

# Literary occasion

Computer Weekly  
9 Dec 1982

IT was a thoroughly uncomputer like event, apart from the ubiquitous Clive himself – but then it was his event.

All the literary lions were there, figures from the ghost of your writer's Eng-Lit degree.

There are now about six major literary awards each year for fiction, but none until now was given for unpublished work.

Clive Sinclair, charismatic ruler of Sinclair Reserch, has stepped into the gap with an award of £5,000. The award is in one sense restrictive, however: only works of current social or political significance need be submitted.



*BERNSTEIN . . . Literary prize.*

This year the first prize went to Hilda Bernstein, a refugee from Africa, who wrote a book about her experiences of white dissent in that bipartite country.

No other prize was intended, but such was the standard of the entries that Clive shelled out three other prizes: £2,000 for the runner-up, and two consolation prizes of £500.



# WORLD CAMPAIGN

against military and nuclear collaboration with South Africa

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28.1.83

To: Hilda Bernstein  
London.

- For your information  
 For your action  
 Please keep us informed about developments regarding this matter including any information that you come across

Dear Hilda,

Among some of the "strange" publications which I read from time to time is Computer Weekly and in a recent issue I saw the enclosed — in case you have not seen it. We haven't forgotten about an exhibition and Kari is awaiting reactions from some friends. With best wishes to Rusty & yourself,  
Abdul.

# Congratulations from all of us

7/12/82  
Morning Star



**HILDA BERNSTEIN**, the South African women's and black rights' campaigner, has won the first annual £5,000 Sinclair Prize for Fiction for her novel, "Death is Part of the Process."

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The judges were Frank Kermode, David Caute, Richard Hoggart, Mervyn Jones and Polly Toynbee.

"Hilda Bernstein's winning novel completely fulfilled the

prize's criteria for high literary merit combined with contemporary social and political relevance," explained Clive Sinclair.

To be published in the New Year by Sinclair Browne, "Death is Part of the Process" is based on Ms. Bernstein's own experience of political conflict in South Africa.

An outside view of people and organisations that plan and carry out acts of sabotage, it deals with the tensions of actual events and the complex moral dilemmas they provoke.

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7/12/82 *Normy Star*

# Sinclair Prize for Fiction

FOR any aspiring authors among *DAWN's* readership, the National Book League is looking for unpublished novels for entry in this year's Sinclair Prize for Fiction.

The prize, which is worth £5,000, will be awarded to the author of the best full-length novel which is not only of great literary merit, but also of social or political significance.

Sponsored by Sinclair Research of Cambridge and administered by the National Book League, the prize was first awarded in 1982 to Hilda Bernstein for *Death is Part of the Process*. Readers may be interested to know that Frances Bernstein, a Research Assistant at Central Office and a contributor to *DAWN*, is Hilda Bernstein's daughter.

The final date for entries is 31st July, and entry forms are available from Barbara Buckley, National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ. Please include a stamped, addressed envelope.

*Dawn*  
(USDAW) June 83

F 9 F 26/11/82

# £5,000 award for novel

Artist and writer Hilda Bernstein was last night awarded the first prize of £5,000 in the new Sinclair Prize for Fiction for her novel *Death is Part of the Process*.

Mrs Bernstein, who lives in Rothwell Street, Primrose Hill, drew on her personal experience of women's and black rights campaigns in South Africa in writing the novel.

# PERSON OF THE DECADE



# Clive Sinclair puts his micro power into a million hands

Mass appeal has turned Clive Sinclair into a million-selling winner. Alan Burkitt traces Sinclair from his start as a journalist on *Practical Wireless* to a future which may see him emerge as a motor car magnate

Six months before the first copies of *Computing* landed on the doormats of the UK's dp community, a former electronics journalist called Clive Sinclair set the extraordinarily low price of £79 for his first calculator.

A decade of inflation and hyperinflation means that price would be worth precisely £299 in today's money. Though the calculator, called the Sinclair Executive, was thought revolutionary, it could do no more than add, subtract, multiply and divide eight-digit numbers.

For the same £299 in 1983 it is possible to buy both Sinclair's Spectrum and ZX81 personal computers and still have enough money for the flat-screen Microvision when it comes on the market this summer.

But the days of the Sinclair calculator are long gone. Sinclair Research, the company he founded in July 1979, has now sold a million personal computers. Timex, which has an exclusive licence to sell an upgraded ZX81 in the US, is believed to have shipped 400,000 more.

It was the introduction of the pioneering ZX80, launched in February 1980 at under £100, and its successor, the ZX81, which led most of *Computing's* panellists to nominate Sinclair as the person who has made the greatest contribution to the industry in the UK during the past decade.

They cited his work on 'bringing computer power into the hands of the general public'. One commended his development of 'low cost consumer-oriented IT products, most notably the ZX80' and another his 'marketing of computing to the masses'.

He has brought 'personal computing to the nation despite the Japanese domination of this market', said another. Someone else added that he has brought 'computing into the home and within the reach of children'.

Market research by Sinclair's company indicates that, while the first purchasers were almost all 25-40 year old men, now the typical buyer is a teenager—or at least a parent buying for a teenager.

Studies by the company in West Germany, where sales are running at almost 100,000 a year, found that mothers were often the driving force behind the purchase, concerned that their children should find out about computers. In the UK, a Sinclair-sponsored competition in *Woman's Own* collected 50,000 entries.

Sinclair has only started. 'We think the personal com-

## Profiting from products with a high creative content

puter's going to be a one-per-home product,' said Sinclair aide Bill Nichols. So far, market penetration in the UK is about 3%, with plenty of room for expansion before it is saturated.

'Maybe our market share won't look so healthy in three years time, but in volume terms it will be ahead,' added Nichols.

The record of the first three years will be pretty hard to live up to. Sinclair Research was founded when Sinclair took himself, some colleagues and some ideas out of the remains of his old company, the now renamed Sinclair Radionics. That was controlled by the National Enterprise Board (NEB), which had decided ventures into computers and consumer products generally were unlikely to be successful.

Sales in the first full financial year, ending March 1981, were £4.7 million, with pretax profits of £1.1 million. In the second year sales of £28 million brought profits of £9.8 million. This year Sinclair Research is heading for sales of £50 million and profits of £14 million or more.

The financial performance of the company, which employs only 50 people, was recognised in the City last month when Clive Sinclair raised £13.6 million in a private placing of shares, reducing his holding from 95% to 85%.

The sale valued the company at £136 million, and 42-year-old Sinclair's own

stake at over £115 million. But riches are not new to him: he bought his first Rolls-Royce long ago from the reward of his calculator business.

The astonishing success of his computers and his newly acquired wealth have brought him fame, with requests to appear on television and give his views on the state of the world generally. But he looks uncomfortable in this role and even in private can rarely be provoked to expand on his views.

One of the many clichés often repeated about Sinclair are that his politics are 'Cromwellian', a description usually attributed to *Fortune* magazine. But *Fortune* (March 8 1982) was simply quoting an unnamed company executive and the meaning is vague.

Sinclair disagrees with the conventional view that a strong manufacturing industry is an essential part of the UK economy. 'Any products with a strong creative content can be made here profitably,' he said on BBC2 last year. 'As soon as a product becomes standardised, by evolution, as most cars have, it is best made in less sophisticated and so cheaper countries to our mutual benefit.'

'By the 1990s we must turn from the products of the material to products of the mind: books, videotapes, tv programmes, computer programs, design services, consultancy of all forms.'

Sinclair began the long trail working on the magazine *Practical Wireless* and then branched out to sell kits for electronics hobbyists. His first book, published when he was 19, was *Practical Transistor Receivers*. Since then, there has been one more, the *British Semiconductor Survey* of 1963, according to his entry in *Who's Who*.

A few years ago, one or two of the older electronics journalists would occasionally reminisce about the days when they had worked alongside the young Sinclair, who had suggested going into business. But they had said no, and turned back to their typewriters and regretted it ever since.

Sinclair Radionics was set up in 1962, and Sinclair

headed it until 1979 when problems with current products—low-cost competition and poor reliability—as well as difficulties in developing new ones finally overwhelmed the operation with massive losses.

First the NEB came in, mainly to back the early Microvision venture, and then the NEB decided the company should get out of consumer products and concentrate on instruments.

'The NEB had diametrically opposed views to me about the way we should go,' said Sinclair. 'The television side was potentially profitable; instruments were profitable but dull.'

But Sinclair is both persistent in pursuit of his ideas and stubborn when opposed. The beginnings of the personal computer venture date back a long way, to the days when Commodore and Tandy were launching their first units. They claimed to be aiming at the hobby market, but the price was high and small businesses were the major customer.

'I knew that if I made a machine at a lower price, say £100, it would definitely be a hobbyist product,' Sinclair recalled. But the NEB 'chucked the project out' of Sinclair Radionics. Eventually, after

## Sinclair sold his house and car to start again

much development, it emerged as the Grundy Newbrain.

Sinclair had to start again after setting up Sinclair Research. 'To fund the development I sold my house and car and got a leasehold house.'

For even longer he had been nursing the flat screen development, which is at the heart of the Microvision and has a central role in both the successor to the Spectrum and a collaborative project with ICL.

The principle of the tube was invented in the early 1950s by the late Dr Denis Gabor, whose work at Impe-

rial College London was sponsored by the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC). Then it came to nothing, but Sinclair picked it up in the early 1970s and again won backing from the NRDC.

'The NEB tried to sell off the tv side of Sinclair Radionics to the Japanese,' he told *Computing*. 'I found out purely by accident.'

He protested, and after an

## 'The NEB tried to sell the tv side to the Japanese'

unsuccessful attempt to find a UK buyer, the NEB let the new Sinclair Research take over the project. The planned launch date for the product is about midsummer, and the price should still be about £50.

Sinclair Radionics succeeded when it had a new product, dreamed up by Sinclair and developed by him and his colleagues. It failed when it had to compete with the giants of the industry, particularly Japanese calculator and watch makers, able to cut margins and achieve superb output yields and long-term reliability.

A decade later, Sinclair Research has succeeded in the same way by pioneering. Now, however, others have moved in, and current products are facing competition. How will the company stay in the business?

In one way it has avoided many of the earlier difficulties by refusing to manufacture itself. Timex and Thorn EMI share production of the computers; Timex will employ the workers on the Microvision plant.

Sinclair explains that involvement in manufacturing 'dilutes management time', but his arrangements enable him to stay aloof and say, when Timex employees protest at enforced redundancies, 'that's Timex's problem'.

At the same time the company has to keep running, thinking up new ideas which will be as innovative and successful as the calculators

and computers in the past and as, it is hoped, the Microvision will be.

In the second half of this year we are likely to see the unveiling of the results of the company's collaboration with ICL. They are working on a desktop work station, destined to be connected to a digital telephone exchange such as the Mitel SX2000 which ICL also hopes to sell. It will combine telephone and computer, using the flat screen tv tube to provide a visual display.

The next Sinclair product, internally codenamed the ZX83, is likely to be something similar, but portable and including a floppy disk drive and without the telephone.

'It will open a new market,' commented Nicholas. Observers point to the pricey and heavy Osborne 1, and suggest there would be demand for a cheap and lightweight version of that. But this too could be seen as a natural growth from current products.

So what will be next? As far as Sinclair Research is concerned, the new development will probably emerge from a laboratory at Winchester, headed by Michael Pye who was with Sinclair Radionics in the 1970s and returned to the new company a year ago.

Pye heads a small team working on 'television and solid state products', but Sinclair has a reputation for getting cross if anyone tries to probe further.

He is a little more willing to talk of what used to be a Sinclair Research project, but is now under his own direct control: an electric car. Most of the £13.6 million raised by last month's share placing has gone towards that team.

'It will take about two years to get into production,' he said. He has been dabbling in electric traction for years and the results of his persistence have yet to be seen. It is an area in which the established companies—mainly battery companies such as Chloride but also automotive firms like Lucas—have been remarkably unsuccessful. Maybe we will see Sinclair turn into a car magnate.

Alan Burkitt is deputy editor on *Computing*.





Hilda Bernstein: "A period which should be written about."

## Prize-winning fiction to shield violent fact

HILDA BERNSTEIN'S first novel, which was not only unpublished but also unsubmitted, may still be languishing somewhere in the dusty files of the security police in Johannesburg.

It was about the African squatter movement in South Africa during the war, and she showed the only copy of the work to the nationalist leader Walter Sisulu. Unfortunately, his home was raided a few days later, and Mrs Bernstein's manuscript was part of the material taken and never seen again.

So there is some poetic justice in the fact that her second novel, **DEATH IS PART OF THE PROCESS** (published yesterday by Sinclair Browne at £7.95), which also deals with the liberation struggle in South Africa, has won the very first £5,000 Sinclair Prize for Fiction.

Hilda Bernstein, who lives in Rothwell Street, Primrose Hill, is better known in this part of London for her distinctive etchings of African flora and fauna and, more recently, of Mediterranean market scenes.

She is a diminutive lady with a sweet smile, an engaging giggle, and a soft voice, and it is sometimes hard to remember that she has more than once had personal experience of South Africa's prisons and that ultimately she and her husband, Rusty, managed to escape the apartheid regime only by walking all night through the bleakest possible landscape to cross illegally into a neighbouring country.

Come to think of it, there is a hardness to that soft voice, and a determination about her that more than fills the gap between her benign appearance and personal history.

The Bernsteins' flight from South Africa was in the early '60s, but since then she has been no stranger to the craft of writing. She wrote, in 1967, the moving and powerful *The World That Was Ours*, about their last two years in the country.

More recently she has written books about Steve Biko and the plight of women under apartheid. The latter, *For Their Triumphs and Their Tears*, is now being rewritten and updated.

*Death is Part of the Process* is a novel about the change in the South African freedom movement from non-violent protest to armed struggle and sabotage. It deals with the early successes—and dramatic failures—of the people who laid the foundations for today's organised resistance movement.

It tells of the whites, blacks and Indians who set off the first bombs against railway lines and electricity pylons and deserted buildings. But it tells, too, of how the organisation was infiltrated and then almost obliterated by the security police who brought new sophistication and terror to the pressures of solitary confinement and physical torture.

It is, in many ways, the book about her own and others' experiences which could not be written at all in

the early '60s and which, even today, can be written only as fiction so as to protect various individuals.

"Ever since *The World That Was Ours* was published people have been asking me why I never wrote about what it was that we did," she told me last week.

"In the end I decided that it was a period which should be written about — but it had to be as fiction."

But Mrs Bernstein claims that all the major incidents in the book actually took place — "either to me or to people I knew well."

Amongst the latter were Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukhwe, Walter Sisulu, Ruth First, Bram Fischer and others who come high on the roll of honour of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

The characters in the novel, however, are wholly fictitious.

"The fact is that the police broke the first resistance organisation, and as a result during the '60s the movement didn't take off again as it had been hoped.

"That led many people to believe that the whole thing had been both a mistake and a failure. I believe that it was neither, and that what happened was something that had to happen.

### Pressure

"When I wrote *Death* . . . I wanted to show that this early action played a significant part in the whole development of the struggle into what it is today. I was also fascinated by the whole concept of how people react under pressure; how some people can break very easily and how others can hold out."

Again, this sort of information is drawn from the experiences of people she knew at the time. Although she never joined Umkhonto we Sizwe (*The Spear of the Nation*), the underground resistance movement, she was closely associated with the liberation movement as a whole and individual members of the organisation.

The writing of the book started some years ago, and continued sporadically in between the many other activities Hilda Bernstein is involved in.

"One of the discoveries I made was just what a tremendous amount of novel writing goes on in authors' heads all the time—when cooking and driving and doing other things and even at social events while talking to other people!"

The final rewrite took place at the beginning of last year and she began looking for a publisher. Six publishers expressed enthusiasm and were complimentary, but they didn't see any real economic potential for the book.

Then she saw an advertisement about the Sinclair Prize for Fiction, which is specifically aimed at previously unpublished novels not only of high literary merit but also "with

social or political relevance".

"I'm not so sure about high literary merit, but there's certainly a lot of social and political relevance in the book, and that's why, I think, I got the prize."

She also notes that when she entered the novel in the competition last year, she had "no expectation whatever" of winning it.

"All I hoped was that it would help me find a publisher for the damn thing."

When it won the £5,000 prize she "couldn't believe it". "I was quite hysterical with joy."

The money will be used for travel, and she is determined that it won't all disappear into rates and car repair bills and the like.

"This kind of money opens up possibilities in one's life that just didn't exist before, and I intend to use it to do something worthwhile."

There may even be another novel on the cards, but it won't be about South Africa. There comes a time, she says, when one's experiences become dated and, after 20 years, one has to relinquish the past.

She remains, however, very involved with the freedom struggle in South Africa, and is an active member of the African National Congress in London.

The ANC has developed, as she notes in the prologue to the novel, into an organisation capable of spectacular and successful actions against the apartheid regime, like the bombing of the giant Sasolburg oil-from-coal plants in 1980.

More recently, the ANC claimed responsibility for the car bomb which exploded in Pretoria. How does she react to these events?

"I have a mixed reaction, but basically I am very happy about them. I say mixed reaction because I hate violence and I have always had a pacifist streak in me.

"But things eventually reached a point where violence by the state against people has to be reacted to by the people, and all too often people who write about South Africa don't take that into consideration."

This state violence takes many forms, from bodily moving millions of people from white areas to black areas to the strange deaths in detention of some 50-plus people. People like Ruth First have been assassinated. Others have been gunned down in crowds, in Soweto, at Sharpeville.

"The papers really tell a lot of lies about what goes on. The Pretoria car bomb, for example, was parked outside a military installation and practically all the people affected—both black and white—had some kind of military rank.

"The reaction by black people generally in South Africa is one of joy, no matter what the so-called Bantustan leaders might be quoted as saying.

"Even when black people are killed, their reaction is: 'We bury our dead and carry on the struggle'. And that's what my book says as well."

Matthew Lewin



Polly Toynebe

CLIVE SINCLAIR, the electronics genius who captured a world market in personal computers, last year founded a literary competition. He had clear principles in mind, and he summoned the first set of judges to a meeting to explain why he had inaugurated the Sinclair Prize.

The English novel, he said, had fallen into a decline of introspection. Hampered writers write about the thoughts and feelings of Hampered writers. Too few novelists seem to have any experience of a world beyond university and the literary scene. The point of his new prize was to encourage writers to reach out to wider horizons. The £5,000 first prize was to be awarded to an unpublished novel of great literary merit but also of social or political significance.



That definition held some problems for the judges (of whom I was one). What exactly did "social and political significance" mean? Could anyone imagine a work of great literary merit that did not have social significance? There is not much about politics in Jane Austen, for instance. Would she have been disqualified on these criteria? No, Clive Sinclair said with some thought. Jane Austen would be eligible. Reassured, the judges set about their work. There were some curious entries — particularly recall novels set about anti. One or two were impenetrably unreadable. But the winner emerged with relative ease and grace from the rest. How lucky, we felt, that the best book should also turn out to be the one with the most undoubted political and social significance. The winning novel tells the story of a group of political saboteurs in South Africa in the early sixties. Forceful and moving, it was clear that the author had first hand experience of the subject.

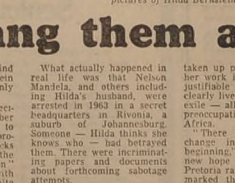
It did come as a great surprise to me when we were told that this winning author was 85, a woman, and that this was her first novel. It had been written in the seventies and had been rejected eight times by publishers. Now at last Hilda Bernstein's book, *Death is Part of the Process*, has just been published, with a *Wingate* of the Sinclair Prize for



fiction" firmly stamped on its cover. Hilda Bernstein turned out not only to be a remarkable writer but also to have been writing mainly from her own experience. Though not herself a member of "Umkhonto We Sizwe" (Spear of the Nation) the group of saboteurs she describes in her book, she was closely connected with them in the early Sixties.

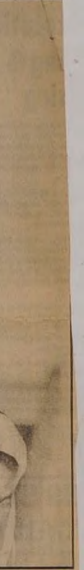
At the presentation of the prize, we all craned to get a look at our mystery winner. She stepped forward smartly and delivered a powerful political speech about South Africa — none of the usual mumbled and inarticulate fumbblings in the uncustomed glare of publicity. Hilda Bernstein is a political animal, first and foremost, and only a writer (and a good painter, too) as an afterthought. She talks as though there were prizes she would far rather have won in her life — for there is precious little now to show for so many years of political agitation.

Hilda Bernstein, born in London of poor Jewish immigrants, left school at 15 and by her late teens went off to South Africa where an aunt was living. I was deeply shocked, and emotionally torn, to pieces by what I saw there. She joined the Communist Party — the only multiracial party in South Africa — and set about a political organisation, drawing her life to it.



She was the first and only Communist ever to be elected to office in South Africa, when she was voted onto the Johannesburg City Council in 1942. "Only because after Stalander there was much less anti-Communist feeling." It was a hard struggle, as the only member of her party — "But I am a very good public speaker," which helped," she says. She was called to order in the Council once for allegedly "using her baby in her political campaigning. When making a speech in a park she had picked up her lawning infant and kept talking while she soothed it. But she was voted out three years later, once the war was over. The Communist Party was banned in 1950. In 1960 came the Sharpeville shootings and the African National Congress was also banned. This is where her book takes up the story.

I reached a point where there was no further to go. In the beginning there had been ways of organising and protesting but every time we used them they were banned. We ran a potato boycott in a protest against the conditions of the convicts in the potato fields, so they passed a law banning boycotts. There was nowhere else to go, no other avenue of protest or organisation. We had to turn to sabotage." Until then the freedom movement had been heavily influenced by the principles of passive resistance, laid down by Gandhi. "I was hor-



pictures of Hilda Bernstein by Martin Argles

## 25 million people — you can't hang them all

What actually happened in real life was that Nelson Mandela and others including Hilda's husband, were arrested in 1963 in a secret headquarters in Rivonia, a suburb of Johannesburg. Someone — Hilda thinks she knows who — had betrayed them. There were incriminating papers and documents about forthcoming sabotage attempts.

It was at the subsequent trial that Mandela and others were sentenced to life imprisonment — and in South Africa that means life. Hilda's husband was acquitted for lack of evidence and a bungled prosecution, but was charged with other offences. While he was on bail Hilda heard that they were about to arrest her and she disappeared.

"But it is hard for a white person to hide. Much easier for a black. She was torn between the need to keep hidden and the need to see her children.

It had become increasingly clear to both Hilda and her husband that they could not stay in South Africa. They were now both so well known that there was little they could contribute to underground activities. Friends helped them to escape across the border near to Mafeking on a terrible journey, foot and on foot.

For 20 years now the family has been living in London. Hilda has been writing articles and one or two short stories. Her husband is an architect. Now she has

taken up painting and shows her work in her studio with justifiable pride. But she clearly lives very much as an exile — all her thoughts and preoccupations concern South Africa.

"There has now been a change in policy, a new beginning," she says full of new hope and vigour. "The Pretoria railway station bomb marked the beginning of a new stage in the fight — all out war. This is ANC policy."

Can it hope to succeed any better than the ill-fated campaign she describes in the book? This time it'll become war. This time war is inevitable." She is full of optimism for the chances of the unarmed, defenceless blacks against the colossal military apparatus of the South African Government.

"When they hanged those men the other day, a slogan appeared on the wall," she says. "There are 25 million of us and you can't hang us all!"

The book, however, is more than a slogan. It is persuasive through its sharp eye and perceptive ear. The scenes set in white suburbia have an eye ring of truth. The characters are more rounded and complex than it might be reasonable to expect from an author who has lived for so long in a country where good and evil are so clearly delineated.

*Death is Part of the Process*, by Hilda Bernstein, is published by Sinclair Brown.

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THE OBSERVER

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# A trek in the London jungle

HIGH JINKS that give you the creeps: that was the peculiar and skilful mixture in Nicholas Salaman's first novel, 'The Frights', which took the lid off rural upper-class family life in 1942. The setting of *Dangerous Pursuits* is urban, the time is now, but the interest is still on the connection between war and civilian life, the manner controlled by a deceptively larky, and the target is, again, English civilisation.

There are two alternating narratives — a commonplace device, but here it makes an effective pincer strategy. One is the mannered voice of Roy Croucher, 46, an eccentric veteran of the war in the Malayan jungles against Communist Terrorists. Having fought for an English heritage (real ale, woodlands, Shakespeare's language, pure women) he returns to find it vanished in the Gadarene rush down the slopes of trans-Atlantic replication. Using the arts of camouflage and defence learned in 'the bug-infested swamps of the Lower Berta', he sets out, an alien in the jungle of modern London, to pursue his chosen enemy, an American Managing Executive of a Video and Security firm, type of everything he abhors.

Croucher's 'pranksome' tale (full of old-world phrases like 'nuptial state' and 'avenging harpies') is deployed alongside the slick, slack prose of his enemies, women who live off a depraved consumer society and men who deal in the software of espionage and protection, in a London which has become 'an important world centre of

## FICTION

by HERMIONE LEE

**DANGEROUS PURSUITS**  
by Nicholas Salaman  
*Secker & Warburg £7.50*  
**DEATH IS PART OF THE PROCESS**

by Hilda Bernstein  
*Sinclair Browne £7.95*  
**OPEN THE DOOR**  
by Rosemary Manning  
*Cape £7.95*

**THE WINDSURF BOY**  
by Bel Mooney  
*Cape £7.95*

terrorism, surveillance, and video production.' Croucher's enemy and rival in love is the veteran of a different war, Vietnam, and an expert in different 'pursuit' systems (voice stress analysers instead of poisoned arrows) in a world 'where everyone is being followed.'

Pursued and pursuer are both outwitted by the latest kind of powerful hunter, a millionaire Lebanese businessman for whom England is just another slice of territory. On the way to a nihilistic denouement we are treated to a rapid build-up of farcical scenes and a clever display of cultural prototypes: the madame of a topless club in Bayswater, the spokesman of a software firm, an ugly American lesbian 'into' ecology. It's a compelling satirical fantasy done with verve and cunning, but the pleasure it takes in a fanatical reactionary ideology is as chilling as the horrid caricature it makes of the human race.

There is no play of wit in *Death is Part of the Process* and there doesn't need to be. It is a straightforward, solid, honourable document of the

beginnings of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and an appropriate winner of the Sinclair Prize for Fiction, which requires a combination of 'high literary quality' with 'contemporary social and political relevance.' (Rather lowering, isn't this? Fiction should be good for you.) Hilda Bernstein has written books on Steve Biko, on the lives of women under apartheid and on torture in South Africa, and her close knowledge, indignation and hope feed into her writing.

Taking a small group in Johannesburg—an Indian ex-law student, a white liberal academic and his wife, the radical daughter of a right-wing suburban family, a black African organiser, another who is a hard-drinking loner—she describes the unlearning of passive resistance. 'Until we learn to be like them, as hard as they are, as ruthless,' the battle can't be won. Each stage of the 'process' (painful in different ways for each of the group)—arguing, making bombs, blowing up symbolic targets, going to ground, regrouping, detecting informers, undergoing interrogation—is set against each stage of the reaction: news blackouts, infiltration, torture. In prison, a bitter lesson is learned: 'It was the greatest mistake of all—patience.' As for the argument that innocent people should not be hurt: 'there are no innocent people.'

In a now well-charted tradition of English women novelists (Jean Rhys, Barbara Pym, Molly Keane) Rosemary Manning has returned to adult fiction after a gap of 20 years. *Open the Door* is a grave, thoughtful novel about the uneasy cohabitation of an archaeological team in North Wales.

As the dig uncovers evidence of an 'ancient, secret place' where sacrifices were made, so the human layers are disclosed, and the door is opened, as in the Mabington, onto 'every loss they had ever sustained, and . . . every ill that had come upon them.' The tyrannical professor wants to revenge the death of his favourite son on his wife, who plans at last to leave him. The beautiful Welsh researcher has been betrayed by the woman she loves. The team's alcoholic is mourning the loss of his wife. I found these characters rather too collectively ravaged, and the commentary over-portentous, oddly stiff. Nevertheless, it has a quietly gripping effect.

The fatal flaw in Bel Mooney's writing is to be found in the word 'upon,' as in 'Barbara gazed upon the river a lot.' 'She reached up and her hand closed around the one that rested upon her shoulder,' 'A battered brown sofa whose cover sagged upon the rush-matted floor.' The sagging prose of *The Windsurf Boy* is the vehicle for a touching tale about a 35-year-old abandoned wife who goes back, with her small son, to the family's holiday cottage in a touristified South of England coastal village. Our heroine has to come to terms with her mother's terminal cancer, a romantic passion for the handsome young boy of the title, and her feelings for her dead father. She does it in phrases like 'Remembering, with a catch of love in her chest,' 'I am alone as she is alone, but in that aloneness she and I are closer together,' and yet there was an emptiness at the centre.' But kinder not to dwell upon the details: it's an easy read, after all, and holidays are here.

## ON THE AIR

**A Good Read**, Radio 4, 17 July (repeated 21 July): *A Unicorn Among Lions: The Life of Edith Sitwell*, Victoria Glendinning (OUP, £3.95); *Social Studies*, Fran Lebowitz (Arrow, £1.50); *Good Behaviour*, Molly Keane (Deutsch, £7.95; Sphere, £2.95); *The Aspen Papers*, Henry James (Penguin, £1.35).

**Kaleidoscope**, Radio 4, 11 July: *Death Is Part of the Process*, Hilda Bernstein (Sinclair Browne, £7.95); 12 July: *Mr Bridge and Mrs Bridge*, Evan S Connell (Sinclair Brown, £8.95/£4.95 and £7.95/£3.95); 13

Sindair Bourne

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THE BOOKSELLER

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LONDON, W.C.1

ISSUE DATED **09 JUN 1983**

July: *Theatre in My Blood* (biography of John Cranko), John Percival (Hert, £10.95); *Horovitz*, Glenn Plaskin (Macdonald, £14.95); 14 July: discussion on Dent Paperbacks' new series of classic thrillers, *Blind Corner*, Dornford Yates; *Bulldog Drummond*, Sapper; *The Mind of Mr J G Reeder*, Edgar Wallace, and *Castle Gay*, John Buchan (£2.50 each).

**Critics Forum**, Radio 3, 16 July: *A Mania for Sentences*, D J Enright (Chatto, £12.50). This is the last in the present series; a new series will commence on 3 September.

**Round Midnight**, Radio 2, 27 July: interview with Michael and Mollie Hardwick about the new imprint, Evergreen Lives, with particular reference to the first six titles, *Beethoven*, *Charles Dickens*, *Karl Marx*, *Louis XIV*, *Napoleon* and *Van Gogh* (£3.95 each). There will also be interviews on LBC and Radio London (21 July).

**Stiff: The Story of a Record Label** (Blandford Press, £3.95): tie-in competition to run on the *Daily Mirror* Rock and Pop Club on Radio Luxembourg (12 July).

First £5000 prize award

# Sinclair for Bernstein

The first award of the newly-established £5000 Sinclair Prize for Fiction has gone to Hilda Bernstein for her first novel *Death is Part of the Process*, a fictional account of her perilous campaign for blacks' and women's rights in South Africa.

"I wrote it because a friend wanted me to tell what really happened," Bernstein told *PN*. "I'd written the surface of the story of when my husband was on trial and we finally had to flee the country in my autobiography (*The World That Was Ours*, Heinemann, 1967) but I had to tell the real story as fiction because of people that are still there."

Publication by Sinclair Browne next spring accompanies the first prize but not the second and third, which are: £2000 to Gill Edmonds for *The Common* and joint third of £500 each to Philip Lathan for *Sarah Singing* and Aviott John for *Chasing*



Sybil Marshall is presented with the £1000 Angel Literary Award by Patrick Lichfield.

*Curses*.

The judges were Frank Kermode, David Caute, Polly Toynbee, Mervyn Jones and Richard Hoggart.

Among further literary awards Glyn Hughes has won the £750 Guardian Fiction Prize with a first novel

about how capitalism used Methodism to tame factory hands and chapel goers in the Pennines. The title is *Where I Used to Play on the Green* and the publisher is Gollancz.

John Kilbracken claims the Times Educational Supplement Information Book Award of £150 for children's books with *The Easy Way to Bird Recognition*. Grisewood & Dempsey's Kingfisher imprint published not only the winner but three of the eight short-listed books.

An annual Literary Award for writers living and working in East Anglia was inaugurated this year by Dick and Mary Gough, proprietors of hotels at Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich and Great Yeldham.

The first award of the £1000 prize has been won by Sybil Marshall for her *Everyman's Book of English Folk Tales* published by Dent.

Sinclair Browne

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NEW STATESMAN

10 GREAT TURNSTILE,  
LONDON, WC1

ISSUE **41** **JUL 1983**  
DATED

FICTION  
Roger Lewis

## Pinball

### Death is Part of the Process

HILDA BERNSTEIN *Sinclair Broome* £9.95

### Telling Tales

SARA MAITLAND *Journeyman* £8.95 & £3.75

### L'Abbé C

GEORGES BATAILLE *Marion Boyars* £7.95

As we know, the Caucasian ruling-class in South Africa derives much of its wealth and comfort from the systematic degradation of the natives. The country is a version of ancient Rome without the culture: the rich men live in villas where their wives make a tragedy out of a cancelled hair appointment and the poor live in tin shacks without a toilet. Hilda Bernstein's novel chills us into realising that such a grossly unfair social stratification is unlikely to be destroyed. Her book registers the muted desperation of the blacks and the happy smugness of their masters.

**Death is Part of the Process** monitors the fumbled attempts of the aggrieved to make their passion felt. They concoct home-made bombs and set out to destroy railways and power-stations. Emphatically, death is not part of their process: they do not want to kill, only to register the existence of an Opposition. However, the Special Branch, South Africa's licensed thugs, descend upon the perpetrators with brutal glee: it is they who are empowered to start a process which can end, if they want, in a death.

We begin by following Indres as he is chased through the night by the police. He recalls that the tiny rebellion began when an innocuous exhibition of posters at the University was ripped apart by the authorities. Those who found this over-reaction particularly egregious become the pioneering 'terrorists'. We, too, are enticed into an alliance with the saboteurs when the rhetorical question is asked: 'How do you organise for change when organisations are banned and everyone who inspires others is taken and jailed?' The passive resistance of Gandhi seems hopelessly idealistic and the intricate constitutional procedures exist to fox and not to aid the operation of democracy. We aren't allowed to demur; 'there are no innocent people'. For Bernstein, to ignore the injustices is tantamount to condoning them; to be silent is to clamour approval. Owing to this, *Death is Part of the Process* becomes less of a novel than an exercise in ethics. We are expected to justify our points of view and there is an array of characters who embody different moral attitudes with which we can identify.

Paradoxically, however, the best character in the novel is the one whom we are meant to hold in the greatest contempt. Mrs Norval, with her liveried black servants,

objects to her daughter attending political demonstrations because 'at the very least it's undignified'. She is like a garrulous ninny out of Jane Austen and her speeches are wonderful confections of infinite digression. Yet she is out of place in Bernstein's didactic tract. More fitting is Pila Norval, who relishes working with the rebels because she hates her plutocratic father. Thrown into jail she feels a martyr, and is hurt to be released without even being interrogated.

It is to jail that all the saboteurs reluctantly go. The noises of chains, keys and doors create 'an opera built on discords and dissonance'. This is the real South Africa: its heart of darkness. What the government finds unpleasant, it locks away. The guards justify their cruelty as a means of 'seeing the law observed'. Dick is made to stand until he gives his statement. He is kept in the same upright position for several days without sleep. Indres also stands and is simultaneously beaten. Thabo is suspended by his wrists and metal clips are attached to his tongue and ear-lobes. The police begin to electrocute him and this turns into a harrowing pinball game. Each of the torturers takes a turn at the control, seeing how high they can tip the voltage.

Sara Maitland's *Telling Tales* are ululatory fables about womankind. The battle of the sexes started as soon as Adam missed his rib and altercations have occurred ever since when his sons punish the daughters of Eve for not giving it back. Sara Maitland's book, nevertheless, transcends the limitations of having to view men as the enemy — crea-

tures who pinion their women with psychological cruelty — and manages to work well as an exercise in the macabre.

In 'Natural Freaks' an adolescent daughter is repelled by her mother's pregnancy. She sees the mountainous belly as grotesque whereas the mother extols its beauty. These observations are made while visiting Potter's Museum of Curiosity, a Victorian freak show with its tableaux of taxidermised creatures in little costumes and mummified monsters in glass jars. The conjunction of anthropomorphism with the secret inside the mother's womb has an almost gothic bizarreness. The most alarming tale is an account of binding the feet of Oriental girls to keep them petite. Underneath the perfumed socks is the stench of putrefaction. This represents fettered femininity, woman imprisoned; but it is also excellent as literature.

**L'Abbé C** would like to explore the cruelties of eroticism, but Georges Bataille's novel is extremely bad, perhaps because it is so extremely tame. Dotted lines indicate cut smut. The author pretends to be an editor who arranges the manuscripts we read during sessions with his psychiatrist and the story concerns the temptation of a priest by his libertine brother. Charles sees Robert as an extension of himself which has unaccountably become devout. He must defile it to make it conform to the rest of his personality. The author seems to imply a re-enactment of original sin. The trouble with original sin, however, is that it has made all subsequent ones derivative. □

DAVID CAUTE

# THE K-FACTOR

His compelling novel of the war for Zimbabwe

'A powerful and convincing study of real people caught up in events beyond their control and outside their comprehension.'  
ROBERT NYE *The Guardian*

'THE K-FACTOR shows how the fusion of powerful imagination and sense of history has made Mr Caute one of our most impressive novelists.'  
*Sunday Telegraph*

'The atmosphere of mounting panic and slipping control is frighteningly conveyed.'  
*The Times*

MICHAEL JOSEPH £8.95



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**BOOKS PAGE** edited by Colin Chambers

# The sky is alight

WHEN the general facts of a fiction are quite widely known how greater must be the stretch of the imagination and the creative effort to win and hold our attention. Hilda Bernstein succeeds magnificently.

Death Is Part of the Process is set in South Africa, the title taken from a play by Peter Weiss, Marat, the quote in full suggesting that life itself is an on-going process and death but a part of that continuity.

The time is the '60s with the focus on a group, a mixed group, attempting sabotage of railways and government buildings in a bid to break the grip of apartheid. Each one is incisively drawn, made known to us.

There is Indres, escaped from prison, on the run, seeking to warn the others of betrayal; Thabo after years of precarious legality, having to disguise himself to become the Rev. Tomas Khumalo; Ralph and Dick abandoning The Council, a university liberal protest forum which they recognise is but giving to the world a false impression of democracy.

There is also their respective wives Margie and Pila, initially blinded from a full knowledge of what is happening but then caught up in things: April who has opted for life in a cave rather than conform to the impossible restrictions; impetuous Sipho who turns Judas.

Around these central characters all the animality of the system, with its active executors in the police and security forces mouthing their inhuman morality while inflicting the most hideous tortures on their victims.

And in another world, the tea and cakes and the self-blinded population of whites floating along on their vacant self-perpetuated delusion.

The blacks, propelled by a sense of mission, have little self-

interrogation — their environment must be changed so that they can breathe.

For the whites, certain inner confusions arising from the material benefits around them have to be exorcised. There are so many reasons for not doing anything.

Here is Margie questioning herself: "At what stage do you stop saying my child, my job, my home, my possessions? How do you decide what is the most important thing, your personal safety and that of the ones you love, or the need to be human, to have integrity, courage, in the face of so much evil?"

The author's stance is rock hard — apartheid is an abomination that must be consigned to

**EDDIE WOODS**

reviews

**DEATH IS PART  
OF THE PROCESS**

by Hilda Bernstein  
Sinclair Brown, £7.95

the dustbin of history — but the telling holds more than the documentary tract.

It is alive with compassion, discerning of character and the inner feelings of people. The natural environment also is graphically described:

"For behind him now were the lights of the city behind the natural humps of the land and the mine dumps on the Western fringe, a glow in the sky, the richest city in all Africa. Deep dongas pitted the earth, miniature canyons, their sides veined and scored by the rain."

Pila, who has left home, returns one day to visit her mother, opens a window, "burglar bars curled in iron leaf," looks out and sees "the rockery pulsating with red and purple

mesembryanthemum and portulaca, a wall with trailing bells of golden shower, a blazing bed of zinnias. . . .

"It was the same delectable world in which she had grown up, full of visual delights and tangible comforts; it was like living in a great glass ball, polished by others, from which all that was sordid or distasteful had been excluded."

The murderous, smothering repression of the state is illustrated in many ways, yet its vulnerability made manifest in that the successful acts of sabotage are denied coverage in the press.

The authenticity of prison interrogation has been attested to by those who have come through. It is all here. Some break under pressure, others survive — unto death.

As already said, this is more than an indictment of a system of society. In its own right it is a gripping story, holding one breathless as to the outcome.

It is no surprise to read that it won a literary prize for "a novel which combines high literary quality with contemporary social and political relevance."

As always with anything written about South Africa, one asks how the author sees the outcome, the hopes for the future. The clue here lies in a prologue, dated June 1980, in which a man watches an earth-shaking explosion before burying himself in the night.

This is Cass, whom we meet in the story aged 10. A brief, one-paragraph epilogue has the same Cass — the whole sky is alight. "It was done. Years of preparation, years of training. They had succeeded; or partially." Contemporary novels of this stature are rare. You must read this.

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MORNING STAR

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ISSUE DATED 26 JUL 1983

womanwise edited by Mikki Doyle

'There are 25 million of us and you can't hang us all'



Hilda Bernstein

HILDA BERNSTEIN, the first winner of the new Sinclair prize for fiction, speaks to Jo Stanley about the political thriller of South African life that won the award.

for works of great literary merit but also of social or political significance.

Much of her pleasure at winning the prize is because of the valuable publicity it gives to the fight against apartheid headed by the African National Congress — of which she is an active member over here.

Ms. Bernstein first went out to South Africa from East London in her late teens. Initially she was a member of the all-white Labour Party there. Then she joined the Communist Party because it was the only organisation to bridge the races.

Council

Also, she explains, "it was because I had a deep belief in a world of justice and freedom — which I was quite sure it was possible to make and indeed be a part of."

Political activity was integral to her life from the late '30s onwards. Nineteen-forty-three found her on Johannesburg City Council — the first and only time a Communist has held such a post

She was involved with all

those people who slowly changed to deciding that non-violent action wasn't effective enough. That nationwide change took place in ironical circumstances.

In 1956, six years after the Communist Party had been banned, 156 people (including her husband, Rusty) were tried for treason. But the state had to prove the violent overthrow of the state had been plotted: the emphasis on "violent."

After a trial that lasted four-and-a-half-years, the African National Congress proved it had always advocated peaceful means. But by then people had decided they were actually going to have to fight the racist regime's violence with violent means.

And it is this period that **Death is part of the process** describes. All the major incidents in it are true; they just didn't happen to the characters Hilda Bernstein has created.

She herself was arrested in 1960, in the "State of Emergency" after Sharpeville, but was never in "solitary" or tortured. Descriptions of these experiences in the book came from comrades who'd suffered through

the agony of not being allowed to sleep for five days, who found themselves playing bizarre games alone in their cells.

Different grades of torture were meted out, depending on colour. In the book, Dick, the white lecturer, got better treatment than Indres, the Indian. Black Thabo got sleep deprivation, assault after assault, electrocution and drowning.

Sabotage

"These days," says Ms. Bernstein, "events like Neal Argett's death prove that the worst brutalities are no longer reserved solely for blacks."

The point of writing this book (her first novel after several non-fiction works and an autobiography) was to show that "this whole early crude and sad experiment in sabotage was an absolutely necessary part of the development of the struggle in South Africa.

"These early steps were inevitable, they had to take place.

"And they formed the basis for the more sophisticated sabo-

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS



International Day of Solidarity with the Women of South Africa

August 9th is South African Womens Day — the day on which, every year, the world joins with the women of South Africa as a mark of solidarity and support.

Women have always played a militant and prominent part in the liberation struggle against apartheid oppression, and 1984 has been declared by the African National Congress as **The Year of the Women**

We invite you to share in our celebration of August 9th, to enjoy our singing and visual displays, to listen to our speakers and learn about the struggle against apartheid.

Demonstrate your solidarity and support for South African women, many of whom are in jail, or under house arrest, or banned.

TUESDAY 9th AUGUST 7pm Conway Hall Red Lion Square, London WC1

tage of today," she argues, thinking of the explosion outside the military headquarters in Pretoria recently; the partial destruction of the SASOC oil refinery and the bombing of the Koeburg power station in the Cape.

It was a stepping stone she argues. The book's title is taken from Marat, by Peter Weiss. "Any animal, plant or man who dies adds to nature's compost heap, becomes the manure without which nothing could grow, nothing could be created. Death is simply part of the process."

Defiance

Not only the current bombings reported in Britain reflect the way in which that mulch has helped a new type of anti-racist action grow.

There are also the thousands of unreported actions in the country and "the growing spirit of mutiny and defiance."

That spirit had been damped down when Hilda left there to come to Britain in the 1960s. But by 1976 the uprising of the students showed it was growing again.

"And it has subsequently shown itself over and over again in large-scale strikes, trade union organisation and action taken despite the regime's oppression."

The thing that really expresses how people in South Africa feel, she believes, is the sign that appeared the day when the Moroka Three were executed earlier this summer.

"There are 25 million of us and you can't hang us all."

Sinclair Browne

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THE YORKSHIRE POST

LEEDS,  
YORKSHIRE

15 28 JUL 1983  
DATED

## KIRSTY McLEOD on new fiction

MORRIS WEST'S new novel is based on a psychiatric case-history, that of a confessed murderer treated by Carl Gustav Jung.

In *The World Is Made of Glass* (Hodder & Stoughton, £8.95), it is 1913, the year of Europe's swansong. It is also a year of crisis for Jung, at loggerheads with his old master, Freud, and himself suffering from a protracted manic depressive illness.

Jung's own account of his encounter with the unnamed killer is a brief, non-committal, undated paragraph in his autobiography. Morris West has dressed the encounter up, has given it a date — the twilight year 1913 — and an emotional impact that brings patient and therapist into such close harmony that Jung, too, teeters on the brink of breakdown.

"*The World Is Made of Glass*" is written in staccato style, like jottings from a journal or case-book. Its themes — love, guilt, sexual obsession and self-forgiveness — are not only a psychiatrist's raw material, but also the stuff of which

Morris West customarily weaves his novels.

The dust-jacket for Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings* (Macmillan, £9.95) is itself a work of imaginative fiction. "... recreates a lost civilisation ... a world as remote and familiar as Homer's *Odyssey* ..." After such bombast, even Mailer's prose seems quite subdued.

In fact, his new novel is exactly what you would expect — a brilliantly envisaged, bafflingly described (with adjectives such as "urine-cursed") picture of life in the Pharaohs' Egypt.

In this vast 700-page tome, Ramses and Nefertiri, their courtier and plaything, Menenhetet, and their dreadful gods, are seen through the eyes of a four-times-reincarnated citizen, who describes in fascinating detail his own incarceration in the Pyramids and his own embalming.

# Tortured harmony

Clare Boylan, the young Irish novelist acclaimed for her recent first novel "Holy Pictures," has followed it up with an accomplished collection of short stories, curiously titled *A Nail on the Head* (Hamish Hamilton, £7.95).

This is graceful writing. Clare Boylan's style is deft rather than robust, her stories are not particularly striking, but they are full of elegant little twists concealed till the last moment with feminine guile. The title story, set in Metroland, describes a house-proud suburban couple's attempts at impromptu bohemian entertaining. I liked, too, the first tale, "Housekeeper's Cut," with its mocking echoes of "Brief Encounter."

With his second novel *Dangerous Pursuits* (Secker, £7.50), Nicholas Salaman joins the small band of English writers — Wodehouse and Tom Sharpe among them — who

are masters of sly, jovial, intelligent comedy.

Roy Croucher is an Englishman of the old school, peering disapprovingly through an invisible monocle at foreigners and promiscuous youth. With ingenuity worthy of the SAS, he persecutes a hapless American marketing man who has taken up with Chloe, a high-class hooker turned English rose. Weaving their three narratives together with a high-spirited malice that never dissolves into outright farce, Salaman concocts an enjoyable, stylishly original story.

Aisha is both the heroine and title of a first novel (Jonathan Cape, £7.50) by Ahdaf Soueif. Divided into "Eight Chapters," cycles from Aisha's life, it flits from London to Cairo to Alexandria to Paris.

The part where Aisha is a London schoolgirl, fending off questions about camels and the number of her

father's wives, is less interesting than the periphery of her life in Cairo where her old nurse, Zeina, regales her with horrific details of peasant bridal customs, and her cousin Marianne fights a valiant rearguard action against an arranged marriage.

## IN BRIEF:

**Author from a Savage People** by Bette Pesetsky (Bodley Head, £7.95). First novel by an accomplished short story writer, a street-smart comedy about a woman ghost-writer whose client wins the Nobel Prize. Funny and original.

**Nothing to Lose**, by Consuelo Baehr (Gollancz, £8.95). Timely novel set in the American advertising business about one, April Taylor, and her attempts — through walking, jogging, pummelling, dieting, and finally, starving — to escape her prison of fat.

**Death Is Part of the Process**, by Hilda Bernstein (Sinclair Browne, £7.95). Set in the early 1960s, a thriller with a social conscience about the duel between anti-apartheid activists and the State police.

HAM & HIGH, July 29 1983 - 67

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Neither a "liberal" nor one of the broederbond has ever been nor could be argued from his or her entrenched position by logic, which is why the South African mess will never be resolved other than by force, and with tears.

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THE FINANCIAL TIMES

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# Stories for a sunny summer

BY GAY FIRTH

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it is possible—though never easy—to be clever, and funny, and write "proper" novels as well, if you have the courage of your cleverness and funniness. Kingsley Amis did; and does. So does Frederic Raphael. Mr James does not, yet; and *Brilliant Creatures* reads un-easily, accordingly. But it is brilliantly funny. Take courage, Mr James.

Stephen Benatar and Nicholas Salaman are two relatively recent novelists whose individual skills and originality catch the eye—the cold, hard eye of the reviewer—with respect. Mr Benatar's third novel, *When I Was Otherwise* (The Bodley Head, £7.95, 270 pages) is his second journey into old age: three elderly relatives living to-

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Not so Antony Beevor's, whose novel *The Faustian Pact* (Jonathan Cape, £7.50, 208 pages) reads like a comfortably old-fashioned political thriller, with enough now-fangled political horrors—terrorists, computer systems, Northern Ireland—thrown in to raft it out of the 1930s. Nina Bawden's *The Ice-House* (Macmillan, £7.95, 236 pages) begins to melt and drip a bit towards the end, but Miss Bawden is an established novelist who never writes less than well, and this story of Ruth and Daisy, friends from childhood, now neighbours in middle-aged motherhood, middle-class comfort, middle-brow adultery, is beautifully observed: a chilling, well-worked melodrama. There is a lot of adultery about in Nancy Thayer's *Bodies and Souls*, too (Hodder and Stoughton, £8.95, 373 pages): an American import bristling with bodies in beds, souls in torment; superficial cleanliness and godliness in a prettily middle-class New England setting.

M. S. Power is a new Irish writer well worth watching. *Hunt for the Autumn Clowns* (Chatto and Windus, £7.95, 160 pages) pegs a delicate piece of story-telling to the Wordsworth poem of the same title. Set in a remote Irish island, to which a disgraced priest, Father Redmond, has been exiled, this tale of an idiot boy and a schoolmarm, Miss Hudson, reminds us that humanity is humanity wherever we find it, that those who may seem less than human are no less human than ourselves, and that unless we seek humanity in our hearts there is less hope of a more humane world. Mr Power makes the point in a first novel of exceptional subtlety, never forgetting that an Irishman's first duty is to his story-spinning.

Four collections of short stories provide a lucky dip of "good reads" and real surprises. Robert Nye's distinctive tone of voice sounds spasmodically through *The Facts of Life and Other Fictions* (Hamish Hamilton, £7.95, 153 pages): 16 stories, some marvellously subtle, others mere experiments with dreams and language—and why not. Hugh Fleetwood's six stories, *A Dance to the Glory of God* (Hamish Hamilton, £8.95, 183 pages), look at people who have to invent their own world in order to keep a foothold on the real one: story-telling about story-telling; sad; frightening. John Gardner, who died last year, has a fitting memorial in *The Art of Living and Other Stories* (Secker and Warburg, £8.50, 283 pages): ten tales ranging from the Middle Ages to the mid-1950s, the Mid-West to lands of Make Believe. And Clare Boylan's 15 stories in *A Nail on the Head* (Hamish Hamilton, £8.95, 135 pages) nail human relationships, especially in love, more often than not in a collection evidently hustled out of cold storage to follow her recent first novel, *Holy Pictures*. The novel is better. But her stories, extravagantly written, rattle with life.

Sinclair Browne

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THE BOOKSELLER

13, BEDFORD SQUARE,  
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**BBC World of Books** has recorded interviews with: Hilda Bernstein, winner of the Sinclair Prize for fiction, for *Death is Part of the Process* (Sinclair Browne, £7.95); Melvyn Bragg, *Melvyn Bragg's Art Series* (Piatkus, £5.95 each; one title at £6.95); John Gribbin, *Future Weather* (Pelican, £3.50); Sarah Pooley, illustrator of the *Your Body Series*, Vols 1 & 2, *Skin and Bone* and *Blood and Lungs*, Dr Gwynn Vevers (Bodley Head, £3.75 each); Zee Edgell, joint winner of the Fawcett Society Book Prize, for *Beka Lamb* (Heinemann, £1.50); plus a paperback round-up by Edward Blishen.



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HUDDERSFIELD DAILY EXAMINER

HUDDERSFIELD,  
YORKSHIRE

ISSUE  
DATED

21 JUL 1983

## Death Is Part Of The Process. Hilda Bernstein/Sinclair Brownè, £7.95

**HILDA BERNSTEIN'S** novel was rejected by a growing list of publishers over the years until it won the first Sinclair Prize for Fiction.

The award was offered for a previously unpublished novel that combined "high literary merit and a strong story line with social or political significance applicable to the world today."

Her book is about the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and thereby fulfils the latter condition.

But its literary style is pedestrian rather than of high merit and the story line is simple but thin.

Mrs Bernstein lived in South Africa from 1933 to 1964 and both she and her husband were politically active. They left illegally when they were under threat of arrest.

She has published non-fiction works about that tragic country and uses her wide experience to give the scenes, atmosphere and conditions the stamp of authenticity.

But her attempt to explain why a multi-racial

group of human rights workers move from pacifism to militancy becomes dialectic and, sad to say, slightly boring.

Their attempts are, inevitably, doomed, but apart from one charismatic black African the participants evoke little sympathy. And, despite high and worthy motives, Mrs Bernstein falls into cliché when one white woman makes amends for her privilege by bedding an Indian fugitive. The Indian, if, of course, cultured and good looking.

*Denis Kilcommons*

# Stories for a sunny summer

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Financial Times  
Sat 13 Aug 83

Sinclair Brown

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HAMPSTEAD & HIGHGATE EXPRESS

HAMPSTEAD  
LONDON NW2

ISSUE  
DATED 9 AUG 1983

HAM & HIGH, July 29, 1983—57

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# Long list for the Booker

A BROWN paper envelope arrived on my desk the other day showing no signs whence it came. And in it, once again, I found a list of all the titles submitted by publishers for the 1983 Booker McConnell Prize for Fiction. One hundred titles in all.

Here it is. But keep in mind, dear excluded author, before you reach for the telephone to your publisher, that the judges are entitled to call in titles in addition to these (and that some publishers with bloated fiction lists are sometimes thought to leave some titles off their Booker entries in the confidence that they will be called in by the judges anyway). Here we go:

**Alison Press:** Nicholas Salaman. *Dangerous Pursuits*

**W H Allen:** Peter de Polnay, *Of Venison and Victims*

**Allison & Busby:** Aidan Higgins. *Bornholm Night-Ferry*; Katharine Moore, *Summer at the Haven*

**Bodley Head:** Peter Dickinson. *Hindsight*; Moris Farhi, *The Last of the Days*; William Trevor, *Fools of Fortune*; David Wheldon, *The Viaduct*

**Brilliance Books:** Peter Hazeldine. *Rapture of the Deep*

**Cape:** Anita Brookner, *Look at Me*; George MacBeth, *Anna's Book*; Brian MacLavery, *Cal*; Brian Moore, *Cold Heaven*; Salman Rushdie, *Shame*; Lisa St Aubin de Teran, *Slow Train to Milan*; Emma Tennant, *Woman Beware Woman*

**Chatto & Windus:** Howard Jacobson, *Coming From Behind*; Neil Jordan, *The Dream of a Beast*; Jessie Kesson, *Another Time Another Place*; Iris Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil*; Patricia Roberts, *Tender Prey*

**Robin Clark:** Helen Stancey. *Words*; J V Stevenson, *Through the Kaleidoscope*

**William Collins:** Gillian Avery. *Onlookers*; John Moat, *Mai's*

*Wedding*; Maggie Ross, *Milena*

**Constable:** Harriett Gilbert, *The Riding Mistress*; David Hughes, *The Imperial German Dinner Service*

**Daedalus:** Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nightmare*

**Dent:** David Thompson, *Dandiprat's Days*

**André Deutsch:** Sally Beattie, *Annie's Story*; Molly Keane, *Time After Time*; Roger King, *Horizontal Hotel*

**Duckworth:** Alice Thomas Ellis, *The Other Side of the Fire*; Sian James, *Dragons and Roses*; Carol Jones, *Late in the Day*; Crispin Kitto, *The Antarctica Cookbook*

**Faber:** Lawrence Durrell, *Sebastian, or Ruling Passions*; Maggie Gee, *The Burning Book*; Jane Rogers, *Separate Tracks*

**Victor Gollancz:** Georgina Lewis, *The Winter Tree*; Robin Lloyd-Jones, *Lord of the Dance*; D M Thomas, *Ararat*; Ian Watson, *Chekhov's Journey*

**Granada:** Ted Allbeury, *Pay Any Price*; G F Newman, *The Nation's Health*; John Ralston Paul, *Baraka*; Alan Sillitoe, *The Lost Flying Boat*

**Hamish Hamilton:** Peter Ackroyd, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*; Anita Mason, *The Illusionists*; Shiva Naipaul, *A Hot Country*; A N Wilson, *Scandal*

**Heinemann:** Penelope Lively, *Perfect Happiness*; Graham Swift, *Waterland*

**Hodder:** Janice Elliott, *Magic*; Janet Turner Hospital, *The Ivory Swing*; William McIlvanney, *The Papers of Tony Veitch*; Gillian Tindall, *Looking Forward*

**Hutchinson:** Zulfikar Ghose, *Don Bueno*; Francis King, *Act of Darkness*; Stanley Middleton, *Entry into Jerusalem*

**Michael Joseph:** David Caute, *The K Factor*; Barry Hines, *Unfinished Business*; Jonathan Smith, *Come Back*; Jane Somers, *Diary of a Good Neighbour*

**Allen Lane:** Rodney Hall, *Just Relations*; Charles Maclean, *The Watcher*; Penelope Mortimer, *The Handyman*; Carolyn Slaughter, *The Banquet*

**Macmillan:** Nina Bowden, *The Ice House*; William Cooper, *Scenes from Later Life*; Ann Schlee, *The Proprietor*; Mary Wesley, *Jumping the Queue*

**Methuen:** Maureen Duffy, *Londoners*; Sarah Gainham, *The Tiger, Life*; David Nobbs, *Second from Last in the Sack Race*

**Murray:** Meira Chand, *The Bonsai Tree*; Ruth Praver Jhabvala, *In Search of Love and Beauty*

**Peter Owen:** Peter Vansittart, *Three Six Seven*

**Piatkus:** Peter de Polnay, *The Other Self*

**Prosperity Publications:** Lola Halil, *Aphrodite's Lament*

**Robson Books:** Vernon Scannell, *Ring of Truth*

**Routledge:** Sasha Moorsom, *In the Shadow of the Paradise Tree*

**St Pancras Press:** Peter Preston, *Vertical Line*

**Salamander Press:** John Fuller, *Flying to Nowhere*

**Secker:** Malcolm Bradbury, *Rates of Exchange*; Melvyn Bragg, *Love and Glory*; J M Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*

**Sheba:** Jo Jones, *Come, Come*

**Sinclair Browne:** Hilda Bernstein, *Death is Part of the Process*

**Springwood Books:** Derek Clifford, *The Affair of the Forest*

**Virtuoso Books:** Solomon Candy, *The Next Prime Minister*

**Weidenfeld:** Paul Ferris, *A Distant Country*; Monica Furlong, *Cousins*; Patrick McGinley, *Foxprints*; Harriet Waugh, *Kate's House*

**Women's Press:** Elizabeth Baines, *The Birth Machine*; Sheelagh Kanelli, *The Nets*; Michele Roberts, *The Visitation*

**World's Work:** I I Magdalen, *Ana*

P HB

the boy had driven the tractor without permission. He claimed a goat from the child's parents as compensation for his tractor!

It should be remembered that the parents do not want their children to work, but have no alternative. The children's meagre income stands between them and starvation. Besides, the rights of residence and of movement of Blacks are monitored and controlled through the pass laws, influx control measures and the migrant labour system.

Child labour is morally abominable. Poverty, deprivation, illiteracy, drug addiction, malnutrition, prostitution, endemic alcoholism, etc, are its side effects.

What is often forgotten is that agriculture — which makes use of child labour — contributes a lot to South Africa's gross domestic product, and agricultural exports also make an important contribution to South Africa's revenue. Besides the economic angle, there is also the political angle. South Africa's ability to export food — when millions in the country have no food — has become an important element in the racist government's plan for the creation of the so-called constellation of South African states under South African hegemony. It was none other than the Minister of Agriculture who, in 1979, stated that "full grain silos will mean we can talk and negotiate from a position of strength. With rising populations all around us, more and more black states will depend to some extent on this country for basic foods. It is strongly in our interests that we should be able to meet the demand."

That sums it all up. Those who are against sanctions because apartheid is an 'internal' problem of an 'independent' state should listen.

This booklet is valuable for many reasons. But it has serious weaknesses. In parts it tends to moralise on the injustices and malpractices of apartheid. Its conclusions are weak. What we need is a strategy that will link the question of child labour to the whole question of apartheid and the struggle against it.

## APARTHEID- THE FACTS

Hilda Bernstein: *Death is Part of the Process*, (Sinclair Browne, London, 1983, £7.95)

This novel is set mainly in Johannesburg, where the writer was politically active for many years, and it deals with the beginnings of Umkhonto We Sizwe, in the early sixties. A small network of sabotage groups is set up, composed of people who want to fight oppression and injustice. The groups train, carry out acts of sabotage, and are broken up by arrest; as one comrade turns out to be a police informer, and others are, in different ways, destroyed in the interrogation room, the members of the groups learn the reality of illegal struggle. At the same time, a new generation of freedom fighters is watching, learning and growing up.

Perhaps the strongest presence in the novel is that of light, which accompanies all crucial events in the plot. Sunlight is 'vibrant' in Dick's garden the day his concern over his servant causes him to make his choice; it reflects off metal in 'blinding flashes' at the moment the police capture Thabo, the bravest of them all. When Indres and Siphon blow up the pylon, the light is 'incandescent,' and it is 'brilliant' at the end of the story, when Cass carries out his triumphant act of resistance. The strong natural light of the highveld is in this way identified with the fires that are the harbingers of freedom; Africa was created light, the novelist suggests, and to light it will return.

The absence of light plays an opposite role in this system of imagery. In the powerful description of Thabo's suffering and death under torture, it is 'darkness' that finally explodes 'in his skull.' The child of Dick and Margie, too innocent to understand racism, fears not the light but the dark;

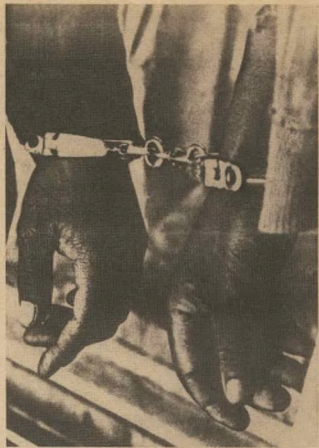
while Pila's sister, silly, spoiled and racist, has to wear a cardboard shield to protect part of her face from the sun.

In the Sunday conversation of Pila's family, the dialogue quickens and becomes the living voice of white Johannesburg masters and madams, talking carelessly and callously about money, investments, black servants, black thieves. On the other hand, there are characters like the woman who works for Dick and Margie, and who sits patiently baby-sitting, but cannot quite overcome her resentment of the child she is obliged to look after, while her own is far away. Hilda Bernstein's pictures of Johannesburg are authentic, these characters are consistent and credible.

Apart from Thabo (whose soundness and strength are shown to derive from his sense of being one with his people) and perhaps Indres also (who gains stature from his driving determination to finish the work he has to do), the central characters are insubstantial. They seem too slight for the part they play in the plot, and lacking in any kind of real motivation or seriousness.

The naive and well-meaning Pila, whose brief and peripheral involvement in political activity comes to a pathetic and ignoble close, would be satisfactory at one end of a range of characters, but the range isn't there. Margie, Dick's wife, has little more weight; she learns some kind of independence while Dick is in detention; she harbours Indres, and while harbouring him gives him the kind of consolation she has learned to give in her years as a sheltered wife; but her political involvement and her political education end there. When it seems that Dick may be going to give state evidence, the only support she seems able to offer him is a message that he must do what he wishes.

While Dick is in solitary confinement, his self-centred urge to protect himself at all costs from the pressure of his environment is shown with great insight (and indeed this chapter is one of the best pieces of writing in the book), but before he goes to gaol, he is sketchy. Why did he take the step of joining



Umkhonto? — we see only his anger at the plight of black prisoners in the police cells, and we are told he was on a 'committee' at the university. This adds up to a character scarcely more solid than Pila. Even Ralph, the organiser, has few revealed motives; he exists as a shadowy leader figure, recruiting Dick into Umkhonto We Sizwe (though not into any political organisation) because of Dick's technical 'expertise,' and later, urging Dick not to become a state witness.

In the course of their experience, these characters don't seem to gain any further political knowledge or understanding, and the training received by little Cass, the future freedom fighter, is concerned with the mechanics of underground work rather than with the political theory that should inform it. The effect (though this is not intended) is to imply a certain triviality in the organisation these characters are working in.

The impression of the central characters gained by the critic David Caute is quoted on the dust jacket. He describes them as, "the small band of despairing rebels ... who embark on a heroic but doomed campaign of sabotage in protest against apartheid."

Despairing? Doomed? the organisation that is the subject of the story is Umkhonto We Sizwe, the South African people's army; the novel doesn't seem to have communicated any feeling of its dignity and purpose, only a kind of romantic thoughtlessness. The history of Umkhonto in later times has been characterised by courage, dedication to the struggle, level-headedness and political clarity; these qualities are not demonstrated in the novel.

*Death Is Part of the Process* won the Sinclair Award for 1983. It should be of interest to readers who never knew the time and place it is set in, as well as to those who did.

JM

## DEATH IS PART OF THE PROCESS

*Apartheid – The Facts:* (International Defence and Aid, London, 1983, £3.00)

This book is intended to explain the history of apartheid laws, from the days of the first white settlement; how the legislation operates; what it means for the exploited black majority; how it is defended by the white minority government, and the struggle for liberation.

International Defence and Aid prides itself on the accuracy of its information, and there is a great deal of information here, up to date, concisely put, and arranged under headings. It is a very useful book, at an accessible price.

The photographs are good. Some speak for themselves, some are captioned; some aren't captioned, but should be.

JM

## OBITUARY

# HAMBA KAHLE, CANON CALATA

*On Saturday, June 25th, more than 3 000 people carrying ANC flags and banners braved midwinter weather in Cradock to bury Canon James Arthur Calata. The Rev. Calata, died on June 16th – a significant day in the political history of South Africa.*

Mourners from all over the country converged on Lingelihle Township to listen to tributes to the Rev. Calata by representatives of various organisations. Archie Gumede, the Natal chairman of both the United Democratic Front and the Release Mandela Committee, and former cell-mate of the Rev. Calata, said:

“During his time he was the spine of the African National Congress, and he never changed his mind until the last day of his life ...

“Of the many sons and daughters of Africa, Rev. Calata was surpassed by few in nobility and patriotism.”

# Political thriller from South Africa

**The book:**  
**Hilda Bernstein**  
**Death is part of the process**  
**Translation: Eva M Ahlander**  
**Hjulet**

THE PUBLISHERS present the book as a political thriller from South Africa. This is an accurate description of *Death is Part of the Process*. No cleverly composed detective story could offer greater suspense than this book. In addition, even in its Swedish translation by Eva M Ahlander, this portrayal is in a language which it is a pleasure to read.

It would be incorrect towards the presumptive reader to describe its course of events in detail. Briefly it can be said that a group of blacks, Indians and whites who engaged in a series of acts of sabotage against the apartheid regime in the early sixties are portrayed. They worked in small groups, sometimes blindly, since the mass media mentioned very little or nothing about the sabotage. In other words, the media played into the hands of the regime. The destruction caused by each act of sabotage is intended to arouse dread or reflection amongst those who want to support the regime, or those who carefully wait on the sidelines hoping to avoid discomfort.

When the nazi outrages were revealed after the fall of the Third Reich, there was a measure of truth in the excuses that one had not taken a stand because of ignorance of what was occurring within those borders. This excuse is not valid today. Particularly those of us who live outside the borders of South Africa constantly receive information on outrages which occur there. Not all details, nor sufficiently forcefully, but enough for us to perceive the chain of events.

This portrayal clearly illustrates the brutal methods, which the representatives of the apartheid system have inherited from the nazis and further refined. Even while torturing a saboteur, the brutal henchmen do not hesitate to discuss their small family affairs and what their children want amongst themselves.

The whites who have been caught are better treated than the coloureds. They may sleep in beds, while the others must always sleep on the floor, to mention one example. With a sophisticated insight for sowing distrust, the torturers allow the blacks to learn not only that the whites are clearly not exposed to the same treatment as they are, but that the whites are also prepared to betray them. A young white woman felt lucky to be detained at the same time as the others. But she realized that they would regard her as a traitor when her father, thanks to his good connections, managed to get her released. Her white skin excluded her from the wider community and deprived her of her right to the country she loved.

The Indian had the greatest difficulty in avoiding his pursuers. He was unable to solicit help like the whites nor to hide himself in a township like the blacks. He belonged to a minority which, to top it all, was split in its attitudes to the apartheid regime. Nonetheless it was one of the blacks who broke down and became an informer. Skilfully Hilda Bernstein portrays how interminably difficult it is to struggle for human rights in a society in which everything is based on injustice from birth and where people live completely separated from one another, in alien worlds.

As a childminder for a white child, a black woman may travel in a bus for whites. But not with her own child, which she has been forced to send to its grandmother who lives far away. Oh, it can't be fun to live with granny, says the ingenuously cruel white child.



□□□

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to put the book aside without having finished it even if that requires reading far into the night. What remains is wonder over how anyone could hit on the idea that the colour of someone's skin should determine one's worth as a human being. It is such an absurd thought that anyone who accepts it ought to feel degraded.

The reader is also left with anguish at the prospect of the appalling showdown which appears ever more unavoidable in South Africa. The only possible escape appears to be such strong pressure from the outside that the whites realize that, for their own sakes, they must make peace with the country's black majority.

Hilda Bernstein's message does not allow for prevarication. Even the passive take a stand.

*Ingrid Segerstedt Wiberg*

*Göteborgs-Posten*

29th September, 1987

Translation and photo by **Madi Gray.**

**Caption:** *Hilda Bernstein's message does not allow for prevarication. Even the passive take a stand.*

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