the Soviet Union in 1988.

The second literary event was Solzhenitsyn's short novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which received immediate success at home. In this case the work was published in the Soviet Union by *Novy Mir* in 1962 and its appearance was sanctioned by

Krushchev. The problem-free publication of Solzhenitsyn's novel is explained by the fact that it deals specifically with the inhuman conditions in a camp under *Stalin*, whose image Krushchev was interested in blackening at the time. Solzhenitsyn, however, soon fell out with the government with his subsequent works denouncing the system, and was eventually expelled from the Writers' Union. After accepting the Nobel Prize in 1970 and publishing *The Gulag Archipelago* in Paris in 1974, he was finally arrested and banished from the Soviet Union, the harshest punishment that could be meted out to such an ardent patriot. Recently Solzhenitsyn's works were published almost integrally in the Soviet Union and newspapers are calling for his return from exile.

Beyond their love for Mother Russia, Solzhenitsyn and Pasternak seem to have little in common. Solzhenitsyn, the younger writer and unknown until the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, is the more prolific of the two and wrote unceasingly, under the most appalling circumstances. He survived twelve years of prison, labour camp and exile (not to mention cancer) and remains an outspoken activist, having in the last decade joined Sakharov's Human Rights Committee, donated his royalties to the families of prisoners and written petitions and letters of protest to the government. His writing, even at the most artistic level, is explicitly political and like Tolstoy he distributes prescriptions for the righteous life. Pasternak, on the other hand, led a relatively untroubled life. He was a well known and respected poet before Stalin's access to power. During the years of terror he was mysteriously spared and wrote almost nothing. Even though he did occasionally act to help his friends (for instance once in a telephone call he pleaded with Stalin for the release of the poet Osip Mandelstam),[1] his political behaviour, particularly in the case of his rejection of the Nobel Prize, was criticized by some dissidents and by Solzhenitsyn in particular[2] for its lack of firmness. Pasternak's only concern seemed to be with art and nature, and he had no wish of being a 'guru' of any kind.

Yet in spite of their different personalities and approaches to political problems both writers are considered giants in the protest movement that has advanced the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union during the last decades.[3] Solzhenitsyn and Pasternak are not merely representatives of a political position. They are '*artists* of the written word', as even the authorities in Russia respectfully call writers.[4] As such, both fulfil the messianic task Russian readers traditionally expect from literature. Not only, like Sakharov, do they offer firm practical or moral guidelines for solving problems, but by using art as their medium and showing the effect that history has on private lives, they provide readers with a

larger, more complex framework and lead them to ask themselves essential questions about the meaning of life and about man's position in the universe.

Solzhenitsyn's concern with the violation of human rights is present throughout his work. A good part of his work is dedicated to the description of prisons and prison life during and after the Stalin era: *The First Circle, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and especially *The Gulag Archipelago* all depict the inhumanity of incarceration, where privations and torture rob most men of their dignity and integrity. Solzhenitsyn stresses the arbitrariness of prison sentences and conditions and raises the questions of why people are imprisoned. Again and again, he makes the point that prisons are an instrument of absolute power and have nothing to do with justice or the nature of the crime committed.

Solzhenitsyn furthermore suggests that the iniquitous prison conditions are a reflection of life in Soviet society in general, where the arbitrary use of power frequently crushes people's spirit and makes them into puppets of the state. One example of a man broken by the system outside the prisons is Shulubin in *Cancer Ward*, who has abdicated all human dignity in order to preserve his life and that of his family.

But the chief impact of Solzhenitsyn's writing is not so much as 'denunciation literature', important as this aspect of his work may be. What his readers best remember is not the lies and tortures, the hypocrites and the broken wretches, but those individuals who *survive* the outrages of arrest and captivity, morally and spiritually: Ivan Denisovich, the simple man whose incorruptible moral sense and love of work gets him through 'one day'; Kostoglotov in *Cancer Ward*, and his proud, independent and questioning spirit, unbroken by his years in labour camps; the numerous prisoners in the Gulag who refuse to submit to the moral degradation that the system tries to impose upon them; Gleb Nerzhin in *The First Circle*, whose passion for truth makes him voluntarily leave the relative safety of the *sharashka* for one of the terrible camps of the Gulag. These survivors embody Solzhenitsyn's conception of human dignity and provide part of his answer to the Tolstoyan question of 'what men live by', formulated in *Cancer Ward*.

To these people, whom Kostoglotov recognized as brothers because they would 'smile while others were serious or while others laughed',[5] suffering has taught wisdom about the value of life: slowly savouring food, seeing an apricot tree in bloom, being able to stretch out one's legs in a crowded cell, these are pleasures which only those who have known the experience of the closeness of death can appreciate. Privations have given them the power to restrict and control their desires. The moral survivors also know the joy of work, which, like Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn regards as a

purifying discipline. Most of all, they value human fellowship and understand that there is no place for envy or anger in a world where every day 'great-souled people are being dragged out to be shot'.[6] Solzhenitsyn's 'survivors' are able to celebrate life and have achieved inner serenity because they have not allowed the integrity of their personality to be reduced by the inhuman system under which they live. All of them, to a greater or lesser extent, are aware of a spiritual dimension to life. Shukov, the illiterate peasant who has known nothing but godless Marxist ideology, senses a mysterious force emanating from the believer, Alyosha the Baptist, one of his fellow prisoners. Gleb Nerzhin's choice is the expression of his growing spiritual awareness. The protagonist of *The Gulag Archipelago* who never tires of affirming the victory of the spirit over the body exclaims: 'My name? I am the Interstellar Wanderer! They have tightly bound my body, but my soul is beyond their power'.[7] (Even the broken Shulubin in *Cancer Ward* dimly senses within himself 'something else, sublime, quite indestructible, some tiny fragment of the universal Spirit'.)[8]

Solzhenitsyn urges his fellow men to look inward for the solution to the problems of the violation of human rights. In his 1970 Nobel Prize speech he stresses the existence of an absolute, universal and divinely inspired concept of justice which, according to him, the Marxist regime has violated. In the same speech, he equates Marxist revolutionaries with Dostoevsky's *Devils*[9] and appoints the artist as guardian of divine truth. 'In Russian literature', he says, 'there has long been the inborn idea that a writer can do much for his people, and that it is his duty'. The writer must follow this calling and not 'depart into a world of his own creation or into the wide spaces of subjective capriciousness, leaving the real world to mercenaries, or even madmen'.[10]

Whether or not one agrees with this dogmatic conception of art as the vehicle for ideas is irrelevant. The irritation the Westerner may feel at the self-righteous disdain with which Solzhenitsyn sometimes treats foreigners who have not suffered the soul-purifying experience of imprisonment or terror, at his nationalist bigotry or at the inconsistencies contained in some of his more recent public pronouncements is also beside the point. Essential is that Solzhenitsyn, in putting art at the service of the human rights cause, shows his readers that to right the wrong it is necessary to ask the basic question of 'what men live by'. This is a question which Westerners also might well ponder.

The case of Pasternak as champion of human rights is more complex. Unlike Solzhenitsyn he seems to feel no urge to enlighten his fellow men. In fact, at first sight he seems to be one of these writers who delve into 'the wide spaces of subjective capriciousness' and appears strangely lacking in social conscience.

A widely read, well-informed intellectual, he witnessed the revolution and the Stalinist period, having written little more than poems about love and nature. However, the fact that in his youth he had once been (like most cultured liberals of his time and like his hero Zhivago) *in favour* of the new regime, having published a eulogy of Lenin in his 1923 poem 'The Lofty Illness' and an epic poem about the revolution (*Nineteen Five*, published 1927), indicates that he was not as politically innocent as he has sometimes been made out to be.

Even though he was a mere observer in the tragedy of his time, a man of Pasternak's calibre could not have been unaware of the abuses perpetrated by the government. Yet in *Doctor Zhivago*, his only novel written after years of near silence, there is almost nothing about the terror of the Stalin period and hardly any specific criticism of the regime. The only allusion to Stalin as a 'pock-marked Caligula'[11] passes almost unnoticed. There are a few 'offensive' passages such as the remark about the inefficiency of revolutionaries who are 'ungifted' and 'aren't at home in anything except change and turmoil'.[12] But these remarks are handed down from a lofty distance and Pasternak makes it clear that he *chooses* to have no part in politics and wishes to remain merely human. Political events and sentiments appear in *Doctor Zhivago* as mere aberrations or barbaric atavisms.

This was Pasternak's unpardonable offence, which led to his eventual official disgrace. During the 'new wave' of criticism against Stalin, a book like Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was considered acceptable because it happened to suit the current policies of the leaders. Pasternak, on the other hand, simply dismisses the task of 'denunciation literature' as an endeavour unworthy of his attention and in this way ignores the civic function expected from the writer in a state where everything is determined by politics. *Doctor Zhivago* is, however, unquestionably a political novel. By leaving the unspeakable unspoken and deliberately choosing instead to write about trees, to use Brecht's phrase,[13] Pasternak confirms his life-long assertion that the significance of human life ultimately lies outside of the historical problems of his time and that it is the individual's right to choose his own values. After his initial burst of fervour and subsequent loss of faith, Pasternak consistently refused to acknowledge the importance of the Revolution's mission and this is the reason why, during the Thirties, people were put in prison for disseminating his poetry.[14]

Pasternak's concern to defend man's integrity or individualism (in its original sense of 'in-divisibility' pertaining to a completely self-centred and separate being)[15] lies behind Doctor Zhivago's actions in the novel: Zhivago chooses to abandon the medical

profession at a time when his services would be most needed by the community and prefers an underground and fugitive existence. His steady refusal to give up his personal liberty for the sake of any communal interest makes him into the negation, not only of a Soviet 'positive hero', but also of the *homo politicus* every Russian is expected to be.

What does interest Pasternak's hero is poetry and life. (The name Zhivago comes from the Russian word for life, *zhizn* or more precisely *zhiv(oi)*, alive.) Like Solzhenitsyn's heroes Zhivago has the capacity of enjoying intensely every act of living ('. . . he longed to thank life, thank existence itself, directly, face to face, to thank life in person'.)[16] 'Man', he says, 'is born to live, not to prepare for life',[17] thus denigrating the revolutionaries who are planning the 'radiant' future. The most memorable scenes in *Doctor Zhivago* are descriptions of everyday life: Zhivago writing poems and his lover Lara attending to housework — gathering fuel, gardening, drawing water. Zhivago is absorbed by his love for Lara, whose simplest act appears beautiful, whether she is peeling potatoes or reading a book. The joy of living which the poet feels in her presence, which leads him to reject every family or communal obligation, is the essence of *Doctor Zhivago*'s moral and spiritual message: the supreme good is man's celebration of the marvel of life, which is an endlessly reiterated challenge to death.

In the same way, the poet is also fascinated by nature, which provides a constant against which the accidents of politics seem irrelevant. As in the case of Solzhenitsyn's heroes, Zhivago's life-celebrating attitude results from his awareness of the existence of a cosmic spiritual power. Pasternak distinguishes this awareness from the emotion provided by the comforts of religion. While attending a funeral, Zhivago feels the presence of this spiritual power: 'and there was nothing in common with devoutness in the emotion he felt of dependence on the supreme forces of earth and heaven, to which he bowed as his true progenitors'.[18] Because he understands that his wholeness — 'integrity', 'individuality' — includes a spiritual dimension, Zhivago is able to become a creative human being. By implication, Pasternak is saying that the life-destroying force of the Revolution is caused by Marxism's ignorance of man's link with the universe.

Basically, this is the same message as Solzhenitsyn's. Although there appears to be a great distance between Pasternak, the unworldly poet living in a state-sponsored dacha in Peredelkino, and Solzhenitsyn, the long-suffering activist (or between Zhivago and, say, Gleb Nerzhin), both writers share the same conception of the artist's mission: he is to understand and reveal man as a *whole* being, related to a cosmic design and unfettered by restrictive political ideologies. This conception is reflected in Pasternak's

remarks on writing. Even though, unlike Solzhenitsyn, he says nothing about the utilitarian function of art, there is no doubt about the loftiness of his purpose. In a letter to the translator Eugene Kayden he says the following: 'Art is not simply a description of life, but a setting forth of the uniqueness of being . . . The significant writer of his epoch (and I want no other beside him) is a revelation, a representation of the unknown, unrepeatable uniqueness of reality'.[19]

Is Zhivago only a 'prerevolutionary self-sufficient intellectual, "refined", futile and full of grudges and resentments at the abomination of a proletarian revolution', as one faction of critics would have it?[20] If this were the case it is unlikely that Pasternak would have had such a large following and been 'seen by many as a last surviving focus of moral resistance to the infinitely cruel and merciless master of the country's destiny'.[21] He owed this position to his idealism and to his obstinate refusal to compromise his integrity by accepting a reduction of his poet's vocation.

Pasternak was, after all, a poet and an intellectual and wrote only about experiences which were familiar to him. Had he been interned in a labour camp, his life-celebrating, soul-searching attitude would probably have made him a brother of 'those who smile while others were serious or while others laughed', described in Solzhenitsyn's novels. As it is, Pasternak's aloofness is far from being indifference: *Doctor Zhivago*, in which he sets forth precisely the reason for his aloofness — his total disregard for the anti-spiritual Marxist ideology, which he views as an aberration of history — is his testimonial of his concern for Russia's plight. Like Solzhenitsyn he urges men to look inward and to ask themselves fundamental questions about their ultimate values.

The very 'Russian' literary voices of Solzhenitsyn and Pasternak, added to that of Sakharov, the Western-minded scientist, are leading ones in the chorus of dissent that has been heard from the Soviet Union during the past decades. Solzhenitsyn's is that of the mostly self-educated man, whose harsh life has brought him in direct contact with the abuses of human rights in his country. Pasternak is the cultured 'cloud dweller'whose experience is chiefly intellectual. Yet both share the same concern for Russia's problems, and both look for answers not simply at a political level, but at a transcendental one. The spiritual renewal which is taking place in the Soviet Union at the present time owes a great deal to their literary bequest.

The soul-searching questioning of Solzhenitsyn and Pasternak may be what is needed to fulfil what Italo Calvino defines as the function of literature: to 'guarantee the survival of what we call "human" in a world where everything appears inhuman'. Not 'human' in the meaning that Calvino says the word has acquired in

the West — that is, 'temperamental, emotional, ingenuous' — but in the sense of 'austere', introspective and consciously looking for truth.[22]

NOTES

1. Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope against Hope* (New York: Atheneum, 1976), p. 25.
2. Yuri Glazov, *The Russian Mind since Stalin's Death* (Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), p. 166.
3. Ibid., p. 158.
4. Andrei Sinyavsky, 'The Literary Process in Russia', *Kontinent I*, Vladimir Maximov, ed. (London: Andre Deutsch, 1976), p. 74. My italics.
5. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward* (London: Penguin Books, 1971).
6. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, Bk. II* (London: Collins & Harvill Press, 1974), p. 591.
7. Ibid., p. 517.
8. Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward*, p. 595.
9. Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Prize Lecture 1970*, (London: Stenvalley Press, 1982), p. 37.
10. Ibid., p. 35.
11. Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1975), p. 17.
12. Ibid., p. 266.
13. In the poem *An die Nachgeborenen*, 1938: 'What kind of times are they, when/A talk about trees is almost a crime/Because it implies silence about so many horrors?' Trsl. by John Willet in *Bertolt Brecht — Poems 1913–1956* (London/New York: Methuen, 1976), p. 318.
14. Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 352.
15. Fyodor Stepun, 'Boris Pasternak', in Victor Erlich, ed., *Pasternak — A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1987), p. 123.
16. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, p. 350.
17. Ibid., p. 266.
18. Ibid., p. 434.
19. Quoted by Eugene Kayden in 'Pasternak on Poetry', preface to Boris Pasternak, *Poems* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. vii.
20. Isaac Deutscher, 'Pasternak and the Calendar of the Revolution', in Donald Davie & Angela Livingstone, eds., *Pasternak — Modern Judgments* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1969), p. 256.
21. Max Hayward, 'Meetings with Pasternak' in *Writers in Russia 1917–1978* (London: Harvill Press, 1983), p. 187.
22. Italo Calvino, 'Right and Wrong Political Uses of Literature' in *The Literature Machine* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987), p. 95. Everything in quotation marks is Calvino's.

THE UNRESOLVED SHIBBOLETH: SYDNEY CLOUTS AND THE PROBLEMS OF AN AFRICAN POETRY

by SUSAN JOUBERT

Sydney Clouts, a poet described by J.M. Coetzee as 'the purest poetic talent to have worked in South Africa since Roy Campbell' (*Die Vaderland*) left behind him an *oeuvre* that is a testament above all to his sense of desire for, and distance from, Africa.

Clouts's is a poetry peculiar for its unrelenting concentration on the depiction of nature, to the exclusioin of the socio-political. I would argue that such narrowness of vision arises precisely as a result of the essentially 'political', in that Clouts's own stated sense of himself as 'a South African Jewish writer writing in English' and therefore 'not aboriginally African' (Butler, *English in Africa* 88–89) causes him desperately to seek reconciliation with the land of his birth, whilst at the same time attempting to deny the part he, as a product of colonialism and privilege, has played and has yet to play in the formation of its contemporary political situation. Exclusive concentration on the depiction of the landscape appears to afford reconciliation between the poet and the land for Clouts, without the necessity of having to enter the arena of the 'political' and so admit his own culpability. This project becomes increasingly undercut by the role language comes to assume in the poetry, however: language asserts itself in the later poetry as unable to effect a unity between the poet and the African landscape. In the later poems, subversion of his poetic premise through the operation of language within the poems reveals Clouts's increasing sense of his inability to forge an African identity for himself. The poetry is finally betrayed by the process of language itself, which functions ultimately to render Clouts voiceless.

In his early poetry (written before 1954) Clouts is primarily concerned with evolving a metaphysics of sympathy between the poet and the African landscape. In Clouts's poetry the paramountcy of identification with the ontological primacy of the object takes on a particular significance: immersion into the African environment is the most important component of his poetic project because for Clouts the landscape is the key to integration with the African world. The depiction of such landscape and the natural objects that comprise it must illustrate Clouts's suitability to belong in such an environment. The object must be afforded prominent status in the poem as a result.

In a poem such as 'Epic' (*Collected Poems* 67), the supremacy of the original object over 'secondary' human attempts to describe or

contain it is emphatically given voice. In the poem, pointedly *not* written in epic form, human knowledge which is the 'piled harvest', is shown to be inconsequential and powerless when confronted with primordial, consuming fire:

> 'I . . . and I . . . have seen
> the knower and the known become the wood
> of the roaring skyline of this neighbourhood.'

The poem would seem to suggest that objects receive sufficient force by simply existing and then disintegrating in time, divorced from the extraneous figural 'truths' extended to them by the poetic sensibility. 'Lifebelt Post' (*CP* 109) is a poem where the title is metaphoric and ironic as a result: Clouts remarked of the poem 'You can't save life with metaphor' (Butler interview 1975). Indeed, the poem ends with a refutation of the function of the poet:

> when I walk into a room shall all
> its objects be accomplices?
> or walking out are stars not stars enough
> without this heavier multiple of grief?

Clouts's attempts to deliver Africa on the page become increasingly problematized as he writes in the late 1950s and early 1960s: in certain poems the natural object appears increasingly resistant to the poet and to the poem. Exaggerated concern with the uncontaminated object freed from poetic appropriation marks the loss of a sense of the reconciling possibilities of the poem for Clouts, and the location of a fair number of poems characterized by this feature in the 'Unpublished Poems (1966–82)' section of *Collected Poems* might point to the dissatisfaction Clouts felt towards such poems.

In this section several poems that assert the power of the object follow one another in close succession, and each of the poems, in its own way, betrays Clouts's lack of poetic confidence. 'I breathed the first shivers of daylight' (*CP* 124) is a poem where Clouts implies that he, as poet, discards the task of interpreting the natural world ('who interprets the shadows in the stars') and chooses instead simply to record the 'primitive majesty' of a single shell:

> I have taken this one shell;
> I have laid it moist and round in the midst of life,
> there it remains, containing nothing but itself

This apparently uncomplicated gesture is ironized by reference to

other literary models and by the use of elaborate metaphoric terms, even as this reference is a disarming attempt on Clouts's part to forestall and deny such reliance:

> Shelley's dome transformed into fertile splinters.
> Life breaks life and stores the concise fragments.

The reference to 'seahorn messiah of the gathering currents' implies, moreover, that the description carries with it an ideology that works in opposition to the declared task of simply registering the object.

Ever-increasing evidence of a dimension of self-doubt in Clouts's worldview that queries his ability to effect any sort of harmonious understanding with the landscape is manifested as a preoccupation with a sense of the 'impossible' unity between the word and the world. That the poet attempts to use the important tool of the conscious mind, language, in order to reconcile the human subject and the natural object, is a paradox that Clouts is aware of when he says:

> Our knowledge separates us from the world we know. We acknowledge this apartness which is secondary and unavoidable, yet strive for a unity which seems impossible but is the only really desirable end beyond art. (BBC talk in *CP* 142)

Language as problem, by virtue of the role it plays in drawing attention to the schism that exists between the poet and the world around him (in this way subverting the objective of 'pure recognition'), is a theme that is played out continually in Clouts's later poetry.

As has been shown, the 'impossible' unity Clouts seeks is complicated for him still further by the fact that the object adopts a specific guise — that of the African land and seascape and its constituent parts — which for him best represents the unsullied immediacy of nature. If the world is the African landscape then Clouts's identification with such a world is essential for his identity as an African.

To this end, Clouts attempts to discover a specific language that will facilitate this 'Africanhood'. That the 'magic words' he writes of to Butler in a letter are linked to a secret or encoded African language is obvious:

> Some day I shall find some magic words to make the knucklebones shiver, perhaps to even charm [sic] all the talk of 'models of reality' into pure recognition. (Letter from Sydney Clouts to Guy Butler, 22.12.64)

That he is denied access to this 'magic' language, by virtue of his European heritage, is made clear in the statement he uttered, again to Butler, in London in 1975:

> I get broken up with my own stuff because I am obsessed with this secret language which Africa will produce out of English. But I am not aboriginally African. I am a South African Jewish writer who writes in English. I wanted to create South African poetry and a new language for it — an aboriginal language which fulfils not present but future aspirations. In two hundred years' time people will see it. But now I see that no language can have this sort of crazy promise about it. My language is *not* some sort of African vulgate, although I would love it to be that. (*English in Africa* 88–89)

It is here that the notion of 'shibboleth' comes into play: it is a term that would appear to describe fittingly Clouts's conception of his language *vis à vis* Africa. The idea of a 'shibboleth' is employed by Clouts in 'Prince Henry the Navigator' (*CP* 72). As Prince Henry's ship approaches the horizon, manifested as a 'blackness' which 'starts to rise' at the edge of his vision, he is confronted with 'the summit of perception' which is the lucidity suggested by the purely natural character of wild Africa. However, there is the suggestion, posited only tentatively by virtue of the unforceful auxiliary verb 'can', that this contact with the 'raw images' that Africa offers might drive 'the sturdy mind' of this cultured European into disarray:

> unkempt alarming skies
> that can torment the sturdy mind
> to grief or shibboleth.

There is the suggestion that, confronted by Africa, Prince Henry may very well be faced with the realization that he speaks an exclusive language, uncomprehensible to Africa. His language may be a 'shibboleth' that functions to brand him as outsider: the language he speaks may offer the truest test as to his fitness to belong in Africa.

In an earlier version of 'A Portrait of Prince Henry' (*CP* 138) this European Renaissance man is shown to be in possession of all the mechanisms of fluent, cultured language ('a man "of perfect speech" '). Yet he is equally distinguished by being 'conspicuous in nature':

> conspicuous in nature,
> a man 'of perfect speech'
> in perfect isolation,
> conservative of each

Although this phrase suggests the superiority of his demeanour (the 'each' suggesting he conserves both his privacy and his proficiency in language) it draws attention equally to the fact that he stands out amidst the natural world as his caravel is tossed 'On Cape St. Vincent's jagged/promontory's crown'. The man-made apparatus, the ship Prince Henry sails, marks him as distinct from the sea he moves on. His 'perfect speech', the indication of a sophisticated mind, is what facilitates the ingenious invention that sets him apart from the integrated natural environment.

Clouts, as the heir of these early European explorers and colonizers, inherits a transplanted European language. The peculiarities of this language function for him as a 'shibboleth' to identify him as an intruder in Africa. Clouts takes on the task of discarding this burden in his poetry, and substituting in its stead what he calls a 'new language'.

I would argue that this project of discovering a novel language becomes progressively more difficult for Clouts. In his later poetry he becomes more and more preoccupied with analysing the efficacy of his own strategies of representation. The increased concentration on the problematics of representation (that is, on the very possibility of the existence of a 'new language') is indicative of an exaggerated awareness on his part of the futility of the unifying possibilities of poetry and an admittance of de Man's unequivocal assertion that

> . . . words do *not* originate like flowers. They need to find the mode of their beginning in another entity; they originate out of nothing, in an attempt to be the first words that will arise as if they were natural objects, and, as such, they remain essentially distinct from natural entities (*The Rhetoric of Romanticism* 6).

The powers of poetic language cannot constrain the intractability of the object.

Significantly, the disintegration between the poet and the natural world is most evident in those poems that highlight the role of language. In 'Song of Ink' (*CP* 10) the poet, depicting himself as the archetypal grey suburban citizen ('that cuffed anonymous/bald man') is distanced from nature to the extent that his is a 'folio landscape'. He yearns for the intrepidity of the natural object, however, and within the folio-vision of his own 'landscape' can recall and re-present the 'beauty of the wave', albeit only by way of the rigid and uncompromising simile:

> . . . yet my eye
> involved in beauty like the wave,
> being an eye, longs to be brave.

The environment he comes from creates 'songs' of

> . . . gardens where the sun
> behaves like ink that does not run

and bears resemblance to the world of Yeats's 'The Scholars' (*CP* 158) where 'all cough in ink'. In Yeats's poem

> Old, learned, respectable bald heads
> Edit and annotate the lines
> That young men, tossing on their beds,
> Rhymed out in love's despair

and in Clouts's poem the accountable poet is the poet as accountant, who similarly 'annotates' the landscape. The poignancy of his failure to penetrate the natural world is revealed by the very fact that his lament occurs in a rhymed couplet, consisting of lines of perfect iambic tetrameter:

> The world in columns asks me why
> I cannot balance sea and sky.

This is precisely the submission to a regulated, societally-condoned lifestyle that is implicit in the disappointed cry (again carefully phrased in iambic tetrameter) of the middle-aged man to the muse of inspiration:

> . . . Where are you,
> my love, who would have saved my life
> had I left pen and ink and wife?

Clouts's figural diction states its own precariousness and takes on a particular urgency in 'Cape of Good Hope' (*CP* 44). Here he attempts to confer the authenticity of the object upon his own interpretation by envisaging elements of the landscape as 'texts'. The formations of the stars are realized by the poet as a physical rendition of writing. An unequivocal 'reading' is seemingly guaranteed in this way, for signifier and signified are confirmed as a single entity:

> 'Idle on my back
> reading the text of night,
> alphabet of the stars

The scattered trunks and branches of fallen trees similarly suggest lexical properties to Clouts in 'The Cutting of the Pines'

(*CP* 60). William Carlos Williams's 'Botticellian Trees' (*Selected Poems* 77) employs this same metaphor of trees as words:

> The alphabet of
> the trees
>
> is fading in the
> song of the leaves
>
> the crossing
> bars of the thin
>
> letters that spelled
> winter

In Clouts's poem the easy confidence of Williams's 'reading' of the signs ('the strict simple/principles of/straight branches') is absent. The 'fallen pine' of Clouts's poem is 'more personal' than the living tree to the poet-persona, because it has been uprooted from the environment. The subject can identify with this; he is 'jagged', in the same way as the trees are broken. The identification cannot be fully completed though, because the 'words' of the felled trees are encoded and hidden from the comprehension of the poet-persona. Clouts makes out a lexical pattern created by the trees on the ground, but cannot decipher it. Signification without meaning is offered by the trees:

> They lie in a forest of jumbled alphabet.
> This means that I feel more jagged with regret.

The limitations of the powers of the poem become an important focus of the poem in 'On the Mountain' (*CP* 22). Here Clouts attempts to appropriate the stone for his own metaphorical use. The stone, always functional as resistant Africa in the poetry,[1] intrudes into the poet's mind, yet resists integration into his thought processes. Indeed, the 'hot stone' does not appear to be satisfactorily incorporated into the poem as an image ('The mind is hot like stones/that have stood long in the sun'), suggesting that Clouts acknowledges it to be resistant to metaphoric colonialisation. What Guy Butler calls 'the semantic poverty [of] Africa's rock' (in the Introduction to *A Book of South African Verse* xxxvi) — and intends by this to indicate the limitless options that are open for the poet to fill with meaning — is confirmed by Clouts, but instead to suggest 'semantic poverty' as presence rather than absence.

The recalcitrance of the natural world receives its best expression in 'After the Poem' (*CP* 75), a poem that might have as

its source poem Stevens's 'The Poem that took the place of the Mountain'. It is in speaking of this poem in 1980 that Clouts explicitly identifies the importance of metafiction in his poetry, remarking that '[A]rt, really, is a construction which constantly deals with itself' (*English in Africa* 29).

'After the Poem' sets up an active antagonism between the poem and the world it takes as its *materia poetica*. In the main body of the poem, comprising three stanzas, the landscape and the poem meet each other head on, with the first and last lines pitting 'the coastline' against 'every line' of the poem. The confrontation sees the 'coastline' as the victor, as it acts aggressively to claim what is its own and what will always be resistant to poetic coercion, remaining intact and untouched as it ever will be 'After the poem':

> After the poem the coastline took
> its place with a forward look
> toughly disputing the right of a poem to possess it

The poem may successfully use the coast for its 'subject' and so 'subject' it to subordination *within* the poem — a point Clouts manages to convey by his deliberate use of a confiding tone of sinister proselytism, that consciously smacks of social engineering:

> It was not a coast that couldn't yet be made
> the subject of a poem don't mistake me
> nothing to do with 'literary history'

The final stanza makes clear the illusory nature of this attitude, though. The action of the waves crashing on the rocks creates an ever-splintering, ever-shifting coastline. This undermines the linear symmetry of the poem that attempts to define its boundaries, even as the poem itself is 'bound' and confined to its own internal action, whatever it may temporarily appropriate to function as its subject matter:

> But the coast flashed up — flashed, say, like objections
> up to the rocky summit of the Sentinel
> that sloped into the sea
> such force in it that every line was broken

Clouts's task in the poem is still more complicated, however, in that as the three stanzas stand, the poem can be accused of undermining its own argument by transforming the landscape-in-opposition-to-the-poem itself simply into the 'subject' of a poem. To dispel this possible charge, Clouts must show the landscape to

exist 'after the poem'. To this end, the two lines that come 'after' the body of the poem (and that are separated from it on the page) are intended to 'be' the landscape, in action outside of, and beyond, the poem:

> and the sea came by
> the breaking sea came by

Through repetition and crescendo Clouts attempts to make for the pattern of the crashing waves. Through lack of margins and of punctuation, and through the dangling appearance of the lines, he simulates the autonomous existence and everlasting presence of the waves.

It is patently obvious that this is artifice of the highest order, in operation to disclaim the very existence of such. Clouts's comment that '["After the poem"] allows the world to flow beyond it' (*EiA* 30) ignores the unyielding paradox of the fact that the poem through its working shows that words attempt to manipulate and constrain through their very function as language. They cannot 'be' the world, they can only reproduce it, and in so doing they reappropriate the autonomy supposedly won by the landscape within the poem. The poem is self-deconstructing, in that it simultaneously asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical processes.

The option of erasure becomes attractive to Clouts as a consequence of the word-world disjunction he feels ever more pressingly. In his Master's thesis, 'The Violent Arcadia', Clouts criticizes Pringle, one of his South African poetic precursors:

> He is the affectionate scientist, closely observing his objects, giving a consistent prominence to them (missing therefore the spaces between them and finding no proximity or distance in his landscape) (49)

and redresses this potential oversight in his own poetry, by acknowledging the silences and spaces within and beyond words, by the lay-out of the poem on the page. In this way Clouts can ward off the confinement Rilke feels in *Duino Eleqies*, when he says:

> it's always a world
> it's never a nowhere (72).

A poem like the late, untitled, and possibly unfinished poem published in *New Coin* in 1984 attempts to make itself 'instantly declarative' in terms of the pattern and the sight it forms on the page:

Un-

like

lightning

which

(we cherish it)

nightlightning

which

is instantly declarative

once
of the fence-nail

once
of the glittering

witholding nothing

(embryonic)

instantly is all itself
to crack the gatepost

annotating darkness

A poetry of spatial tactics allows Clouts to deliberately court a position of precariousness as poet to his own poem in the poetry he writes in the late 1950s. His position becomes, quite simply, to take up no position, or rather to take, in the poetry, a position of utmost fragility as poet in relation to the landscape. In a poem such as 'Residuum' (*CP* 78) Clouts practises self-effacement in relation to the natural environment; the poem itself becomes the object, retreating from language and refusing to obey constraints of connection or causality:

My tradition is dew on a shrub,

One word is too many; many, too few.

Not for perfection though that is a part of it.

The pressure of silence is about me.

A commotion.

'History
surprise us!' is one petition

'Society
save us!' is one petition.

Speeding the lizard.

> Thingbedded mutterings delay.
>
> Listen, listen among the particles.
>
> A vigil of the land as it appears.

'Residuum' 's utilization of fragments on a palpably larger surface and its radical use of the potentialities of such a format make it the most explicit comment about language and representation in Clouts's *oeuvre* and the most exciting poem in terms of its exploration of the parameters of poetry; it functions as the manifesto for Clouts's poetic ambitions and is the most impressive realisation of the 'new language' he desires as a poet. Originally envisaged by Clouts as the final poem of his first volume of poetry, *One Life*, no doubt because its subject is explicitly stated to be that which is 'left over', its expressed purpose is to allow for the freshness and vitality that accompanies disregarded, and therefore unexploited, things. The autonomous line 'My tradition is dew on a shrub' declares itself as untainted, yet simultaneously constructed of all things. As J. Hillis Miller remarks:

> The smallest units of space and time — drop of dew, needle's eye, or gleam of water — are more than images of heaven. The indivisible concrete event actually contains eternity, and in that indissoluble unit all contraries are present in tense reconcilation. (*Poets of Reality* 124)

Accordingly, the words of the line 'Open. Open.' are 'an invitation to the world to enter thing by thing, by thing, by thing, by thing, everything' (Clouts in 1980, *English in Africa* 21).

The poem cannot allow this freedom from tradition to be compromised by words, and to this end, the spaces between the words and lines function to ensure a sense of momentariness that guards against what Barthes recognizes to be the loss of freedom that is brought about by language:

> . . . words have a second-order memory which mysteriously persists in the new meanings. Writing is precisely this compromise between freedom and remembrance, it is that freedom which remembers and is free only in the gesture of choice, but is no longer so within duration . . . [I]t is impossible to develop [freedom] within duration without gradually becoming a prisoner of someone else's words and even of my own. A stubborn after-image, which comes from all the previous modes of writing and even from the past of my own, drowns the sound of my present words (16).

As a result of this, Barthes concludes that 'Writing as freedom is therefore a mere moment'. Clouts can sustain this 'mere moment'

and so 'free' his words through the temporal and spatial discontinuation from one line to another.

The poem literally realises that 'No word is my dwelling place'. This line works powerfully to suggest that 'no word' is simultaneously not a word, as a result of the disclaimer, and quite clearly in existence. These words function ingeniously to explore the operation of both meaning and non-meaning within language. In this way a word can expand to include the silence that operates beyond epistemological boundaries. Clouts here succeeds in enacting what Geoffrey Harman sees as the broadening possibilities of literary language:

> We assume that, by the miracle of art, the 'presence of the word' is equivalent to the presence of meaning. But the opposite can be urged, that the word carries with it a certain absence or indeterminancy of meaning. (Preface, *Deconstruction and Criticism* viii).

'No word is my dwelling place' suggests ultimately the precariousness of the position of the speaker in the poem, as has been suggested. The subject position is under attack, in that the speaker reliquishes a place in the poem and instead moves together with each disparate part of the poem, 'taking over the life of each and then quitting it' (Coetzee, *White Writing* 173). The speaker sheds his identity in conjunction with the object, which 'begins to mutate and shed its old name almost as soon as it is taken over by language'. In this way Clouts can be seen to deny a position for the transcendental ego. The subject itself is shown to be made, constituted, and relative — rather than absolute — as is language.

'Residuum' is a poem that is revelatory in terms of Clouts's whole poetic development. Most importantly, it appears to be a poem that allows no fixed position for the poetic speaker. Significantly, the holder of 'meaning' in the poem is 'A man in Klapmuts' who 'breathes the secret'. The importance of this line is two-fold: firstly, it gives an identity and a location to the man with 'the secret' that is undeniably of Africa (and who is definitely *not* Clouts) and secondly, it is a secret that is not spoken. The man 'breathes' whatever 'the secret' is, not rendering it up as language which would make it intelligible to the listener.

To acknowledge 'Residuum' as Clouts's most radical realisation of his poetic project, as this argument maintains, is thus to recognise that it is a poem that works to negate the poet's role as teller of truths, as it does the very efficacy of his language, just as it denies to Clouts a clear position and identity within the African world.

'Residuum' would appear to leave Clouts nowhere to go. Clouts,

however, did not acknowledge 'Residuum' to be 'the central statement of his poetry' according to Guy Butler (interview with Susan Joubert, 1.7.87), admitting in later years to Butler that 'another one [poem] goes further'.

One can only speculate, but it is probable that this 'other' poem might well be 'Dew on A Shrub' (*CP* 88), for it is a poem that draws from the same vital source as 'Residuum', except for Clouts's own ordering of it as later in the final version of *One Life*. 'Dew on A Shrub' differs from 'Residuum' in one significant aspect, though. It is a poem permeated throughout with the strength of African mythology. One could argue that the criterion by which Clouts may have judged it to go 'further' than 'Residuum' might be in terms of its efforts to carry the poet into the life of the poem, and thus to confer on him an identity consisting of African elements.

'Dew on A Shrub' comprises three short separate poems, each, according to Clouts, in conversation with Butler in 1975, 'related to an African myth'. Structurally, Clouts in this poem attempts to assert the ideographic nature of poetry as he does in 'Residuum', in an effort to draw attention to language as a free-floating signifier, which is always elliptical. Concomitantly, the reliance on the 'mythical' properties of each separate poem is intended to 'root' the poem (if not the precise language which articulates it) within the mystique of Africa. Clouts makes this clear when he said to Butler in 1975:

> I wanted a mysterious structure in these poems — playing with language which [sic] gives language a hold on reality without being rational or explicit. It's a poem without an argument, but unfair to the reader.

It is clear that for Clouts this poem advances a long way towards becoming that 'secret language which Africa will produce'. The poem operates as a shibboleth for the reader, precluding total comprehension, but this is a shibboleth of Africa, close to the fulfilment of 'those magic words' Clouts seeks.

Important in the poem is the fact that the integration of the poet into the landscape only occurs through the destruction of the poet as speaking human agent. The 'hippo who is mud of the rainbow' (Clouts in 1975, to Butler) of the second 'poem' and who is the African animal incarnate in 'Dawn Hippo' (*CP* 66) becomes the essentially African figure of the crocodile of the third section. The poet is equally transmuted into crocodile form in the course of the final 'poem' or section, it being based on 'fairy stories about a man who dies and becomes a crocodile' (Clouts to Butler, 1975):

The crocodile flies to me,
him that I killed
for meat of him, flaps
flaps to me, over me.

Ultimately, then, the poem seems to set up an alternative 'language', based on a denial of Eurocentric categories of meaning or tradition, but it does so by the simultaneous erosion of the poet as 'I'. Clouts in this poem, as in 'Residuum', appears to be searching for a stage at which *his* language disappears altogether.

The endeavour to erase his own language from the poetry leads Clouts to explore a further, logical, option in the poetry, that post-dates 'Residuum' and 'Dew on A Shrub'. This option represents, I would maintain, a straitened response on Clouts's part to the issues of language, representation and the associated problems of African identity. The response, intended as some sort of solution to Clouts's own effacement within his later poetry, is to substitute indigenous people as personae.

The 'Hotknife' poems *(CP* 107, 108, 116, 117 and *New Coin* 7–9) were written in London (Clouts *English in Africa* 33) and the first mention of them by Clouts is in a letter to Guy Butler (28.6.65). The eponymous persona is a so-called 'Cape Coloured' ('a culler man') who speaks a patois that is peculiar to his environment, and which is a conglomeration of English and Afrikaans idiomatic language.

In other poems of about the same time Clouts uses Afrikaans to complement his own, inadequate, language. In 'Folktales' (*CP* 110) 'Nimbilo/a nameless scholar' spills out the secrets of the earth in two languages: 'O earth, O aarde!' The title of 'Wat die Hart van Vol is' (*CP* 118), written in England, is taken from the Afrikaans epigram: 'Wat die hart van vol is, loop die mond van oor' ('The mouth overflows with the preoccupations of the heart'). Significantly, when speaking of language overflowing the boundaries of constraint that is the result of extreme emotion, Clouts turns to a language other than his own. Afrikaans would seem to offer more intimate connection with the Africa he longs for. This incorporation of 'other' tongues, to expand the possibilities of English, continues a tradition long practised by South African English-speaking poets, as Slater reveals in his introduction to *A Centenary Book of South African Verse* published in 1825:

> South African poets have also enriched the language by the adoption of many homely and expressive Afrikaans words and a few liquid and beautiful words from the Bantu languages. (x)

It is for the same reason that Clouts praises Pringle's absorption of other vernaculars:

> [In Pringle's] poetry we are occasionally at the edge of discovery but the conventions of his idiom withhold it from us; and it is in this connection that his use of Cape Dutch and Xhosa names and phrases makes the most meaningful 'sense'. 'The Emigrant's Cabin' makes quite liberal use of these for the sake of the tang of immediate reality ('The Violent Arcadia' 66).

The 'Hotknife' character is chosen for a purpose more than the illustration of the possibilities dormant in the idiosyncracies of his 'native' tongue, although this is part of it. One could argue that he, in fact, replaces Clout's own voice in the 'Hotknife' poems because of his claim to 'authenticity'. Hotknife's mixed racial origins mean that he is, for Clouts, the genuine thing, being if not wholly at least partially constituted of 'African' blood.

Hotknife speaks in his own, unmediated idiom, haltingly articulating the realities of his life. These include murder and imprisonment, but also the poignancy of a 'secret life', comprising a recognition of the natural phenomena that make up his Cape Town world, and the realisation of his own oppressed condition:

> S is for my secret life, you know.
>
> O is for a oaktree
> oaktree for a okey
> coming witties girlie.
> Bokkie, state your case.
>
> B is for your black heart, shit's bliss.
>
> (*CP* 'Hotknife III' 116)

Hotknife's monologue, as is apparent from the extract, contains an encoded message, amongst the banality of expression. He spells out 'S.O.B.' in the course of his testament, thereby connoting the sound of misery, even as the acronym indicates lack of repentance and insurrection, standing as it does for 'son of a bitch'. At the end of the poem Hotknife adds another letter: "H is forra haap in heawen, too", attesting to the validity of his name and his identity.

To Clouts, then, Hotknife can be located as the speaker of a language that has claim to legitimacy, both in terms of its credibility as an 'African' language spoken by an African speaker, and in terms of its suitability of expression in responding to the iniquities of the socio-political situation. The title of Adam Small's edition of poetry published in 1963 calls attention to problems implicit in the Hotknife poems, however. Small's poems are what

can loosely be labelled protest poems, written by a so-called 'coloured' poet about the condition of being 'coloured', and are collected together under the apt title: '*Sê Sjibbolet*' ('Say Shibboleth'). Employing the same, often bantering, patois as does Clouts, Small makes his poetry utterly distinct from Clouts's. He does this by the fact that he recognises this language to be something that operates as part of the insidious classificatory system of South African society. Small makes the point that the 'sjibbolet' of one's language distinguishes and separates a person as effectively, in the South African context, as does the colour of his or her skin. What Clouts in effect can be seen to be doing in the 'Hotknife' poems is demanding, as author and therefore authoritatively, that Hotknife 'sê sjibbolet'. Clouts unwittingly participates in the tragic segregationist impulse of the system by setting Hotknife 'apart'. And, importantly, Hotknife is most obviously set apart from Clouts.

Thus, although Hotknife 'speaks' he speaks a debased language, that in effect, has little real claim to African authenticity, being composed in the main of one or other transplanted European languages. It is a language, furthermore, that operates effectively to designate him an outcast. Clouts's depiction of Hotknife as a character operating on the perimeter of 'decent' society works to reinforce this. The so-called 'coloured' as criminal is a dangerous stereotype, similarly utilized by a poet such as Uys Krige in his 'Skietgebed van die Skollie' in *Ballade van die Groot Begeer en ander gedigte* of 1960, a 'skollie' being the colloquial term for a ne'er-do-well.

That Clouts is aware of the latent problems of possible crude sterotyping is apparent in the revisionary stereotype he envisaged creating, based on a similar 'skollie' character called 'Skelm' (again, a noun that denotes one who has criminal leanings), who was to be invested with the mystical qualities of the African world. Clouts writes of this project to Guy Butler in a letter dated 24.9.64:

> Besides shorter pieces I've been working on two longer poems; each to contain about 20 parts, which I shall have to leave for later completion.

Marge Clouts, the poet's widow, provides details of this elaborately-conceived plan:

> Sydney's idea of 'Skelm' dated from when he was in South Africa but he talked of it and worked on it also in Britain. The idea was a world of strange creatures, full of wonder and mystery — he intended to write a lot about it — many poems — Skelm and other figures would represent aspects of strangeness in the world of

> strange qualities. He liked the word skelm and wanted to raise it from its meaning into a myth and creation. (letter to Susan Joubert 9.2.88)

The only evidence of the 'Skelm' project is the 'Extracts from an unfinished sequence' published posthumously in *New Coin* (10–11), where 'Skelm' with 'his peacock tail in the ocean' speaks the language of 'Hail's icecold gibberish/ ... the mightiest language':

> To speak like Skelm! Such grandeur grinds
> the magnitude of mountains,
> oceans, cities, dreams.

What is most striking about the 'Skelm' character is that he is envisaged as an other-than-human creature. This has enormous bearing on a discussion of the other so-called 'coloured' protagonist Clouts uses in his poetry. Ou Pellie, of the poem 'Over the Side' (*CP* 104) is a fisherman, as is the speaker in Uys Krige's poem 'Vishoring' from Krige's volume of poetry already quoted. The fisherman in Krige's poem speaks a language that is simple and interspersed with sounds and phonetic repetitions. The point in relation to 'Over the Side' is that Krige's character speaks. Ou Pellie is voiceless.

'Over the Side' opens with the creaking sounds of the boat leaving the shore, with the repetition of the "kr" syllable also suggesting stammering attempts to name the crayfish, the desired prey. These are the only sounds uttered within the poem. Clouts's own description completes the action and it is through this description that an interesting transformation occurs. Ou Pellie is initially depicted as bearing a resemblance to the crayfish he hunts, in terms of a simile:

> Ou Pellie dives:
> his soles are whitish
> like the underscales of crayfish

The crayfish he then disturbs is pin-pointed in its lair, and the analogies Clouts makes between the hunter and the hunted become even more explicit. The poem advances the point that Ou Pellie, within the South African context subjected to the iniquities of race classification, the Group Areas Act, and daily injustice, is able to be identified with the sentiment that gives expression supposedly only to the *crayfish's* predicament as it is trapped:

> an area; a group; a victim.

By the last stanza, all comparison has been abandoned. Ou Pellie *is* a crayfish:

> Deeply rising
> surfacing Ou Pellie
> undecipherable
> with his claws

Like Hotknife, Ou Pellie, the victim, is allowed no voice in the poem, and he is, moreover, 'undecipherable' to Clouts.

'Firebowl' (*CP* 106) is a poem where Clouts uses, finally, a 'truly' aboriginal protagonist. The 'Kalahari Bushman' is an autochthon, formed of, and raised in, Africa. In this sense he has better claim to being indigenous than do either Hotknife or Ou Pellie, they being products of miscegenation. In the poem the 'Bushman' is portrayed as the utterer of unintelligible sounds that approximate the noises of nature:

> stick stuck upright
> click
> click
> of
> bowstring
> toes of the eland
> thk thk the big rain drops
> tk tk tk the sandgrains
> drinking
>
> Sssskla!
> sparks of honey

Together these sounds constitute the 'grunt of darkness' as the 'bushman' is utterly integrated into the natural-animal environment, losing all distinguishing human characteristics. The obvious racist connotations of this are made clear in the critical commentary of Ruth Harnett, a South African academic, who unproblematically equates 'Bushman' with 'animal' when she speaks of the ending of the poem as 'a guttural response in animal-Bushman tongue' (*English in Africa* 155). Her later comment in the same article is equally illuminating:

> Clouts is not advocating a return to Bushman culture, an obvious impossibility and probably undesirable even if possible.

What can be established by tracing this progression of African personae in Clouts's later poetry is, in fact, a clear regression in terms of the status of such personae. The poems, read together, demonstrate the establishment of a disturbing racial hierarchy that works in descending order to suggest the following: white person

(Clouts) is in possession of tools for articulation on behalf of self and other; 'coloured' persona (Hotknife) has access to (inadequate and 'other') speech; second, less urbanized, 'coloured' persona is voiceless and, by association, not-human; and finally aboriginal persona ('Bushman'), through utterance, is animal.

In summation, then, Clouts in his later poetry, in an effort to combat the sense of his own language's distance from the African source adopts the strategy of resigning from the narration of the poem. Instead, he allows protagonists other than the poetic 'I' to act within the poems. African protagonists are chosen precisely because they would appear to be more 'qualified' to effect some sort of unity with Africa, the elusive object. The protagonists do achieve oneness with Africa, but this is accomplished through the forfeiture of their humanness: reconciliation with the object is achieved by the protagonists being, in varying degrees, themselves objectified. The experiment of working with 'other' protagonists is a failure for Clouts not least because it is conducted with a view of the African as 'other'.

One could argue that, after the achievements of 'Residuum' Clouts is increasingly haunted by the notion of a shibboleth. Unable to tap the resources of the vernacular through African protagonists, and convinced, as the analysis of 'Residuum' has shown, of the inadequacies of his own language to constrain the African landscape, or to conform to it except through a kind of (successful but unrepeatable) 'hit and run' manoeuvre, Clouts appears to be a poet whose explorations of language allow him nowhere else to go. Clouts's work prior to his death, what little there is of it, is devoted simply to a reiteration of the supremacy of the object over the words that attempt to describe it. Clouts's ultimate response to the failure of his language to effect a reconciliation with the embodiment of the elusive other, the African landscape, is to equate this with a failure to find an African identity for himself. Perceiving himself to be destined to speak a 'shibboleth' in Africa, his final answer to the problems of language and his own identity is to leave the perceived source of such anguish and to go into exile in Britain. That this exile effectively halted his writing, by severing him from his (albeit problematic) poetic source is the last irony. Faced with the impossibility of writing in Africa, and of writing outside of Africa, Clouts allows the silence, that occupies so prominent a position in many of his poems, to appropriate the page. Self-censorship and a virtual halt in poetic production were Clouts's solutions to the problems of language for the last fifteen years of his life.

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NOTES

1. See Clouts, *English in Africa* 11, 2 (12); 'A Pool for the Image' (*CP* 1); 'In this Landscape of Mountains' (*CP* 33); 'Of Thomas Traherne and the Pebble Outside' (*CP* 65); Coetzee, *White Writing* (41); and Nixon (11).

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JANE AUSTEN AND THE REASON–FEELING DEBATE

by J.A. KEARNEY

In recent years there has been a tendency for critics, when considering Jane Austen's position in relation to reason and feeling, to adopt polarised viewpoints. On the one hand there are those who speak of her 'conscious shying away from emotion'[1] even of her 'distrust of feeling',[2] and who believe that the choices of which she approves are chiefly 'rational and objective'.[3] On the other, there are those who, giving more attention than has usually been the case to the fact that Jane Austen is a contemporary of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Byron, seek to reveal her strong Romantic leanings. My own inclination is to conclude, together with the critic, Barbara Hardy, that 'to be able to be rational and passionate, and look rationally at the passions is [Jane Austen's] ideal requirement'.[4] But since the views expressed above, including Barbara Hardy's comment, emerge only as by-products of general accounts of Jane Austen's novels, there is scope for a sustained investigation of this particular issue, which is what I propose to undertake in my paper.

In order to trace Jane Austen's relation to the reason–feeling debate in the Eighteenth Century as substantially as possible, I have consulted the relevant propositions of a fairly wide range of philosophers and moralists. I have not confined my attention to the work of writers whom Jane Austen is known to have read (viz. Dr Johnson[5] and Bishop Sherlock[6]) but have included reference to pervasively influential works either in philosophy (Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*)[7] or in ethics (Bishop Butler's *Sermons*),[8] and also to works whose influence was great enough for them to have been likely subjects of educated society's conversation. (Here I include the Third Earl of Shaftesbury's essays [*Characteristics*],[9] and William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*[10] from the earlier part of the century; together with Hume's two philosophical treatises, *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *Enquiries*,[11] and Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*[12] from the later).

My approach is to consider first the views of these selected philosophers and moralists, and then the views of Jane Austen in terms of illustrations from her novels, in relation to four main headings:

(1) a general sense of the relationship between reason and feeling;
(2) introspective states including reflection, self-examination and imagination;

(3) the role of reason in the restraint or control of feeling;
(4) the status of spontaneous emotion and enthusiasm.

My illustration from the novels, on account of space, have to be very brief. Furthermore as it would be tedious to refer to more than two novels at each step of the investigation, I have tried to keep varying my choice of quotation so that, for each section of the discussion at least, it will be clear that the opus as a whole is the frame of reference.

Before moving on to my first heading, 'A general sense of the relationship between reason and feeling', I need to take into account briefly some of the comments of C.S. Lewis and Christopher Hill about historical shifts in the use of the term 'reason'. Lewis points out how, in Medieval Philosophy, the word reason sometimes means Rational Soul, and sometimes means the lower of the two faculties which Rational Soul exercises. These are *Intellectus* and *Ratio*'.[13] He goes on to elaborate the distinction, quoting from Aquinas:

> . . . intellect . . . is the simple (i.e. indivisible, uncompounded) grasp of an intelligible truth, whereas reasoning . . . is the progression towards an intelligible truth by going from one understood point to another.' . . . We are enjoying *intellectus* when we 'just see' a self-evident truth; we are exercising *ratio* when we proceed step by step to prove a truth which is not self-evident.[14]

For pre-Eighteenth Century moralists, according to Lewis, morality was chiefly a matter not of *ratio* but of *intellectus*. When he turns to the Eighteenth Century itself, he claims that the word was significantly narrowed in meaning:

> From meaning . . . the whole Rational Soul, both *intellectus* and *ratio*, it shrank to meaning merely 'the power by which man deduces one proposition from another'.[15]

Christopher Hill, following a more theological line of enquiry, explains that 'right reason' (which seems to be virtually synonymous with *intellectus*) is reason sanctified by grace, and that it acts as its own judge. But he then notes how, for Locke, reason has taken on a more practical, secular complexion, being the mental agent which deals with the 'self-evident truths of common sense and experience'.[16] Locke's own methods of deduction, however, would suggest that by 'reason' in a particular context he might mean either *intellectus* or *ratio*, or a combination of the two.

A general sense of the relationship between reason and feeling

Whichever is the case above, John Locke asserts unequivocally the primacy of reason: 'Reason must be our last guide and judge in

everything'.[17] Though, as far as I can ascertain, he doesn't examine the relation between reason and feeling, his resolute opposition to enthusiasm, since it 'takes away both reason and revelation and substitutes in the room of them the ungoverned fancies of a man's own brain',[18] suggests that emotion in general did not rate highly for him as a foundation of moral principle.

All the other writers I have considered, with the exception of David Hume, assert the primacy of reason in ethics. Even Shaftesbury, so well known for his belief in an innate moral sense, automatically directed to the good, considers that reason is necessary to 'secure a right application of the affections'.[19] However, as the last phrase quoted from Shaftesbury suggests, these writers tend to give more attention than Locke to the claims of feeling, even if the outcome is largely an acknowledgement of the difficulties of reason in maintaining its primacy. Bishop Butler, who emphasises that the 'benevolent affections [are] quite distinct from reason',[20] nevertheless maintains that they are as 'much a part of human nature' and thus necessary to 'create a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man'.[21] For him the moral sense must therefore involve the integration of reason and feeling:

> [the moral sense] ... whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding, or as a perception of the heart; or, which seems the truth, as including both.[22]

Although William Law at one point takes the straightforward view that

> it is our glory and happiness to have a rational nature, that is endued with wisdom and reason . . .[23]

and that 'true religion is nothing else but simple nature governed by reason',[24] elsewhere he decides that the seat of religion is in the heart.[25] However, he also believes that we have, as it were, 'two hearts within us, one attracted to good, one to bad'; with the good heart he claims that we 'taste and admire reason, purity and holiness', while with the other we 'incline to pride, and vanity, and sensual delights'.[26] Dr Johnson shares Law's sense of two hearts so that, while he has a strong belief in the potential capacity of man's reason, and, in particular, the fact that virtue makes a powerful appeal to it,[27] he is at the same time well aware of the immense difficulties facing reason in practice.[28] What receives considerable stress in Johnson's writing on morality is the ineradicability of the human passions; any attempt to suppress or eliminate them involves a loss of humanity.[29] More pessimistic than Johnson is Bishop Sherlock who stresses that the problem for reason lies in the Fall and points out that, as a result, although it 'be the Work of

Reason to keep the Passions within their proper Bounds', Reason 'cannot govern the corrupt Will; only the Spirit of God can achieve that.[30]

David Hume and Adam Smith differ a good deal from the other writers consulted. Though Hume acknowledges that 'reason and sentiment concur in almost all moral determinations and conclusions',[31] he allows reason only the task of doing the preliminary sorting, while feeling has the superior role of making the necessary distinctions and of actual choice.[32] More forcefully still, he concludes that the 'ultimate ends of human actions can never . . . be accounted for by reason' since 'Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions';[33] thus, for Hume, 'morality is determined by sentiment'.[34]

Smith is by no means so easy to pin down with regard to a sense of the relationship between reason and feeling. This is largely because of his use of the term 'sympathy',[35] which seems to include in it much of what would earlier have been considered the dispassionate province of reason. The basis of his argument is that 'we endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it',[36] thus shifting from the idea of an innate faculty of discriminating reason to reliance upon a sense of social approval or disapproval. Nevertheless he explicitly identifies this interior 'spectator' with 'reason, principle, conscience . . . the great judge and arbiter of our conduct',[37] and will not have it confused with 'that soft power of humanity . . . that feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lighted up in the human heart'.[38]

Jane Austen does not, in my view, accept the widespread Augustan belief in the primacy of reason, yet she is also not prepared to shift to a contrary stress on feeling as Hume does. Closest to her position is that of Bishop Butler with his sense of a tight integrtion between reason and feeling, powers which are nevertheless to be regarded as distinct. But one can appreicate how her wish to give parity of esteem to both powers may have been strongly influenced by the writing of Johnson, with his stress on the crucial importance of feelings, and his awareness of the limitations of reason in practice. Implicit acceptance, on Jane Austen's part, of William Law's 'double heart' postulate leads her to acknowledge how transcendent reason may become clouded, yet she avoids such pessimism as that of Bishop Sherlock about the weakness of reason. She is also opposed to the Shaftesburian belief in an innate moral sense which involves an equivalence between ethical and aesthetic perception and the possibility of a virtually automatic choice of virtuous conduct. For her the alliance between reason and feeling needs to be in energetic, sustained operation, maturing through the experience of error. While she would very likely

disagree with Adam Smith's account of the formation of conscience (i.e. of what he refers to as the 'inner spectator'), she would endorse his sense of the need for the assured authority of inner guidance, closely bound up, if not synonymous with, the activity of reason. She would not, however, be inclined to identify this principle with sympathy as Smith does; for her, as for Butler, 'Benevolence . . . and the want of it . . . are in no sort the whole of virtue and vice'.[39]

Jane Austen's understanding of the term 'reason', I would argue, is based primarily on the idea of *intellectus* combined with the Lockean secularised version of 'right reason', while *ratio* or reasoning acts to provide confirmation or elaboration of what *intellectus* has perceived. Though, for her, the inherent force of reason is spiritual and incorruptible, experience is crucial for its adequate development. It follows, then, that the validity of critical judgment is a relative matter, depending on a character's capacity for moral insight and maturity of feeling at the time: Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, for example, has to learn how much the factors of time and situation are bound up with the two decisions, separated by eight years, which she makes about Captain Wentworth. The power of reason can also be diminished or subdued by hurt, prejudiced feeling like that of Elizabeth Bennet towards Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, or by the urge to exert power and influence like that of Emma Woodhouse in *Emma*. Because the act of reason is so intimately connected with the finest potentialities of human nature in Jane Austen's delineation of character, it is usually allied in a special way to feelings such as compassion, sympathy and loyalty. Although this aspect may not be immediately apparent, consideration of priorities in such feelings will reveal how strongly the alliance is at work. Elinor Dashwood's reason, in *Sense and Sensibility*, for example, enables her to decide that she cannot allow sympathy for the repentant Willoughby to deflect her from the more necessary sympathy she owes her mother and sister. Calculating sense, which seems to be the result of *ratio*'s gaining ascendancy over *intellectus*, is generally characterised by its divorce from humane feeling: John and Fanny Dashwood, also in *Sense and Sensibility*, when they decide how minimal their contribution to their relatives' financial security needs to be, exemplify this tendency. On the other hand, sympathy such as that of Jane Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* which continually denies or evades the influence of open critical reason, is shown to be equally unreliable and ineffectual.

Perhaps one can say that the ideal state of affairs for Jane Austen is when reason and feeling possess equal strength, as suggested in such phrasing as 'her judgment was as strong as her feelings'[40] or 'it was not only that her feelings were still adverse to any man save

one ... her judgment ... was against Mr Elliot'.[41] Although this kind of usage resembles the eighteenth-century fondness for paired antitheses, it must be noticed that, in Jane Austen's case, the two terms are not intrinsically opposed to each other. Though allied powers, they are nevertheless distinct. Since each needs the support of the other, each is equally fallible when trying to act independently. Both are needed for an adequate understanding of the truth about human affairs and experience. Many of the difficulties experienced by Jane Austen's characters result, in fact, from attempts by reason or feeling to act independently of each other, or for one power to try to usurp the other's domain.

Impartial judgment, Jane Austen suggests, is virtually impossible to attain: some form of bias or prejudice is bound to be present. Although bias may of course be favourable or otherwise, one form of it seems, inevitably, to invite a counter-bias. Emma, for example, comes to the telling realisation that she and Mr Knightley are both inspired by prejudice in their argument over Frank Churchill's sense of duty, she for and he against.[42] But Jane Austen is not concerned simply to reveal this state of affairs as a deficiency in human nature. Any attempt to be impartial which does not take account of the feelings of others is a more serious form of bias than accidental prejudice; impartiality cannot, in fact, be attained without a 'just consideration of others'. On the other hand, qualities such as affection and family loyalty, valuable as they are, may create special obstacles for dispassionate judgment, especially if the character is inexperienced. Thus the very power, in *Northanger Abbey*, of Catherine Morland's fresh delight and wonder in the circumstances of her brother's engagement to Isabella Thorpe, allows Catherine's judgment to be temporarily blinded by Isabella's experience in contrived feeling.[43] The possibility of an almost ideal reconciliation between critical judgment and strong affection is conveyed through the effect on Emma of Mr Knightley's rebuke about her treatment of Miss Bates:

> The truth of his representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel, so unfeeling to Miss Bates.[44]

Yet it is characteristic of Jane Austen's realism that, just when one has been presented with such a possibility, she chooses, in a richly comic passage, to focus on the general partiality of human judgment even in the wise Mr Knightley:

> He had found her agitated and low. — Frank Churchill was a villain. — He heard her declare that she had never loved him. Frank

> Churchill's character was not desperate. — She was his own Emma, by hand and word, when they returned into the house; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill then, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow.[45]

Introspective states including reflection, self-examination and imagination

The continual need for a review of mind and action, what Dr Johnson refers to as a 'serious and impartial retrospect of our conduct',[46] is affirmed several times by him as well as by most of the other eighteenth century writers I have consulted. According to Johnson, this is because errors in conduct 'must arise from ignorance of ourselves'.[47] For Bishop Butler, in fact, conscience and reflection become synonymous in practice, and this enables every action to be guided by some 'determinate rule'.[48] William Law agrees that 'all our miseries are of our own making'[49] but he gives special emphasis to the notion that '[one's heart] can discover no guilt so great as [one's] own'[50] and that, therefore, one needs to be 'the most severe in [one's own] censure'.[51] A particular insight of Shaftesbury, in relation to the practice of self-examination, is that 'feeling may be converted through resolve created by reflection',[52] which seems to imply, not a total displacement of an unworthy feeling, but its redirection from another point of view. Thus he believes that good affections may come to be 'industriously nourished, and the contrary passion depressed'.[53]

Johnson's special contribution to this area of moral consideration is, I would suggest, to remind his readers frequently of the power that false imagination has over reason, and the consequent need for reason, via reflection, to keep guard over imagination. Wittily, he warns: 'He that forsakes the probable, may always find the marvellous'.[54] Early in the *Rambler* series, however, he admits that we are effectively motivated through the imagination,[55] and later on in this series he reveals how crucial a part imagination plays in the arousing of sympathy.[56]

The habit of self-examination, involving reflection upon one's motives and conduct (as recommended especially by writers such as Butler, Law and Johnson) does not, of itself, guarantee self-knowledge for Jane Austen's characters, though it does help to provide a mode of introspection which promotes and sustains the crucial process of self-insight when that becomes possible. Very disturbed, intense and agitated feelings need to be reflected on and understood as far as possible: by this means Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* prevents herself from increasing her own grief unnecessarily and, in a similar way, Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* can channel what might have become morbid regret into social

availability. Powerful feelings which are simply restrained without such understanding, on the other hand, are shown to be dangerous both for the individual experiencing them, and for others — the behaviour of the Bertram sisters in *Mansfield Park* forcibly demonstrates this point. The kind of reflection that Jane Austen has in mind is voluntarily chosen by the individual in order to achieve self-understanding and greater awareness of the feelings of others; it does not, therefore mean what Sir Thomas Bertram has in mind when he tells Fanny Price to 'reason [herself] into a stronger frame of mind'[57] since his motive has too much to do with his own ends. Much as the process of self-examination is necessary, Jane Austen does not envisage it as an easy one: major obstacles to its effectiveness are hurt pride like that of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*; or love of supremacy and self-protective rationalisations such as those of Emma.

Self-knowledge, in Jane Austen's novels, is usually achieved as the result of some kind of major fall. Strong remorse and self-reproach then combine with a state of sudden illumination about previous conduct to set up a fairly prolonged period of thorough and intense self-scrutiny. Censure of self, in this period, is heavy to the point of exaggeration, very much along the lines described by William Law and seen, for example, when Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* discovers her mistake about Mrs Tilney or when Emma faces the implications of Harriet Smith's declared love for Mr Knightley:

> How improperly had she been acting by Harriet! How inconsiderate, how indelicate, how irrational, how unfeeling had been her conduct! What blindness, what madness, had led her on! It struck her with dreadful force, and she was ready to give it every bad name in the world.[58]

(In passing, one might notice here the force of the parallel condemnations: 'how irrational, how unfeeling'.) The feelings of remorse and repentance thus seem to involve a special limiting of judgment, so that it remains, at least temporarily, directed towards the self. The process of repentance over a further period of time, however, usually engenders feelings of greater sympathy and also the strong wish to do oneself greater justice.

Jane Austen is not a believer in Stoicism: unwelcome or inappropriate feelings such as Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* still discovers in herself for Wentworth during their eight years of separation, cannot be simply reasoned away or stifled through composure and self-command; on the contrary it is the surprising retentiveness of these feelings which is stressed. Ways of coping with and bearing such feelings need to be found through reflection.

Jane Austen recognises, particularly in the situations of Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* and of Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, that love which cannot be expressed produces states of considerable agitation, and that the need for periods of tranquil reflection is proportionately increased. In *Persuasion*, however, she gives more attention, through her portrayal of Anne Elliot, than in any of her previous novels, to the great difficulty of being able to synchronise a state of agitation with a suitable opportunity for reflection. Unworthy or bad feelings also cannot be made to vanish into a limbo, but Jane Austen believes — like Shaftesbury — that they can and should be struggled against, and that reflection upon them is capable of arousing better feelings, as Fanny Price finds in her jealous awareness of Edmund Bertram's attentiveness to Mary Crawford.

Like Dr Johnson, Jane Austen presents imagination as an ambivalent aspect of consciousness, able to enhance, or to detract from the joint operation of reason and feeling, depending on the extent to which their alliance is effective. Vulnerability to sensational feeling allows imagination to produce fictional blueprints of entertaining new schemes such as those of Emma Woodhouse. On the other hand, it is equally well imagination which spurs Catherine Morland to sympathise with her brother's predicament in *Northanger Abbey*, or Emma to realise that her feelings for Frank Churchill have no profundity. While imagination, misdirected, may be seen to foster the frivolous role-playing of a character such as Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, imagination when properly directed enables Fanny Price in the same novel to grasp the jealous agonies of her cousins.

The role of reason in the restraint or control of feeling

All the writers consulted share the characteristic eighteenth-century concern with the need to avoid immoderate feeling. The most vehement of these is Bishop Sherlock who laments the 'pernicious effects of passion, assisted by a depraved reason'.[59] Dr Johnson's calmer, more urbane advice is that an emotion (such as sorrow) should not be allowed to increase by indulgence. To prevent such increase he trusts in the consultation of reason, recourse to which should also ensure that 'healthy and evil feelings are not equally indulged'.[60] Affectation may be cured, thinks Johnson, by reasoned contemplation of how much more securely esteem is gained 'by cultivating real than displaying counterfeit qualities'.[61] Bishop Butler, concerned not only that [every affection] may rise too high',[62] insists that the single virtue of benevolence be not allowed, through too great prominence, to oust all others from a sense of what constitutes virtue.[63] For Adam

Smith there is no problem in reconciling his principle of sympathy, which is in any case for him an equivalent of reason and conscience, with control of feeling:

> Our sensibility to the feelings of others, so far from being inconsistent with the manhood of self-command, is the very principle upon which that manhood is founded.[64]

Jane Austen is not concerned with reason as a means of producing moderate feelings; each of her novels, on the contrary, shows how much she values intensity of feeling. What she does affirm, however, is the value of moderating the social expression of intense feeling out of a 'just consideration for others' and for oneself; the virtual equivalence between such consideration and the need for self-command is given special attention in *Mansfield Park*. There too it is stressed that feeling and principled judgment must be fully integrated within the individual, and brought into greater unity through reflection. Very powerful feelings of a positive and healthy nature (above all, love) seem to lend themselves to restraint and self-command. Indeed, Jane Austen suggests that control of feeling is more natural than its opposite in such cases since the feelings are already potentially in harmony with reason. Major examples of such restraint are to be found in Elinor Dashwood (*Sense and Sensibility*) and in Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*). It's also shown, on the other hand, that even mature moral choice has no automatic power over intense feeling; while the impulse to self-command is present, a struggle is nevertheless necessary to sustain it as is forcefully shown in the case of Anne Elliot when Captain Wentworth enters once more into her world.

Furthermore, Jane Austen reveals that the strength and quality of healthy, intense feeling isn't impaired by such a process of restraint according to reasoned principle; and that it may actually be enhanced when the opportunity for expression comes (here one might consider the quality of Anne Elliot's and Wentworth's feelings for each other after eight years of separation). Asserted feeling turns out, invariably, to be artificially induced feeling, due to self-delusion (as in the case of Catherine Morland's gothic fantasies, or Marianne Dashwood's craving for exquisite sensibility); or it may result from a deliberate effort to deceive others for some kind of manipulation when calculating sense has gained control over '*intellectus*' (as, for example, in the cases of Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park* and Frank Churchill in *Emma*). Enlightenment in the first two cases is possible only after a severe shock (temporary in the case of Catherine's humiliation; prolonged in that of Marianne's suffering and illness). For the deliberate

manipulators such as Henry Crawford and Frank Churchill, however, Jane Austen seems unable to envisage any experience which is capable of effecting a radical change in their motives and choices. Indulgence in feelings such as grief, which are in themselves good, is shown to involve a deliberate suppression of the impulse towards self-control; as a consequence, the feeling is impaired and the integrity of the person harmed, as suggested, for example by the precipitate engagement of Captain Benwick to Louisa Musgrove in *Persuasion*, and more dramatically, of course, by Marianne's severe illness in *Sense and Sensibility*.

It will readily be seen that none of the eighteenth century writers I have considered, approaches the question of restraint of feeling in quite the same way that Jane Austen does. While Johnson makes plain his anti-stoicism and his belief that reason promotes healthy feeling, he appears nowhere to give the same importance to feeling as to reason. In elevating feeling, David Hume, on the other hand, proceeds to denigrate reason. Most of these writers, whatever concessions they make to the value of feeling, give the impression that the characteristc feature of human moral choice is a struggle between reason and feeling (or passion, as it is usually referred to, probably to stress its potential danger), in which passion is always attempting to gain the victory. The idea that healthy feeling may actually contribute towards securing a wise restraint over conduct, or that reason and feeling are involved in a kind of partnership in which neither should take precedence, does not fit in with their characteristic mode of thought. Adam Smith's alliance or virtual equivalence between sensibility and self-command bears some resemblance to Jane Austen's approach, but he lacks her belief in reason as a disinterested, spiritual element in human nature; and his view that generous, sympathetic feeling results largely from the wish for social approval does not accord with her sense of the motives that may produce generous behaviour at its best.

The status of spontaneous emotion and enthusiasm

It will already be clear, in terms of my findings in the preceding sections, that eighteenth century philosophers and moralists, by and large, do not accord much status to spontaneous emotion and enthusiasm. Bishop Butler, while maintaining his belief in the need for the strict government of reason, recognises that reason alone, 'whatever one may wish',[65] is inadequate as a motive for virtue and must be joined with the affections. Similarly William Law, having given due honour to reason, goes on to offer feeling a large role in the religious formation of the individual. Consistent with his belief that the 'seat of religion is in the heart',[66] he advocates that prayer

(at least temporarily while the heart is 'ready to break forth into new and higher strains of devotion') be allowed to 'follow those fervours of the heart'.[67] Furthermore imagination should be used to 'warm' the heart for prayer. Johnson maintains that friendship requires 'not only that its candidates should gain the judgment, but that they should attract the affections; that they should not only be firm in the day of distress, but gay in the hour of jollity'.

As I have already shown, Hume's emphasis virtually goes to an extreme in the direction of enlightenment through feeling rather than through reason:

> It appears evident that the ultimate ends of human action can never, in any case, be accounted for by reason, but recommend themselves entirely to the sentiments and affections of mankind without any dependence on the intellectual faculties.[68]

Smith, who initially explains how general rules are formed by 'finding, from experience, that all actions of a certain kind, . . . are approved and disapproved of',[69] later makes the following important qualification:

> All those graceful and admired actions, to which the benevolent affections would prompt us, ought to proceed as much from the passions themselves, as from any regard to the general rules of conduct.[70]

I conclude then that, apart from Hume's fairly radical inversion of Enlightenment belief, what takes place more generally in the course of the Eighteenth Century, appears to be a process of making concessions to feeling, greater or lesser, with frequent tendencies to be hesitating or even grudging, while trying to preserve the expected primacy of reason as far as possible. The characteristic spirit is perhaps best summed up in Butler's telling parenthetic phrase, 'whatever one may wish'.[71]

In Jane Austen's work feelings such as jealousy may provide a basis for enlightenment in advance of the operation of reason. But this seems to occur when the state about which a character is to become enlightened, already involves a potentially harmonious relationship between reason and feeling (i.e. when the feeling is not an impulse of defiance against reason). An essential contrast here, for example, is the difference between the jealousy of the Bertram sisters, Maria and Julia in *Mansfield Park*, on the one hand; and that of Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion* on the other. While a state of intense joy or delight may not, in itself, actually create enlightenment for a Jane Austen character, its presence seems to mark the new awareness which it accompanies, as

possessing unusual significance in a character's development. As in the case of jealousy, however, this possibility reflects a potentially harmonious relationship between reason and feeling. Major illustrations of such a situation are: Emma's delight at the Highbury ball when Mr Knightley dances with Harriet Smith; and Anne Elliot's feeling of 'senseless joy'[72] when she finds that Captain Wentworth is not, after all, in love with Louisa Musgrove. Indeed there appears to be no possibility in Jane Austen's novels of spontaneous or pure feeling which is unrelated to reason. At every stage of life, reason and feeling are shown to be in interaction within the healthy personality: true, sincere feeling is the kind which is, and has grown, in harmony with acknowledged, convinced principle.

By the time of *Persuasion* there does appear to be a shift on Jane Austen's part to affirm the value of a spontaneous 'burst of feeling'[73] as essential evidence of sincere emotion (perhaps because of an increased awareness that restrained feeling and lack of feeling may be mistaken for each other). Such a 'burst', however, would involve the spontaneous expression of feelings which have gradually been developed in relation to reason. What appears at first to be a rather sudden change in Jane Austen's work, in fact involves a developing increase in emphasis: even Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* is capable of an occasional burst of feeling, while Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* reveals this capacity on several occasions.

Even Jane Austen's most mature characters frequently experience difficulty in achieving a satisfying integration of reason and feeling (here one might note especially the cases of Elinor Dashwood responding to Willoughby's confession; or Fanny Price struggling to cope with the shock of Henry Crawford's elopement with Maria Bertram). In the mutual commitment of lovers to each other, however, Jane Austen finds the most reliable possibility of a harmonious integration of reason and feeling, the two most noteworthy cases being those of Emma and Mr Knightley; and Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth. In making this point I must emphasise that Jane Austen does not invite us to contemplate such male and female partners as representatives of reason and feeling respectively.

Gratitude and esteem are the feelings, for Jane Austen, on which the soundest kind of love is based, since they are inseparable from acts of reason and reflection, and also because they develop in a natural way in corresponding with the major events of a relationship. These are not to be considered rational feelings, however, as if their existence is due more to intellectual than to emotional awareness. What they do involve is a bond between reason and feeling, in which both operate at an intense level. Such

feelings are, moreover, not celebrated in opposition to passionate sexual feeling; Jane Austen's most favoured love relationships in fact reveal a blending of both kinds of feeling. While affection and love should, therefore, have a rational basis in Jane Austen's view, that does not imply an inhibiting and straightjacketing of love by reason. When, for example, Elizabeth Bennet's attitude towards Darcy changes in *Pride and Prejudice*, the point is not that she shifts from a predominantly emotional state to a predominantly rational one, but rather, that she shifts from feelings shaped by an irrational, biased point of view, to feelings shaped by more complete knowledge and understanding.

Though Jane Austen is remarkable for her readiness to grant equal esteem to feeling and reason, her relationship to the tradition of eighteenth century thinking on feeling as an independent entity remains a strong one. The affections in her view are not necessarily directed to the good as Shaftesbury believed, but must be joined with reason in the creation of virtue (a view more like that of Bishop Butler). While Jane Austen's appreciation of 'burst[s] of feeling',[74] corresponds to William Law's recommendation that prayer be given opportunities to 'follow [the] fervours of the heart',[75] she is at no stage on the brink of adopting Hume's belief that 'morality is determined by sentiment'.[76] Even her approving use of the term, 'enthusiasm' in the *Persuasion* passage concerning Mr William Elliot's lack of 'any burst of feeling', is rare, and possibly unique. But it must be noted that it occurs as part of a phrase, 'warmth and enthusiasm'.[77] In other words, her concern — consistent with her views throughout her earlier novels — is with the nurturing and safeguarding of genuine, healthy affections that are consonant with the guidance and channelling available from reason.

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NOTES

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3. M. Butler: *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*. OUP, 1975, pp. 102–103.
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18. Locke, op. cit., p. 429.
19. Shaftesbury, op. cit., p. 295.
20. Bishop Butler, *The Works*, Vol. 11, p. 158.
21. Butler, op. cit., p. 83.
22. Butler, *The Analogy*, p. 313.
23. Law, op. cit., pp. 52–53.
24. Law, op. cit., p. 243.
25. Law, op. cit., p. 194.
26. Law, op. cit., p. 257.
27. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 175.
28. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, Nos. 2 and 41; *Rasselas*, Chapters 18 and 29.
29. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, Nos. 47 and 66; *Rasselas*, Chapter 18.
30. Bishop Sherlock, *Sermons*, pp. 179, 57 and 338 respectively.
31. Hume, *Enquiries*, p. 172.
32. Hume, op. cit., p. 286.
33. Hume, *Treatise*, p. 415.
34. Hume, *Enquiries*, p. 189.
35. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 10.
36. Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 110.
37. Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 137.
38. Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 137.
39. Bishop Butler, *The Analogy*, p. 319.
40. *Emma*, OUP, 1974, p. 431.
   (Note: in quoting from Jane Austen's novels I have relied uniformly on the six-

volume OUP collection edited by R.W. Chapman. The date given in each case is that of the particular reprint.)
41. *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*, 1975, p. 160.
42. *Emma*, p. 150.
43. *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*, pp. 117–118.
44. *Emma*, p. 376.
45. *Emma*, p. 433.
46. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 8.
47. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 24.
48. Bishop Butler, *The Works*, p. 47.
49. Law, op. cit., p. 120.
50. Law, op. cit., p. 337.
51. Law, op. cit., p. 338.
52. Shaftesbury, op. cit., p. 270.
53. Shaftesburty, op. cit., p. 271.
54. This aphorism is quoted by Walter Jackson Bate in *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth Century England* (Harvard: Harper Torchbooks, 1949, p. 62.
Unfortunately he does not reveal the source, nor have I been able to trace it.
55. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 2.
56. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 60.
57. *Mansfield Park*, 1975, p. 322.
58. *Emma*, p. 408.
59. Bishop Sherlock, op. cit., p. 196.
60. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 4.
61. Dr Johnson, *The Rambler*, No. 20.
62. Bishop Butler, *The Works*, p. 99.
63. Bishop Butler, *The Analogy*, p. 314.
64. Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 152.
65. Bishop Butler, *The Works*, p. 83.
66. Law, op. cit., p. 194.
67. Law, op. cit., p. 171.
68. Hume, *Enquiries*, p. 293.
69. Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 159.
70. Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 172.
71. As for Note 65 above.
72. *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*, p. 168.
73. *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*, p. 161.
74. As for Note 73 above.
75. As for Note 67 above.
76. As for Note 34 above.
77. As for Note 73 above.