

## READING INTO HUMAN RIGHTS: IMAGINING THE OTHER

**Paul A. Lizotte, Ph.D.\***  
**Professor of English, Rivier University**

### **Abstract**

*Developing an ethical imagination should be an important goal of education. Reading ethically requires the ability to imagine the other<sup>i</sup>. But representing that "other" in literature and determining what we mean by "ethical concerns" or "human rights" remain problematic. A dialogic theory can begin to address some of the criticisms that feminists and post-colonialists had made of foundational theories of rights, but problems persist. Two works of literature, "Nomad and Viper" by Amos Oz and *Anil's Ghost* by Michael Ondaatje, dramatize these difficulties and illustrate why confronting the other requires the development of an ethical imagination willing to remain critical of its own ideological biases.*

### **The Problem of Human Rights**

To read ethically<sup>ii</sup>, today, is problematic. Since the 1960's, professional readers have been warning us to be suspicious of books and of words for their power to assert ideology where none may have been intended and little suspected. Literary critics have been disenchanters, trying to awaken us from the spell of fiction to the complexities of texts and the endless maze of meaning they represent. The reasons for reading have also changed. We turn to literature, not for examples of how to live and how not to live, but to become more sophisticated deconstructors<sup>iii</sup> of meaning and more alert to authors' inherent will-to-power. But what if we wish to read for cultural understanding and even more significantly, to increase our understanding of others in terms of the ethical issues they face? How can we do so without being naïve readers<sup>iv</sup>?

When it comes to addressing questions of human rights and understanding others through literature, disenchanting<sup>v</sup> reading strategies have their place. For one thing, they remind us of the master narratives imbedded in many works and rightly make us suspicious of all universal claims about men, woman, and "humans." For the past 40 years, literary criticism, through the influence of feminist, post-structuralist, post-colonialist, minority, gender-specific, political, and psychoanalytical perspectives has exposed the difficulty of finding a standing point that is not compromised by, and complicit in, its own ideology. As Masao Miyoshi notes, U. S. literary scholars reveal "an undeniable common proclivity . . . to fundamentally reject such totalizing concepts as humanity, civilization, history, and justice, and such subtotalities as a region, a nation, a locality, or even any smallest group" (McClennen 41). And as Naomi Sokoloff points out, this skeptical school sees all literature as deeply ingrained with cultural bias, inscribing these biases blindly. So that from this critical perspective "canonically accepted texts often encompass, distort, or misrepresent the more suppressed voices of society, thereby marginalizing them and reinforcing their subordinate status" (Sokoloff 37). Literature, from this perspective, can never fully depict the outsider except through the misrepresentations of its own unconscious limited horizon. Literature is not a means by which we step out of ourselves but a reflection of the author's or culture's inability to move beyond ourselves. The problem, however, is that human rights theory has for the most part been based on claims of universality and the assumption that we can step outside ourselves. And addressing issues of human rights in literary texts assumes that we can apply some universal principles of justice and that we can read ethically, for meaning and values. But even this assumption, as James Ife

points out, that "rights" exist independently in an objective form that can be verified, has been challenged by these critical approaches, much like the positivist world-view from which a universalist definition of human rights derives (Ife 5-6).

Moral philosophers have grappled with the fundamental grounds of human rights. And while it may seem obvious to ground such rights in a common definition of our humanity, assumptions behind those definitions are not always clear. One current problem, for example, has been the expropriation of the idea of individual rights by an economic model of "freedom." McClennen and Slaughter, for example, discuss what happens when the language of human rights is transformed from a moral imperative to a consumer ideal—when the right to consume freely and enjoy full economic freedom becomes the common value that motivates social action:

This transformation of the discourse of human rights into a language of desire and indulgence threatens to undermine their position as central principles of political and legal organisation"; that is, human rights begin to lose their institutional force as the founding ideals of a polity when they become a free-floating discourse of social satisfaction and goodwill.<sup>3</sup> In some cases, human rights become indistinguishable from consumer rights, no longer signaling a demand for equal participation in a just social and political order but, rather, an entitlement to enjoy the fruits of free markets. (McClennen 42)

Such an association presents serious problems. As Steven Lukes notes, when human rights are conceived primarily as market freedoms—the right to consume, own, participate in the economic order—then "the poor, homeless, marginalized persons in [the] society do not enjoy equal respect, or equal access to and influence within essential political and social institutions" (Shute 5).

A second problem results from the fact that a universalizing definition of rights tends to overlook differences. Feminist critics, for example, have pointed out how many human rights abuses against women often go unreported or are marginalized because the discourse about rights has been largely the result of a male dialogue and according to male definitions. For example, Catherine McKinnon has pointed out that male oppression goes widely unreported and often unremarked: "when individual men use their social dominance to oppress women, this oppression is ignored because it does not fit the human rights model" (Shute 10). There is also the fact that this human rights model, according to McKinnon, "has been built around a formal notion of equality that omits or marginalizes women; their claim to human status is denied or seen as tenuous or unprecedented" (Shute 10).

## Dialogic Approaches

An alternative to a foundational view of human rights is the see rights, as in other areas of human meaning, "constructed through human interaction and through an ongoing dialogue about what should constitute a common humanity. . . "(Ife 7). While at first it might seem that such a focus threatens the very foundation of human rights' claims to universality, the emphasis on dialogue opens up areas of discourse, particularly in literary studies, where human dilemmas are dramatized and subject to ongoing examination and discussion.

This dialogic approach to rights is derived from Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic self. For Bakhtin, the self is not something given, not something whole and entire that we form by ourselves, but something constructed out of our interchange with our world and with others. Identity is not stable; it is

a transaction, always in flux, always a "response," an answer to a question posed by others. As a result, we can only know ourselves through interaction with others:

It is only in the other human being, in fact, that a living, aesthetically (and ethically) convincing experience of human finitude is given to me, the experience of a human being as a delimited empirical object. The other is given to me entirely enclosed in a world that is external to me; he is given to me as a constituent in it that is totally delimited on all sides in space. (Sokoloff 36)

It is only in our relationships with others that we come to understand ourselves, our limits, and the boundaries that separate me from the other. In Bakhtin's thinking, there is no merging of identities that takes place within this encounter; only a constant interchange and reminder of the flexible boundaries between identities. A dialogical relationship implies dialogue.

The possibility of real understanding, or real meaning, for Bakhtin, thus depends on this interchange with the "other."

The idea lives not in one person's isolated individual consciousness – if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of others. Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is, in someone else's consciousness expressed in discourse. At that point of contact between voice–consciousness the idea is born and lives. (Sokoloff 41)

For Bakhtin it is not the fixed system of language that gives words and ideas meaning, but the fluid, dynamic realm of social interaction that keeps ideas alive. The word, both verbal and written, is "not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile, eternally fickle medium of dialogic interaction" (202).

### Affective Approaches

If a dialogic approach offers one way beyond universalist definitions, another alternative is to ground human rights in the affections rather than in reason, to expand our empathy rather than refine our definitions. Just as foundationalist ideologies have been rendered suspect by post-structuralist criticism, so too foundationalist claims of human rights as grounded in rationality have been challenged. In his essay "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," Richard Rorty critiques foundationalism for its inability to prevent people from denying rationality to others. Rorty begins that essay by citing stories of Serbian treatment of Muslims during the Bosnian war:

Serbian murderers and rapists do not think of themselves as violating human rights. For they are not doing these things to fellow human beings, but to *Muslims*. They are not being inhuman, but rather are discriminating between the true humans and the pseudohumans. They are making the same sort of distinction as the Crusaders made between humans and infidel dogs, and the Black Muslims make between humans and blue-eyed devils. The founder of my university [Thomas Jefferson] was able both to own slaves and to think it self-evident that all men were endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. He had convinced himself that the consciousness of

Blacks, like that of animals, "participate[s] more of sensation than reflection. Like the Serbs, Mr. Jefferson did not think of himself as violating *human* rights. (Rorty 1)

At the heart of Rorty's argument is his belief that the attempt to define human rights in terms of reason—what distinguishes us from animals—overlooks the fact that the definition depends on who we decide to count as rational. As Rorty goes on to point out, “for most white people, until very recently, most Black people did not so count. For most Christians, up until the seventeenth century or so, most heathen did not so count. For the Nazis, Jews did not so count. For most males in countries in which the average annual income is under four thousand dollars, most females still do not so count” (Rorty 5). Rather than try to convince people to overlook cultural, religious, tribal, ethnic differences in favor of some timeless, rational ideal, Rorty believes we should turn our focus to what can realistically be accomplished to improve conditions for future generations. And he believes the sentiments—of sympathy and empathy—provide a more pragmatic and surer guide for moral behavior than rational argument or moral imperatives. We should not, he says “see it as the moral educator's task to answer the rational egotist's question ‘Why should I be moral?’ but rather to answer the much more frequently posed question ‘Why should I care about a stranger, a person who is no kin to me, a person whose habits I find disgusting?’” (Rorty 11). While ideology is often fixed, the sentiments are malleable. Thus for Rorty, it is not so much “minds” that must be changed as the imagination that must be educated to expand our sense of kinship with those unlike ourselves. Rorty calls this process a sentimental education, an education of the sentiments, similar to what Rousseau described as the basis of Emile's education—an education, as Martha Nussbaum points out, which is designed to mitigate the narcissism of childhood and the narrow identification of class and kinship. In Emile's case, this education continues “through a wide range of narratives [by which ] he must learn to identify with the lot of others, to see the world through their eyes, and to feel their sufferings vividly through the imagination.” (Nussbaum, “Not for Profit” 40)

Of course, one of the strongest objections to this reliance on the affections is that they, too, may lead us astray and are as subject to manipulation as reason. Literature itself, as Shute and Hurley remind us, is not immune to these distortions and, in some cases, has continued to foster these same cultural biases and blindnesses:

It is equally important to recall that as often as cultural forms make human suffering visible they distort perceptions in ways that make it possible to disenfranchise and abuse others. Unwilling to romanticize literary interventions, Scarry notes that literature does not always help us to “imagine others” and often serves to underscore national and ethnic divisions (Scarry 104). And, as we know, culture has played an essential role in rendering entire populations into non-humans or even anti-human security threats. This is especially so, as Edward Said claims in *Covering Islam*, in many Western representations of Islamic peoples. (Shute 21)

But others, like Martha Nussbaum, retort that literature, in its ability to educate our imagination, offers a way “of overcoming otherness by depicting inner life . . . it may penetrate the intimate never-communicated thoughts of someone else and so reveal the hidden side of people to give voice to those not readily heard by society” (Sokoloff 37)

Amos Oz, the celebrated Israeli novelist, has perhaps given the strongest support to this position, speaking from the vantage point of someone who has lived the reality of “otherness” for over a half-century:

"As you read a foreign novel, you are actually invited into other people's living rooms, into their nurseries and studies, into their bedrooms. You are invited into their secret sorrows, into their family joys, into their dreams. Which is why I believe in literature as a bridge between peoples. I believe curiosity can be a moral quality. I believe imagining the other can be an antidote to fanaticism. (Oz, "Acceptance Speech")

In the rest of this essay, I am going to examine two works of fiction and a number of poems by contemporary world writers who attempt to address this problem of imagining the other in the context of human rights.

### **Confronting the Other: "Nomad and Viper"**

Amos Oz's story, "Nomad and Viper," explores many of these ideas— the difficulty involved in, but the absolute necessity of, imagining the "other," the need for a dialogic understanding, and the importance of empathy as the ground of rights. "Nomad and Viper" probes the psychological attraction and repulsion exerted by the other and the destructive consequences of repressing that knowledge.

In the story, the members of an Israeli kibbutz are plagued by an influx of Bedouins, driven there by famine and drought. What begins as a humanitarian gesture, "open[ing] the roads leading north . . . [to] a whole population . . . [that] could not simply be abandoned to the horrors of starvation," becomes a troubling experience as the settlers find their crops trampled by the Bedouins' livestock, some of their possessions stolen, and the threat of disease always lurking. The Bedouin themselves, seen through the eyes of the settlers, appear less than fully human, though more powerful for all their mysterious "otherness":

Sometimes you manage to catch them unawares. Crossing a field on foot, you may suddenly happen on an indolent flock standing motionless . . . . Among them lies the shepherd, fast asleep, dark as a block of basalt. You approach and cover him with a harsh shadow. You are startled to find his eyes wide open. He bares most of his teeth in a placatory smile. Some of them are gleaming, others decayed. His smell hits you. You grimace. Your grimace hits him like a punch in the face. . . . After a hundred, two hundred paces, you may turn your head and see him standing just as he was, his gaze stabbing your back. (78)

In this climate of suspicion, distrust, and submerged violence, the central character, Geula, encounters a solitary Bedouin in an orchard. Geula is the rock that everyone looks to. She is the one who makes the extra strong coffee to keep the men awake during the late-night meetings. At 29, she is unmarried and clearly repressed. Her unspoken refrain throughout the story, "must get out," testifies to her deep psychological need to break free of her constricted role in this society, though it is clear she does not know how.

When she leaves the camp one evening and comes upon a Bedouin herder in an orchard, the encounter is sensual and conflicted. Geula notices physical details:

His skin was very dark; it was alive and warm, Creases were etched in his cheeks. He was unlike any man Geula had ever known, and his smell and color and breathing were also strange. . . . The man was repulsively handsome. (85)

It's that oxymoron—"repulsively handsome"—that Geula is never able to resolve. At first Geula is drawn to the Bedouin's strangeness, but as the sounds of the nomad encampment nearby begin to penetrate her consciousness, Geula comes to herself, trying to assert their differences:

What's the matter with you? . . . what are you talking to me in Arabic all of a sudden? What do you think I am? What do you want here, anyway? (87)

When the man turns away in fear at her questions, Geula becomes aware of how vulnerable she has made herself:

Then panic struck her and her blood froze. Her mouth opened to scream but she didn't scream, she started to run and she ran barefoot with all her strength for home and stumbled and rose and ran as though pursued . . . (87)

Oz is interested in the way that Geula reacts to this sensuous opening of herself to the other, exposing her vulnerability. We see her in the next scene taking a shower to purify herself and constructing a story of imagined rape as a way of making sense of this encounter, of protecting her identity and integrity in the only way she knows how. At the end of the story, the young men of the kibbutz, unable to be restrained by the cautious voices of the elders, go off with clubs to the Bedouin camp to act out the violence they—and Geula—have repressed. We find Geula lying in the dark, among the shards of a bottle she has smashed out of frustration and aware that she is about to be bitten by a poisonous snake—the "viper" of the story's title. In that image, Oz gives us a Biblical echo of what could have been different in that orchard encounter—an opening of self to other, a temptation leading to salvation, rather than exile. But instead, we have an encounter poisoned by the viper of hatred, self-doubt, defensiveness, and social stereotyping. The story offers no easy solution to this problem of conflicting people and cultures. The Bedouin remain resolutely "other." For example, at one point in the story, the elders of the Kibbutz try to deal rationally with the Bedouin by demanding that they keep their young men from stealing and their livestock from straying. But all they meet is a frustrating wall of civility that parries their requests and admits nothing. But if reason and logic cannot solve the problem, neither can force or violence. For Oz, Geula's character points to the deep insecurities of the settlers themselves that must be resolved before they can begin the difficult process of accepting those with whom they must share their land. As Oz has said in a 2007 article,

Part of the tragedy between Jew and Arab is the inability of so many of us, Jews and Arabs, to imagine each other. Really imagine each other: the loves, the terrible fears, the anger, the passion. There is too much hostility between us, too little curiosity." (Oz, "Understanding")

And in an earlier essay, Oz gave a more sanguine view of the probably outcome.

I am not one of those who hold the fatalistic view that there is no other way out of the tragedy [Israel/Palestinian conflict] than the ultimate defeat of one side in blood and fire. On the other hand, I do not share the melodramatic vision of the two reconciling sides embracing each other as soon as the magic geopolitical formula is found. The best we can expect, in the usual way of tragic situations between individuals and peoples, is a process of adaptation and psychological acceptance accompanied by a slow, agonizing awakening to reality, burdened with bitterness and

deprivation, with shattered dreams and suspicions and reservations which, in the way of human wounds, heal slowly and leave permanent scars. (Oz, "The Meaning of Homeland" 251)

### Reading the Bones: *Anil's Ghost*

How one brings abstract principles of human rights to bear on specific human tragedies is the subject of Michael Ondaatje's 2000 novel, *Anil's Ghost*. The main character, Anil, is a female forensic anthropologist returning to her Sri Lankan homeland to participate in a UN sponsored investigation of human rights abuses. The novel dramatizes the difficulties of an outsider trying to penetrate the hearts and minds of a society she is now separated from and the limitations of objectivity in arriving at the truth. And the novel is about Anil's education into the complexities of representing the absent victims in a way that makes them compelling presences—establishing a literal body of evidence, that will be undeniable proof of criminal responsibility, in a society which disdains human rights.

In the novel, Anil brings with her a Western belief in the power of science and of objective facts to represent the truth fully. For Anil, we are told, "information could always be clarified and acted upon (54). At first, she sees herself motivated by professional concerns only. But when a skeleton in a government protected area turns out to be from a recent body, her intellectual curiosity is transformed into a personal quest to bring this victim's killers to justice. She names the skeleton "Sailor" (from the nursery rhyme, "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor"). "Sailor" represents, for Anil, the possibility of establishing once and for all the full presence of the silenced victim. As she tells her Sri Lankan colleague, Sarath, Sailor is the "representative of all those lost voices. To give him a name would name the rest."

Anil's first glimpse that more than naming and more than explanation will be needed to deal with such a tragedy comes when she sees the families of the disappeared:

She used to believe that meaning allowed a person a door to escape grief and fear. But she saw that those who were slammed and stained by violence lost the power of language and logic. It was the way to abandon emotion, a last protection for the self. They held on to just the coloured and patterned sarong a missing relative last slept in, which in normal times would have become a household rag but now was sacred. (55-56)

The extent to which science and reason alone are inadequate to establish the truth in Sri Lanka is raised by another character in the book, Palipana. A celebrated epigraphist, he was known as a brilliant decipherer and rigorous interpreter of ancient texts. With Palipana, we're told "all archaeological data proposed by a student had to be confirmed. Every rock cuneiform or carving had to be drawn and redrawn onto the pages of journals, in sand, on blackboards, until it was a part of dreams." (79-80).

But by the time Anil finds Palipana, he has retreated from the scientific community, rejected his previous methods, and is leading an ascetic life in the ruins of a Buddhist monastery. For Palipana, the meticulous accumulation of facts has ceased to be adequate to the truth as he now understands it. As his knowledge increased, so too did his understanding of the limitations of his science. He now sees that more is required—he needs to enter imaginatively into the lives hinted at by the inscriptions he studied, to put a "face" on the faceless inscriptions he reads:

And he began to see as truth things that could only be guessed at. In no way did this feel to him like forgery or falsification. . . the patterns that emerged for Palipana had begun to coalesce.

They linked hands. They allowed walking across water, they allowed a leap from treetop to treetop. The water filled a cut alphabet and linked this shore and that. And so the unprovable truth emerged (83).

It takes Anil a while to realize that Palipana is, in fact, blind. When she shares Sailor's skull with him, she watches with fascination his intimate probing of what for her, to this point, has been merely a piece of forensic evidence:

Anil watched his fingers, beautiful and thin, moving over the outlines of the skull Sarath had given him, his long fingernails at the supraorbital ridge, within the orbital cavities, then cupping the shape as if warming his palms on the skull, as if it were a stone from some old fire. (87)

Anil learns yet another lesson from a sculptor they hire to reconstruct the face of this skeleton. The sculptor, Ananda, specializes in the "eye" ritual—the ritual by which special artists paint eyes on a holy statue in order to bring it to life. But Ananda is an alcoholic whose work habits seem inefficient and pointless by Anil's standards. He spends weeks simply sitting in the nearby village, observing the villagers and talking to them. At first, Anil is impatient; she criticizes what she sees as unnecessary delay. Yet as she watches, she begins to understand Ananda's process—that the victim's identity can only be realized through an intimate connection to community from which he came. When Anil observes Ananda finally sitting with the skull and building its features from clay, she comes to realize Ananda has succeeded in embodying this individual, re-creating a life, not just a forensic fact. And this recognition changes her whole understanding of her project:

There had been hours when, locked in her investigations and too focused by hours of intricacy, she too would need to reach forward and lift Sailor into her arms, to remind herself he was like her. Not just evidence, but someone with charms and flaws, part of a family, a member of a village who in the sudden lightning of politics raised his hands at the last minute, so they were broken" (170). . . His head was not just how someone possibly looked, it was a specific person. It revealed a distinct personality. . . As if she was finally meeting a person who had been described to her in letters, or someone she had once lifted up as a child who was now an adult (183-4). . . . She sat down in one of the large cane chairs in the dining room and began weeping (185)

What began, for Anil, as a professional investigation, a scientific attempt to establish this individual's legal identity, becomes an empathetic journey into the lived experience of a human life. When her colleague asks her who she was crying for, Anil can only reply, "Ananda, Sailor, their lovers, your brother working himself to death. There's only a mad logic here, no resolving" (186). The distance between her as observer and Sailor as victim collapses even further when she allows the sculptor Ananda to touch her, and she feels herself as much a creation of his sympathy and understanding as Sailor was: "He moved two steps forward and with his thumb erased away the pain around her eye along with her tears' wetness. . . . while the other hand came up to her face, kneaded the skin of that implied tension of weeping as if hers too was a face being sculpted . . . This was a tenderness she was receiving" (187). Anil begins to understand that it is only through the eyes of, and the connection with, the others around her—Sarath, the committed archeologist, Ananda the half-drunk eye painter, Gamini, Sarath's physician brother who soldiers on against almost impossible odds, Lakma the girl who had seen her parents killed at 12, and who had been given the "eyes" to look deeply into the heart of this



experience—that she can fully comprehend the human truth that this skeleton represents and bring it to life. As Palipana says about the "eye-ritual," "without the eyes there is not just blindness, there is nothing. There is no existence. The artificer brings to life sight and truth and presence. [However] . . . He never looks at the eyes directly. He can only see the gaze in the mirror" (99).

At one point in the novel, we are told that “for [Anil] the journey was in getting to the truth.” But her colleague, Sarath recognizes that objective truth alone, in this highly politicized climate, will be merely “a flame against a sleeping lake of petrol.”

In the most sustained discussion of truth in the novel, Sarath, Anil’s Indonesian counterpart in the novel, recalls the time he spent exploring the images and hieroglyphs of their country's past in caves. Sarath viewed these images by the light of a burning rhododendron branch. In a description meant to invert Plato's image of the cave, Sarath describes how by that light he saw a truth about the human condition denied by the harsh glare of government propaganda outside:

As an archaeologist Sarath . . . would have given his life for the truth if the truth were of any use. And privately . . . he would, he knew, also give his life for the rock carving from another century of the woman bending over her child. He remembered how they had stood before it in the flickering light, Palipana’s arm following the line of the mother’s back bowed in affection or grief. An unseen child. All the gestures of motherhood harnessed. A muffled scream in her posture. . . . Half the world, it felt, was being buried, the truth hidden by fear, while the past revealed itself in the light of a burning rhododendron bush."

This figure, these gestures, are the forms of truth worth fighting for, embodied reminders of shared vulnerability and shared hope. Where Anil once thought that reconstructing sailor's identity would be sufficient to right centuries of wrong, she finds that, like the images in the cave, the truth about Sailor may need to wait for years, centuries, before it can emerge, through the imagination of others, to make its testimony known.

## Works Cited

- Ife, James. *Human Rights and Social Work: Towards Rights-based Practice*. Cambridge University Press. August 13, 2001.
- McClennen, Sophia A. and Joseph R. Slaughter. “Introducing Human Rights and Literary Forms; or, The Vehicles and Vocabularies of Human Rights.” *Comparative Literature Studies*, Volume 46, Number 1, 2009, pp. 1-19. Online: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/13>
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Oz, Amos. "The Meaning of Homeland." In *The Amos Oz Reader*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2009: 235-252.
- Oz, Amos. “Acceptance Speech for Prince of Asturias Award for Literature.” *The Times*, November 3, 2007.
- Oz, Amos. “Nomad and Viper” in Geok-Lin Lim, Shirley and Norman A. Spencer. *One World of Literature*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.
- Ondaatje, Michael. *Anil’s Ghost*. New York: Vintage, 2001 (2000).
- Rorty, Richard. “Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality.” Retrieved March 25, 2013, from <http://www.usm.maine.edu/~bcj/issues/three/rorty.html>.

- Shute Stephen, and Susan L. Hurley. "On Human Rights" (Oxford Amnesty Lectures) *Philosophy and Literature* 22.2 (1998) 343-365.
- Sokoloff, Naomi. "David Grossman: Translating the 'other' in 'Momik'." In *Israeli Writers Consider the 'Outsider'*. Ed. Leon I. Yudkin. Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh-Dickinson University Press, 1993, pp. 37-56.

---

<sup>i</sup> The concept of the 'other' in literature can take on numerous forms and on one thread of thought it is considered to be an individual who is perceived by a group as not belonging; as they have been culturally constructed as being fundamentally different in some way. (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory 1999)

<sup>ii</sup> When we "read ethically" it is with an eye to those issues of moral import in a work, to the decisions characters make and to values of the world they inhabit, rather than primarily to the aesthetics of presentation of those ideas. "Reasoning ethically" implies making judgments based on prior ethical premises. The first term is receptive, the other one argumentative.

<sup>iii</sup> Deconstruction is philosophical movement and theory of literary criticism that questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth; asserts that words can only refer to other words; and attempts to demonstrate how statements about any text subvert their own meanings: "*In deconstruction, the critic claims there is no meaning to be found in the actual text, but only in the various, often mutually irreconcilable, 'virtual texts' constructed by readers in their search for meaning.*"

<sup>iv</sup> A "naïve reader" is an artificial construct, since none of us approaches a work without a set of expectations or schema by which to read it.

<sup>v</sup> This term signifies the difference between a reader who allows the work to guide their imagination or a reader who resists the imaginative power of the work. Reading is always a combination of "enchantment" and "disenchantment"—losing oneself in the work and reflecting critically on the work.

---

\* **PAUL A. LIZOTTE**, Ph.D., is Professor of English at Rivier University. He teaches courses in literature and writing with a focus on 10th Century British Romanticism.