



Is Democracy Losing Its Romance?

Back in the 1980s, when hawks were hawks and doves were doves, it used to be said that democracies don't fight each other. When doves argued for "peace" in, say, Central America, the hawks answered that the best assurance of peace in any region was the establishment of democracy, even by violent means if necessary. Once established, democratically elected governments will never choose to spend the people's blood and treasure making war against their democratically elected neighbors.

It's a nice thought. Unfortunately it has been disproved in Yugoslavia, where the fall of Communism has brought a vicious three-way war. Serbia and Croatia, both under democratically elected presidents, intermittently fight each other while jointly dismembering democratic Bosnia. Serbia had a democratic election Dec. 19 in which all the parties supported Serbia's aggression - although it has left the country a basket case. The Yugoslav mess is one reason some former hawks have become born-again doves. They have lost their interest in promoting democracy. They look at the postcommunist world and see that the most common cause of war is nationalist hatred - which democracy, far from suppressing, actually gives vent to.

Is democracy starting to lose its romance? It seems like an odd question. On the map of the world, democracy is having a great run. It has triumphed over the Soviet empire (well, details to be worked out in some places); it has conquered South America; it has arrived in South Africa. And yet at the same time you can sense a certain world-weary disillusion setting in.

This can be seen, for example, in the way Western observers keep moving goalposts for that hero of democracy, Boris Yeltsin. Democracy lovers have been remarkably understanding as Yeltsin has shut down newspapers, produced a constitution out of his hip-pocket that makes him virtual czar, forbidden candidates in the recent election to criticize his constitution on television, put off for years his own need to run for re-election and so on. This was all justified as an "interim" necessity in order to establish Russia on a democratic course. But if Yeltsin continues to govern in a style one journalist predicts will be "enlightened authoritarianism", it's a safe bet the apologias will continue.

The model here, of course, is China. While Russia - struggling to reform the economy and the political system at the same time - sinks deeper into poverty, China, which is trying capitalism without democracy, grows richer at an astonishing rate of 13% a year. China's leaders still aspire, at least, to a totalitarian regime. Dissidents are still arrested, and the government recently outlawed all satellite dishes. But it would be hard to argue honestly that China's approach has served the average citizen worse than Russia's.

The case for the Chinese model is that while democracy and capitalism may go together, democracy and the **conversion** of an economy do not. Economic reform is chaotic; it makes things worse before they get better; it creates new inequalities that take getting used to. Capitalism, in short, needs an authoritarian government to push it through. **Then**, when widespread middle-class prosperity is securely established, democracy will naturally follow.

A less attractive version of this argument leaves out the last step. It holds that concepts like "democracy" and "individual rights" are Western notions, which (unlike, apparently, the Western concept of "capitalism") are out of place in consensual Asian cultures. Singapore and Taiwan have thrived on capitalism without democracy.



The ethnically Asian President of Peru, Alberto Fujimori, sometimes likes to imply that he is importing this Asian culture to South America. Early in 1992 he shut down the courts and the congress, abolished civil liberties and began ruling by decree. The result? The Shining Path guerrillas, who were strangling the country, have been almost beaten; the economy is thriving; and Fujimori is highly popular. "Traditional democracies will end up in the garbage heap," he told a Peruvian magazine.

Even in the heartland of "traditional" democracy, the United States of America, there are whiffs of disenchantment. The "populism" surging through American politics these days has a certain antidemocratic flavor. Or, at least, it reflects resentment of democratic institutions and procedures. "Washington" and politicians have replaced "Wall Street" and rich businessmen as populism's favorite targets. The favorite populist remedies - congressional term limits, a balanced-budget amendment - would be new constraints on democracy. And, like earlier versions, today's populism hungers for a strong leader on a white horse. Thus Ross Perot, America's would-be Fujimori.

On the other hand, the conventional response to today's populism in America also has an antidemocratic tinge, as highminded commentators bemoan democracy's incompatible demands for high benefits with low taxes, the paralyzing effects of interest groups and so on.

The current movie "The Remains of The Day" reminds us, there was a time not long ago, the 1930s, when openly expressed doubts about the wisdom of democracy as a system of government were positively fashionable, even in established democratic societies. These days everybody pays at least lip service to the democratic ideal. Will that change? Just asking.



Michael Kinsley in: *TIME*, January 17, 1994

Annotations

Hawk - here: a politician who favors aggressive policies in foreign affairs; dove - the contrary; intermittent - mit Unterbrechungen; to give vent to - to express freely; consensual - being of collective opinion

Exercises

1. Look at the text closely and decide what kind of prose it is.
2. What is the general meaning of this text?
3. Divide the text up into its parts and describe them briefly.
4. How does the author develop his main idea?
5. What might be the author's opinion?
6. Could you find tendencies like those described above in Germany?
7. What is your opinion about the problem?



Is Democracy Losing Its Romance?

1. A new kind of prose, it is neither narrative nor descriptive.

It deals with a problem, looks at its different sides, weighs arguments, evaluates ideas, states opinions, tries to convince

→ argumentative prose

2. It is no longer an established truth that democracy is the best possible system to govern countries.

3. Paragraph 1: A look back into our recent history: democracy was undoubtedly the system that worked best.

Paragraph 2: The recent development in Yugoslavia has proved our former opinions about democracy wrong.

Paragraph 3: Democracy seems to be on the way to establish itself all over the world.

Paragraph 4: The Russian way into democracy shows that this way is not altogether democratic and might never be.

Paragraphs 5 and 6: China tries to be capitalist without democracy. During the conversion of an economy democracy is not possible.

Paragraphs 7 and 8: Asian countries and the example of Peru show that in some cultures democracy perhaps is not suitable.

Paragraph 9 and 10: In America tendencies in this direction are visible, too.

Paragraph 11: Conclusion: Our view of democracy is about to change at the moment.

4. He expresses a fact that almost everybody used to take for granted. Modern democracies avoid war among each other, and surprises us with the fact that this is no longer true. Democracy does not seem the ideal system any longer: Yugoslavia is at war against itself. In Russia it brings about more and more poverty. In China democracy is explicitly avoided, but the country is most successful economically, the same is true in some other countries, of which the author shows us examples. The surprise ending for an American reader is that even in the USA there are tendencies that call for the strong man who finds populist solutions for the common wealth of all.

Everybody only pays lip service to the democratic ideal. He ends asking a rhetorical question. Our ideals change!

He begins by stating a fact that he immediately questions: he establishes a thesis (democracy is too civilized to wage war) and the proof against it (antithesis), after more and more



Russian troops intervened in Georgia, Tajikistan and Moldova; keeping the East Europeans out of NATO.

We Americans gave bear stroking a try. It did not work. Despite our extraordinary deference to Russian national feelings, the anti-reform and anti-Western parties did exceptionally well in free elections. Yeltsin is accommodating to reality. Time for us to follow suit.

Yeltsin still represents as moderate a government as Russia is going to produce. But that highlights all the more clearly the limits of Russian moderation. It would be foolish, therefore, to continue a purely Russocentric policy that bets the house on the hope that with enough Western coaxing and acquiescence, Russia will turn into a Western democracy, a Cyrillic England. It is far more prudent for the West to demonstrate some firmness, to show we will respect Russia's national interests but not its imperial impulses.

If Russia tires of reform, that is her business. But if Russia hungers for empire, that unfortunately is our business. As leader of the West, Americans must say no. Instead, for fear of offending Russia, we say no to pro-Western Poles, Czechs and Hungarians seeking admittance to NATO.

Russia needs to be told that it does not have a veto over NATO membership. That only an imperial Russia would take offense at East Europeans finding shelter in NATO - the Polish Army, after all, is no threat to Moscow. And if Russia insists on military pressure on its neighbors, it will pay a high price, economic and diplomatic, in relations with America.

The current unpleasantness is neither Yeltsin's fault nor Clinton's. But it is a fact. The free ride given Russia, based on hopes for a Russia that is not, has got to end.



Charles Krauthammer in: TIME, January 31, 1994

Exercises

1. Work out the main idea of the article.
2. Describe how the author develops his theme, and follow his argumentation.
3. Comment on the language the author uses.
4. How does the author criticize Clinton?
5. Find some stylistic devices the author uses and explain them.
6. What do you think about the author's opinion?



Answer (this is the entire story!)

Dwar Ev ceremoniously soldered the final connection with gold. The eyes of a dozen television cameras watched him and the subether bore throughout the universe a dozen pictures of what he was doing.

He straightened and nodded to Dwar Reyn, then moved to a position beside the switch that would complete the contact when he threw it. The switch that would connect, all at once, all of the monster computing machines of all the populated planets in the universe - ninety-six billion planets - into the supercircuit that would connect them all into one super calculator, one cybernetics machine that would combine all the knowledge of all the galaxies.

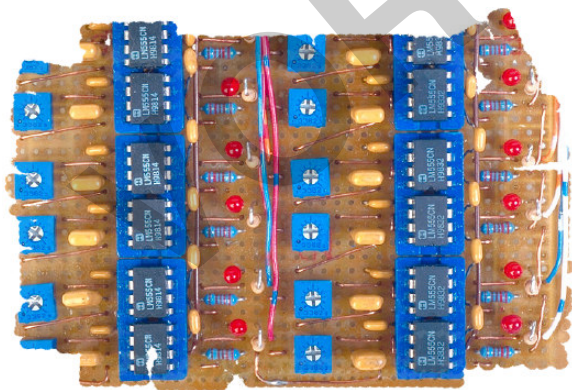


Dwar Reyn spoke briefly to the watching and listening trillions. Then after a moment's silence he said, "Now, Dwar Ev."

Dwar Ev threw the switch. There was a mighty hum, the surge of power from ninety-six billion planets. Lights flashed and quieted along the miles-long panel.

Dwar Ev stepped back and drew a deep breath. "The honour of asking the first question is yours, Dwar Reyn."

"Thank you," said Dwar Reyn. "It shall be a question that no single cybernetics machine has been able to answer."



By: Fredric Brown

He turned to face the machine. "Is there a God?"

The mighty voice answered without hesitation, without the clicking of a single relay.

"Yes, NOW there is a God."

Sudden fear flashed on the face of Dwar Ev. He leaped to grab the switch.

A bolt of lightning from the cloudless sky struck him down and fused the switch shut.

Annotations

to solder - lötten; ether - here: space/universe; cybernetics - intelligent electronic devices; surge - wave; panel - here: Schalttafel



Assignments

A. Text Understanding

1. Find the general meaning of the story.
2. Divide the story up into its main parts and describe them briefly.

B. Analysis

1. Describe the setting of the story.
2.
 - a. What point of view does the author take? Name it and describe it.
 - b. What effect is it supposed to have on the reader?
 - c. What other points of view do you know? Describe them briefly.
3.
 - a. Characterize Dwar Ev and Dwar Reyn.
 - b. Characterize the new cybernetics machine.
4.
 - a. Write down what the term "plot" means.
 - b. Describe the plot of the story.
5.
 - a. Describe the terms "surface meaning" and "metaphorical meaning".
 - b. What do you think is the metaphorical meaning of this story?





Answer

A. Text Understanding

1. a super computing machine has been constructed
combines all computers in the galaxy
it has become God
and takes over the power over the world
2. last work on the computer
ready to switch on
machine switched on
first question: Is there a God
the machine is now God
it kills the man who wants to switch it off

B. Analysis

1. distant future
technical device
planets
place: not specified
in a computer lab
atmosphere: tension (what is going to happen?)
fear
as the world has been taken over
2. a. author observer
he does not look into the characters' minds
only describes what he sees
objectively
b. reader does not know what to expect
tension
is it good or bad for mankind?
c. omniscient author:
looks into his characters' minds
knows their backgrounds
comments
narrator:
is the protagonist of the story
and tells it himself
narrator observer:
a minor character
observes the main characters



O Rose ...



- 1 O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,
- 5 Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
- 8 Does thy life destroy.

William Blake 1793;1794

Exercise

Write down what you think is the purpose the author wants to express with this poem.

VORSCHAU



O Rose ...

Bei diesem Gedicht - man sollte es als erstes nehmen -, lasse ich jeden Schüler in Stillarbeit niederschreiben, was er für die Aussage des Gedichtes hält. Dann lese ich die Antworten anonym vor.

Den Schülern wird klar werden, dass jeder seine individuelle Antwort gegeben hat, und dass dabei jeder, der ernsthaft um eine Antwort bemüht war, im Kern irgendwo richtig gelegen hat. Natürlich gibt es auch hier und da falsche Antworten. Sie werden - anonym - aussortiert, nach Diskussion.

Folgende Regeln gebe ich an die Tafel:

1. To understand a poem: do not read it in a careless manner, you might misread it.
2. Always look for a simple way to interpret it. You must not be afraid of expressing simple ideas when reading poems.
3. The author often addresses your feelings, let them guide you. But never forget to examine closely what the poet actually wrote.

Possible meaning of this poem:

Nothing, not even the most beautiful thing (which a rose symbolizes) is eternal. Everything will be destroyed eventually.

Man kann bereits hier eventuell über Bilder sprechen, über Symbole (Rose, worm, crimson etc.). Ich erwähne dies in der Regel, führe die Begriffe aber dann später ein.





Break, Break, Break

1 Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

5 O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings on his boat on the bay!

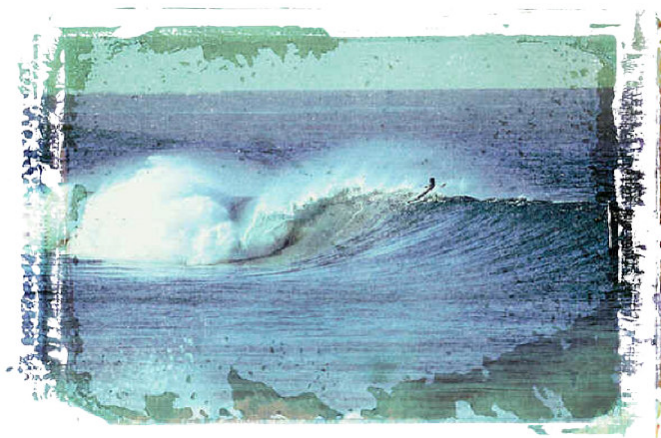
9 And stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And a sound of a voice that is still!

12 Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
15 Will never come back to me.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

Exercises

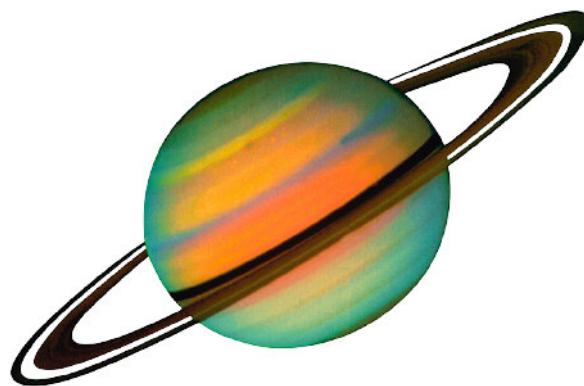
1. What is the poem about?
2. Describe briefly what each stanza is about.
3. What might be the author's intention?
4. Describe the stylistic devices the author uses.





When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer

1. The author has to hear an astronomy lesson and is obviously bored or even angered by it.
2. It consists of one long sentence: 4 when-clauses present us with the initial situation, the main clause follows, and another temporal clause finishes the poem.
The poem shows us a movement in time (from --- to), from an initial situation (when), the author's reaction, and to the final situation (till).
3. Contrast
The first sequence of temporal clauses describes a typical scientific approach to nature: they are sitting, in a room, see charts, diagrams, they add, divide, measure (mathematical operations) and try to explain the universe, take all its secrets from it.
The till-clause shows the contrasting attitude the author takes: he walks into the night, he experiences the air which is mystical (there are still secrets), and he looks up at the stars, without talking about them but keeping his silence in face of the wonderful, mysterious universe and its stars.
4. mystical moist night air: "mystical" shows that the author does not want to analyze the world, he thinks it is not possible; he wants to feel it as an individual experience which he cannot explain like the astronomer.
perfect silence: - complete silence as opposed to the talking scientist
- an entirely personal experience which he does not want to explain or share with others.
5. It is definitely ironical
the astronomer might be "learned" to his audience but on the other side he is not able to explain the secrets of our world.
6. The contrast and the author's attitude towards the scientist strongly suggest that the author is "tired and sick" of the scientists' way of explaining the universe. It is not only that they cannot achieve this, but they also destroy our emotional world, our feelings. The author does the only thing possible he can do: he leaves the boring lecture to enjoy our world as it is, in order to get healthy again. We are too small to explain the huge context of our universe. We should be contented with looking at the stars, at the magnificent view in awed silence rather than trying to explain things all the time.





Animal Farm

June came and the hay was almost ready for cutting. On Midsummer's Eve, which was a Saturday, Mr Jones went to Willingdon and got so drunk at the Red Lion that he did not come back till midday on Sunday. The men had milked the cows in the early morning and then had gone out rabbiting, without bothering to feed the animals. When Mr Jones got back he immediately went to sleep on the drawing room sofa with the News Of The World over his face, so that when the evening came, the animals were still unfed. At last they could stand it no longer. One of the cows broke in the door of the storehouse with her horns and all the animals began to help themselves from the bins. It was just then when Mr Jones woke up. The next moment he and his four men were in the storehouse with whips in their hands, lashing out in all directions. This was more than the poor animals could bear. With one accord, though nothing of the kind had been planned beforehand, they flung themselves upon their tormentors. Jones and his men suddenly found themselves being butted and kicked from all sides. The situation was quite out of their control. They had never seen animals behave like this before, and this sudden uprising of creatures whom they were used to thrashing and maltreating just as they chose, frightened them almost out of their wits. After only a moment or two they gave up trying to defend themselves and took to their heels. A moment later all five of them were in full flight down the carttrack that led to the main road, with the animals pursuing them in triumph.



Extract from: Animal Farm by George Orwell

Vocabulary

Midsummer's Eve - June 24th; Red Lion - a pub; to rabbit - to hunt rabbits; bin - container; with one accord - einmütig; they took to their heels - they ran away; to pursue - to run after sb; tormentor - Folterer; to thrash - to beat with whips or sticks; to maltreat - to treat badly; to be frightened out of one's wits - terribly frightened.

Exercises

- 1.1. What kind of text is this?
- 1.2. How do we know narrative prose?
2. Give the general meaning of the text.
3. Give the detailed meaning of the text.
4. What might be the author's intention?



Animal Farm

- 1.1. a. Fiction = an invented text/imagined (imagination), fiction
Novel, short story, drama, poetry - in literature
(adj. fictional, fictitious)
- b. Prose / no verse
It tells a story = it describes an action or series of actions → narrative prose

1.2. There is movement in time and action

Key words here: Verbs that describe activities (find them) - adverbs that show movement in time such as immediately, at last, the next moment, a minute later
dates, successive days: June, Midsummernight, Saturday

2. General meaning or main idea of a text
= the central event/thought expressed in one or two sentences
Here: Animals revolt against their masters after very bad treatment.

3. Detailed meaning
The text is divided up into its main stages / ideas
Normally you do this in one sentence.

Here: → unfed: behaviour of the farmers causes hunger
→ bins: animals help themselves
→ bear: violent reaction of men
→ end: revolt and victory

(Schüler schreiben ganze Sätze.)



4. author's intention / purpose
The story itself is the "surface meaning." "Metaphorical meaning" = a deeper meaning behind the story, a lesson the author wants to teach his readers, a comment on human behaviour, society, defects - the reader has to find out this himself, sometimes it is not easy. It is implied and not stated directly.

Never read into a text intentions that have neither been implied or expressed. Do not speculate! Always prove your statements!

Surface meaning here: a conflict between animals and men. The men behave like tyrants and oppress the animals, treat them badly, so the animals try to free themselves and succeed.

Men stand for: absolute rulers, dictators.

Animals: people that are oppressed.

Revolt: revolution

We see the animals in a positive light (we sympathize with them (sympathy = Mitleid).

Men are characterized negatively (they drink, do not do their duties, think of themselves only and leave the animals starving).

5. Point of view
he-perspective:

omniscient author: he knows everything about his characters' backgrounds, biographies, knows about their feelings and thoughts and often comments on them

author observer: he only watches his characters, cannot look into their minds, the reader has to make up his own opinion, is not helped by the author (the only objective point of view)

I-perspective:

narrator: the narrator plays an important role in the story, is one of the protagonists

narrator-observer: he is a minor character in the story and watches the protagonists and gives the reader his own (subjective view of the events).

Here: possibly narrator, as we can expect him to play a major role, but we cannot be certain as this is the beginning of a whole novel.

The point of view always serves a certain purpose:

Here: We see the fictional world through the eyes of a certain character, which often means that he/she makes us share his feelings, thoughts, likes and dislikes. So we take over his/her position/opinion, want to protect him and to see his adversaries unlucky or destroyed. Here the reader immediately takes his position against the Board, although we do not know anything about it or the character. He can be bad, and the board good.



6. Characterization

Two methods:

- explicit (direct): We are directly told what a person looks like, what kind of a person he is.
- implicit (indirect): We have to look for hints in the text that may help to describe a character. He may be described
 - by his actions,
 - by his surroundings (eg what his room, car etc. look like),
 - by the way other people treat him,
 - by objective hints given by the text that refer to him.

Here: implicit. The protagonist does not describe himself.

- Physical description/characterization: only: he is a man (shaves)
- Mental characterization: We can guess that he must have a certain intelligence because he wants to cheat the Board and must have a responsible job that requires a certain intelligence
- Social characterization: What is his position in society, how does he behave towards others, what is his job etc?

He is some kind of executive or businessman responsible to a Board, he heads a section.

He wants to clear himself from accusations unknown to us at present, and he wants to do this in a slightly dishonest way (evasions, exaggerations)

7. Plot and action

a. action = the sequence of events in a story

(a man dresses, washes, watches the news, goes to a board meeting)

b. plot: stories mainly get their lives from a conflict, a conflict of persons, of ideas, political systems, economical systems, or conflicts within the characters' minds

Here: a conflict between the narrator and the Board, the narrator is afraid as the Board obviously has power over him

8. Author's intention/purpose

There is always a purpose behind a story

In simple stories the only purpose is to entertain the reader.

- Surface meaning: the story as such. Here: a man in conflict with a board.
- Metaphorical meaning: the purpose of the author, the story that is invented reflects aspects of our real world, we have to find out which (→ allegory). Sometimes the author hides behind his surface meaning because he has to fear consequences for himself (e.g. punishment for criticism in a totalitarian state), sometimes the reader is better able to understand examples (Bible), sometimes it is easier for him to identify with the ideas, which he would have rejected if confronted with the real problem, etc.



The Luncheon

I was startled when the bill of fare was brought for the prices were a great deal higher than I had anticipated. But she reassured me.

"I never eat anything for luncheon," she said.

"Oh, don't say that!" I answered generously.

"I never eat more than one thing. I think people eat far too much nowadays. A little fish, perhaps. I wonder if they have any salmon."

Well, it was early in the year for salmon and it was not on the bill of fare, but I asked the waiter if there was any. Yes, a beautiful salmon had just come in, it was the first they had had. I ordered it for my guest. The waiter asked her if she would have something while it was being cooked.

"No," she answered, "I never eat more than one thing. Unless you had a little caviare. I never mind caviare."

My heart sank a little. I knew I could not afford caviare, but I could not very well tell her that. I told the waiter by all means to bring caviare. For myself I chose the cheapest dish on the menu and that was a mutton chop.

"I think you are unwise to eat meat," she said. "I don't know how you can expect to work after eating heavy things like chops. I don't believe in overloading my stomach."

Then came the question of drink.

"I never drink anything for luncheon," she said.

"Neither do I," I answered promptly.

"Except white wine," she proceeded as though I had not spoken. These French white wines are so light. They are wonderful for the digestion."

"What would you like?" I asked, hospitable still, but not exactly effusive.

She gave me a bright and amicable flash of her white teeth.

"My doctor won't let me drink anything but champagne."



From: William Somerset Maugham

Annotations

bill of fare - menu; to anticipate - to expect; to reassure - beruhigen; salmon - Lachs; effusive - encouraging, hearty; amicable - friendly

Exercises

1. What is the general meaning of the text?
2. Characterize the narrator and the lady.
3. What stylistic device does the author mainly use?
4. Comment on the author's message.