Revising the content – 1

In the following passage you will find a number of things that need to be changed: the active for the passive voice, empty phrases, prepositional phrases that need to be replaced by prepositions, and weak nouns and verbs that need to be replaced. Make the corrections and then check them with the answer below. I have reproduced the article three times, so that in the second version you can see what needs to be changed and in the third the results of making the changes.

Seeing in the Dark

It is a common assumption that creativity goes hand in hand with political freedom. But, all things considered, if this were really the case most countries would at the present time be experiencing a significant increase in artistic creativity of a quality not seen before. The art of post-war democracies would be far superior to the art of the inter-war period. And, in the final analysis, post-Cold War democracies, enjoying their new found freedom, would be producing even better work. But, sadly, this is not the case. French art of the 1970s and 80s is not a patch on the art of the age of Dreyfus or that of Loius XVI. The poetry of those who fought on the Western Front in the First World War is a kind of watershed in the history of modern poetry, yet it was written at a moment in time when the poet’s very survival was a constant struggle and opportunities for freedom of thought, let alone expression, were virtually non-existent.

As a matter of fact, in societies enjoying the freedoms of liberal democracy, art might have more to fear. The repressive tolerance of the free market, in which anything goes as long as the price is right, leads to a dispiriting climate of indifference. Art becomes just one form of entertainment among many: debased and anonymous it represents nothing significant in the cultural development of nations. Perhaps, all things considered, artists do need to be didactic in order to etch their identity clearly against a social and political reality they’re opposed to. In the words of Theodore Roethke, ‘in the dark time, the eye begins to see.’

For example, in nineteenth century Russia, Tsarist control over the arts was almost complete. Writers, like Dostoevsky, were condemned to death, while others, like Pyotr Chaadayev, were declared officially insane. Yet it produced the work of Pushkin, Lemontov, Turgenev, Chekhov, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, all of whom for much of their lives were kind of at odds with the regime. In twentieth century Russia Boris Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his novel *Doctor Zhivago*, despite a concerted campaign of vilification and persecution. And, after 12 years in a Soviet labour camp, *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a realistic record of Stalinism as it was experienced by millions of ordinary Russians.

Even the classic American crime novel seems to progress as a consequence of its didactic content. The works of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and others, are full of social preoccupations: the alienating nature of urban life; the conflict between the government and the individual; and the sense of society falling apart into moral chaos. And, significantly, they seem to do best at those moments in time when they’re most at odds with their society: during the ultra-conformist, ultra-suburbanite years of Eisenhower, re-emerging during the Reagan years when patriotic fervour and the rhetoric about family values, supported a frame of mind that was more accepting than critical. With their pungent tone and sharp social observations they inhabit the menacing environment of modern urban existence, contrasting sharply with the comfortable middle-class drawing rooms of political leaders.

At the end of the day all of this suggests that art has no right to lead an autonomous existence in a world divorced from the values of human life. The values of the society in which it is produced are both reflected and shaped by it. Around the time of Dostoevsky’s imprisonment Belinsky argued, ‘To deny art the right of serving public interests means debasing it, not raising it, for that would mean depriving it of its most vital force, that is, the idea, and would make it an object of sybaritic pleasure, a plaything of lazy idlers.’

Answer:

The parts that need to be changed

I have highlighted in red those parts of the article that need to be changed.

Seeing in the Dark

It is a common assumption that creativity goes hand in hand with political freedom. But, all things considered, if this were really the case most countries would at the present time be experiencing a significant increase in artistic creativity of a quality not seen before. The art of post-war democracies would be far superior to the art of the inter-war period. And, in the final analysis, post-Cold War democracies, enjoying their new found freedom, would be producing even better work. But, sadly, this is not the case. French art of the 1970s and 80s is not a patch on the art of the age of Dreyfus or that of Loius XVI. The poetry of those who fought on the Western Front in the First World War is a kind of watershed in the history of modern poetry, yet it was written at a moment in time when the poet’s very survival was a constant struggle and opportunities for freedom of thought, let alone expression, were virtually non-existent.

As a matter of fact, in societies enjoying the freedoms of liberal democracy, art might have more to fear. The repressive tolerance of the free market, in which anything goes as long as the price is right, leads to a dispiriting climate of indifference. Art becomes just one form of entertainment among many: debased and anonymous it represents nothing significant in the cultural development of nations. Perhaps, all things considered, artists do need to be didactic in order to etch their identity clearly against a social and political reality they’re opposed to. In the words of Theodore Roethke, ‘in the dark time, the eye begins to see.’

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Even the classic American crime novel seems to progress as a consequence of its didactic content. The works of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and others, are full of social preoccupations: the alienating nature of urban life; the conflict between the government and the individual; and the sense of society falling apart into moral chaos. And, significantly, they seem to do best at those moments in time when they’re most at odds with their society: during the ultra-conformist, ultra-suburbanite years of Eisenhower, re-emerging during the Reagan years when patriotic fervour and the rhetoric about family values, supported a frame of mind that was more accepting than critical. With their pungent tone and sharp social observations they inhabit the menacing environment of modern urban existence, contrasting sharply with the comfortable middle-class drawing rooms of political leaders.

At the end of the day all of this suggests that art has no right to lead an autonomous existence in a world divorced from the values of human life. The values of the society in which it is produced are both reflected and shaped by it. Around the time of Dostoevsky’s imprisonment Belinsky argued, ‘To deny art the right of serving public interests means debasing it, not raising it, for that would mean depriving it of its most vital force, that is, the idea, and would make it an object of sybaritic pleasure, a plaything of lazy idlers.’

The revised form:

Seeing in the Dark

It is a common assumption that creativity goes hand in hand with political freedom. But if this were really the case most countries would now be experiencing an explosion in artistic creativity of a quality not seen before. The art of post-war democracies would be far superior to the art of the inter-war period. And post-Cold War democracies, enjoying their new found freedom, would be producing even better work. But, sadly, this is not the case. French art of the 1970s and 80s is not a patch on the art of the age of Dreyfus or that of Loius XVI. The poetry of those who fought on the Western Front in the First World War is a watershed in the history of modern poetry, yet it was written when the poet’s very survival was a constant struggle and opportunities for freedom of thought, let alone expression, were virtually non-existent.

In fact, in societies enjoying the freedoms of liberal democracy, art might have more to fear. The repressive tolerance of the free market, in which anything goes as long as the price is right, foments a dispiriting climate of indifference. Art becomes just one form of entertainment among many: debased and anonymous it represents nothing significant in the cultural development of nations. Perhaps, artists do need to be didactic in order to etch their identity clearly against a social and political reality they’re opposed to. In the words of Theodore Roethke, ‘in the dark time, the eye begins to see.’[[1]](#endnote-1)1

For example, in nineteenth century Russia, Tsarist control over the arts was almost complete. Writers, like Dostoevsky, were condemned to death, while others, like Pyotr Chaadayev, were declared officially insane. Yet it produced the work of Pushkin, Lemontov, Turgenev, Chekhov, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, all of whom for much of their lives were at odds with the regime. In twentieth century Russia Boris Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his novel *Doctor Zhivago*, despite a campaign of vilification and persecution. And, after 12 years in a Soviet labour camp, Alexander Solzhenitsyn published *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, an evocation of Stalinism as it was experienced by millions of ordinary Russians.

Even the classic American crime novel seems to thrive because of its didactic content. The works of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and others, are full of social preoccupations: the alienating nature of urban life; the conflict between the government and the individual; and the sense of society crumbling into moral chaos. And, significantly, they seem to flourish at those times when they’re most at odds with their society: during the ultra-conformist, ultra-suburbanite years of Eisenhower, re-emerging during the Reagan years when patriotic fervour and the rhetoric about family values, endorsed a frame of mind that was more accepting than critical. With their pungent tone and sharp social observations they inhabit the menacing environment of modern urban existence, contrasting sharply with the comfortable middle-class drawing rooms of political leaders.

All of this suggests that art has no right to lead an autonomous existence in a world divorced from the values of human life. It both reflects and shapes the values of the society in which it is produced. Around the time of Dostoevsky’s imprisonment Belinsky argued, ‘To deny art the right of serving public interests means debasing it, not raising it, for that would mean depriving it of its most vital force, that is, the idea, and would make it an object of sybaritic pleasure, a plaything of lazy idlers.’[[2]](#endnote-2)2

1. 1 Roethke, Theodore, ‘In a Dark Time’ in *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke* (London: Faber &

Faber, 1966), p. 239. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. 2 Kochan, Lionel & Abraham, Richard, *The Making of Modern Russia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin,

1990), p. 173. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)