

important factor in this process is clearly seen in German where the loans like *Barriere* or *Courage* with pronounced schwa as the final syllable do not shift their stress. As long as the <-e> was pronounced in English the French stressing did not come in conflict with Germanic prosody but when it was lost in pronunciation in words like *courage* and *marriage*, the stress moved from the last syllable.

Thus, even if the original Germanic stress was root-initial, and even if there is mainly stress shifting from the last syllable to the first in both English and German, reluctance to stress the final syllable appears to be a prominent factor in the stress-timed Germanic prosodic pattern.

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The Late Interviews of Jean-Paul Sartre

When Jean-Paul Sartre was three years old, he lost the vision in his right eye as a result of a childhood illness. In 1973, when he was 67, he suffered a stroke, which was followed by a retinal hemorrhage in his left eye. Though he retained some peripheral vision, he was no longer able to read or write in the way in which he had long been accustomed.

For Sartre producing literary texts had meant sitting at a table with pen in hand over paper. It had meant careful rereading of what he had written, and making line-by-line corrections and additions. His philosophical works were less extensively revised, but they also required close rereading. Facing blindness, he felt that his life as a writer might be over.

Simone de Beauvoir suggested that he could convey his ideas with the help of a tape recorder. He tried this but found that while he could speak into the machine and play back what he had said, there was no practical way of editing, as he was accustomed to doing with his literary texts. The same proved true with his effort to write philosophy with a tape recorder.

Before losing his vision, Sartre had completed the first three volumes of *The Family Idiot*, his study of Flaubert, and done the research for the fourth and final volume, which was to deal with the analysis of *Madame Bovary*. Facing his new situation, he tried to write volume four with the use of the tape recorder, and when that failed, with the assistance of his secretary, Benny Levy. The lack of success was frustrating – he had worked on the project for fifteen years – but his disappointment was tempered by the fact that he regarded volume four as the least interesting of the series. He was ready to move on to new work and to try new methods of writing.

His blindness had created new circumstances for him as a writer, leading him to perceive the interview format as the only way he could convey his thoughts to his audience. And over time he made increasing use of the interview framework. It allowed him to continue his life as a writer, though of course it made him more dependent upon others for assistance in his writing projects

In 1974, Simone de Beauvoir proposed that she conduct and record a series of conversations with Sartre, with a view to using the transcribed conversations as a basis for a book they would write together. The original intent was to edit and reformulate the material around themes like literature, philosophy and politics. When they were finally published, in 1981, they were minimally edited, and were presented as a lengthy appendix to the French edition of de Beauvoir's *Adieux*.¹ Unfortunately, they do not evidence any new ideas on Sartre's part.

But Sartre lost interest in the conversations he had recorded with

Simone de Beauvoir, and turned instead to the possibility of a series of television broadcasts to be made in collaboration with de Beauvoir, Benny Levy and Philippe Gavi for *Antenne Deux*. Up to this time, Sartre had shown little interest in the use of television as a way of communicating his ideas to the general public. However, it now appeared to offer the opportunity to give voice to his ideas without having to produce a written text. Also, under the government of President Giscard D'Estaing, there was a liberalization of the French television system and there now seemed to be political space for programs like the ones Sartre envisioned. They were to be called "75 Years of History by Those Who Made It", with a format which permitted Sartre to reflect upon the history of the twentieth century. A team of historians would provide the research for the historical narrative and Sartre would use fifteen minutes of each program to comment on contemporary events. Work on the programs went on during 1974 and 1975 with the producers concentrating on creating programs which would have a political impact, rather than be purely cultural, despite the fact that the director of *Antenne Deux*, Marcel Jullian, wanted a "cultural event". However, right-wing forces within the government, particularly Jacques Chirac, stepped in to prevent the programs from being produced. The prime minister was not about to allow a Marxist interpretation of French history to be aired on national television.

In 1975, Sartre was interviewed by Michel Contat² for a project that was to be called "Self-Portrait at Seventy". Sartre used the occasion to come out of the closet about his blindness, making his first public statement about it. In response to Contat's question, "Tell us, Sartre, how are you feeling?" Sartre spoke of some of his health problems and then discussed his inability to continue his career as a writer since he could no longer read what he had written. This conversation with Contat was Sartre's first attempt to use the "interview" as a way of producing written texts that would not require him to reread, edit and clarify his thoughts. The editing was performed by Contat. In addition to tightening the language, shortening phrases and eliminating repetition, he had to reconstruct parts of the interview from memory because of technical problems with the recordings, and he added some material from other discussions he had had with Sartre.³ The interview with Contat was first published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1975 and was widely reprinted throughout the world.

In that same year Sartre was also interviewed by Michel Rybalka, Oreste Pucciani and Susan Gruenheck, for a volume of "The Library of Living Philosophers Series". The normal format for the Library of Living Philosophers Series required the philosopher to read critical essays which had been written about his work and then write a response. Since this was not possible in Sartre's case, Michel Rybalka suggested that as an alternative Sartre participate in an interview and to this Sartre agreed. Rather than having the critical essays read aloud to Sartre, the interviewers summarized

them for him orally, both prior to and during the interview. He was not much interested in the criticisms which others had made of his philosophy but nevertheless tried to respond to them. For the most part, the interview took the form of an intellectual autobiography, a strategy that proved to be an effective way of dealing with many of the critical essays about his philosophy.

Like Michel Contat, Michel Rybalka also did a substantial editing job on the material contained in this interview, rearranging sentences, dropping or adding words, eliminating repetitions and in general making the text more cohesive and comprehensible.⁴ The interview conducted by Rybalka, Pucciani and Gruenheck was published in 1981 in a volume entitled *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*.

In 1973, Sartre employed Benny Levy as his personal secretary and together they worked on the final volume of *The Family Idiot*, and, as mentioned above, on the television programs for *Antenne Deux*. By 1977, they had begun work on *Power and Freedom*, a series of philosophical dialogues between the two men, who were trying to produce a new type of philosophy, an articulation of plural, not individual, thought. They recorded some forty hours of discussion but the material has never been edited for publication. A separate interview was published in 1980 as *Hope Now*, in *Le Nouvel Observateur*.

John Gerassi also did extensive interviews with Sartre in the 1970s collecting material which he intended to use for a biography of Sartre, whom Gerassi had known since he was a child. While Gerassi never published the comprehensive biography he had first envisioned he did use some of the material from his interviews for his book, *Sartre: Hated Conscience of the Twentieth Century: Vol I*.⁵ The complete contents of the interviews will probably never see the light of day but, like the interviews published by de Beauvoir in *Adieux*, they do not contain any new philosophical ideas.

When the Sartre/Levy interviews were published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in March of 1980, one month before Sartre's death, their publication evoked a controversy. Simone de Beauvoir and several other members of *Les Temps Modernes* editorial board claimed that Sartre had been manipulated by Benny Levy, and that the ideas expressed in the interviews were not Sartre's. The major problem with this argument is that Arlet Elkaim had read the text of the interviews to Sartre before their publication and she claims that he approved of them. John Gerassi argues that Sartre had known what he was saying and that his goal was to create a scandal. In Sartre's own words: "All I want out of the future, whatever of it there is, is to be read".⁶

In 1991, Benny Levy published his interviews with Sartre as a book entitled *L'Espoir Maintenant* in which he framed the interviews by providing a "Presentation" and "Final Word". This was an obvious attempt to impose

his own interpretation upon the dialogues conducted between him and Sartre more than ten years earlier. In the light of the earlier controversy, the reader faces uncertainty about the validity of Levy's interpretation.

In 1996, an English translation of *L'Espoir Maintenant* was published as *Hope Now*⁷ with a long introduction by Ronald Aronson, who carefully lays out the issues concerning the controversy about the 1980 interviews. Further attention to Benny Levy's role in the interviews⁸ with Sartre appears in a special issue of *Sartre Studies International*. It seems to me that the real question is whether or not Sartre developed any important philosophical ideas in the interviews. In other words, is *Hope Now* worth reading as a philosophical text? And what, if anything, does it add to Sartre's theory of politics and society?

In a section of *Hope Now* called "A Thought Created by Two People," Sartre tried to formulate the goals of his writing project with Levy. He remarked: "What our collaboration brings to me are plural thoughts that we have formed together, which constantly yield me something new even though, a priori, I agree with their whole content."⁹ This is a goal, which was not achieved in the dialogues between Sartre and Levy. The interview was a poor substitute for writing. The simple fact is that Sartre was no longer able to face an imagined public from behind a sheet of paper. The *Hope Now* interviews were not plural thoughts but simply a way for Sartre to continue articulating his ideas to the public. Unfortunately, there are few new or interesting philosophical ideas in this text. The story might be different if Sartre and Levy had been able to complete the project of *Power and Freedom* but because of Sartre's declining health this proved to be impossible. Blindness was not Sartre's only physical problem. He had suffered several strokes and one month after the publication of his interview with Levy, he had to be rushed to the hospital where he died.

The interviews which make up the text of *Hope Now* may not prove anything about the possibility of using the interview as a way of producing social theory given Sartre's poor health. Under other circumstances, he might have reworked his ideas in dialogue with Benny Levy. As this text stands, there is no evidence that he made any attempt to have the interviews read allowed to him so he could make revisions. Arlet Elkaim appears to have read the interviews to Sartre to see if he thought the text was appropriate for publication, not in order to edit or rework any of his ideas. In the past, Sartre showed no real interest in reworking interviews, preferring to let his close friends worry about their content and final form. This attitude might partially explain why the text of "Power and Freedom" was never transformed into a publishable book. Another writer with a different attitude toward the interview as a literary form might have managed to rework the philosophical ideas, but Sartre seems to have lacked the patience and interest to do this successfully.

¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

² Jean-Paul Sartre, "Self-Portrait at Seventy," in *Life/Situation: Essays Written and Spoken* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), pp. 3-92.

³ Interview with Michel Contat, April 7, 2002.

⁴ Interview with Michel Rybalka, April 14, 2002.

⁵ John Gerassi, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Hated Conscience of His Century, Volume I—Protestant or Protester?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁶ Gerassi, p. 23.

⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre and Benny Levy, *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁸ *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1998).

⁹ *Hope Now*, p. 74.