

The 21st Century Scarlet Letter

Latest. Terrence's oral hearing on his motion has been tentatively scheduled for 25 August 2009 at 9:30 am at the Federal Courthouse in Atlanta, in Room 1705. More information as we get it.

The 21st Century Scarlet Letter - the mark of the new sacrificial societal scapegoats.

Terrence White

In February, 1850, the American author Nathaniel Hawthorne published the *The Scarlet Letter*, later to be described as his *magnum opus*. It has been required reading for high school students for many years. Despite its wide appeal, and even given the fact that the work has been translated into major motion pictures more than once, the novel and its ideas seem to have had little real impact in terms of ameliorating society's unfortunate tendency to persecute, sometimes violently and ruthlessly, those who stray from societal norms.

The Scarlet Letter, is a deeply psychological work, exploring in painstaking, almost anatomical, detail (as one critic put it), such themes as 'sin', 'guilt', and 'legalism'. The frequently troublesome relationship between the individual and his/her society (which can often presume the individual to have erred, or strayed, from societal norms), is also deeply explored in this novel. In this respect alone, Hawthorne can be seen to be years ahead of its time. Not until the recent generation of writers and thinkers, such as Chomsky and Marcuse, have we seen such an in-depth psychological exploration of its crucially-important themes.

Why then has it had so little real impact ? Why does our society so readily and so often persecute those whom it considers 'different', or even 'abnormal'? Why are socio-sexual minorities so frequently the targets of such hatred and abuse? 'Sex Offenders', after all, are hardly the first such minority to find itself the unwelcome target of such vicious, vitriolic fury. Consider gays, lesbians, and transgender individuals, for example, many of whom still struggle under such societally-endorsed opprobrium. Clearly, something unwholesome and nefarious is afoot here, and we are not here referring to the hated minorities' ostensibly 'questionable' behaviors. No - we are referring to society's unhealthy negative reactions to those out-of-the-ordinary behaviors.

Those of us who have found ourselves branded with the new 'Scarlet Letter of the Twenty-First Century', as sex offender registration, and the related Adam Walsh Act in particular, have recently been called have become aware that the term 'Scarlet Letter', can now be seen to be an apt metaphor for *any* undesirable person who is persecuted by his or her society, whether justly or unjustly.

A correspondent recently asked this writer the question, "Can any form of authentic 'decency' possibly be founded on such spiteful, mean-spirited sadism" as we now witness? The answer, of course, is 'no', but as Huxley would have said, the false appearance of 'authentic decency' can certainly be founded upon it. This is precisely, after all, what enabled the Nazis and their supporters to compartmentalize their ethics and morality, and commit truly horrendous acts of cruelty, sadism, and barbarism on the one hand (magnified on a monstrously and almost unbelievable scale), and yet still, somehow, maintain a 'clear' conscience, and still believe - and seriously maintain - that they were acting only as good Christians would act, and that they and their cause were among the 'good' elements of society, and that they were only fighting against the 'evil' therein. The same monstrous lie that makes this denial and self-delusion possible, is precisely what we are again witnessing today. Can there be any serious doubt

of this?

What we are witnessing is a serious, ominous, widespread disease of society, or the 'social organism' itself. It would seem to be some form of schizophrenia, which allows the majority to 'channel' such negative emotions of hatred, malice, and cruelty through themselves, directing those emotions outward toward others, whilst still maintaining - and genuinely believing - that they are among the 'good' portions of society - those 'Christian' people whose lives and actions are beyond reproach. It is thus a societal act of self-delusion.

Law professor, Corey Rayburn Yung, a noted expert on 'sex offender' issues, has recently gone even so far as to suggest that we may well be in the midst of an undeclared government-sponsored 'war on sex offenders', in a manner reminiscent of the recent wars on drugs and terrorism. And our governments, of course, do not act alone, but take their marching orders from the voters and 'popular opinion'.

Does the majority truly rule? Is this right in every instance? The 'majority' in our societies are the 'guardians of morality' precisely because they are the majority, and because they are then able to effectively silence any dissenting (minority) voices. This is the principle of 'majority rule' taken to an impossible, untenable extreme. Again, this is (partly, at least) how phenomena such as Nazism were possible. Majority morality is not always right, but in this case, certainly, might does indeed (alas) equal right.

Certainly, neither the individual nor society become more 'moral' by "lynch[ing] someone you feel is less moral", but society and the individual can certainly cause themselves to feel more 'moral' - especially when the act of scapegoating forces the hated 'other' person to assume all of the guilt and stigma one formerly sensed and reviled within oneself. This is made possible, of course, because of the so-called abnormal or 'deviant' thoughts and desires which people like Freud and Havelock Ellis, and even Oscar Wilde, taught us *lie within us all*, to varying degrees.

Solzhenitsyn once famously wrote (and this writer here paraphrases) that much as humanity pathetically tries, again and again, to separate out the 'evil', undesirable elements from within itself, and make them into a persecuted 'other', but this is ultimately an impossible, fruitless, and wasteful task, because the "dividing line between good and evil runs through every [human] heart", and who (he asks) can ever successfully or permanently cut off a part of himself? And yet the infantile human race seemingly can never learn, and so continues to waste an enormous number of human lives in the pathetic attempt to get rid of the 'evil' and guilt within their own hearts and souls.

There was many an ancient culture (particularly in Europe, from whence we Americans derive most of our traditions and genes) which used to regularly sacrifice and murder individuals within their societies as sacred, ritualistic scapegoats, for the good of the society as a whole. The sacrificed individuals were supposed to have taken upon themselves the collective sins of the entire society, and by their sacrificial sufferings and deaths, atoned for the sins of their societies. The ancient Greeks referred to this hapless sacrificed individual as a *φαρμακος* (*Pharmakos*), a term from whence we ironically derive the words 'pharmacy' and 'pharmaceutical', which words would seem to indicate wholeness and health. The so-called 'bog men' of the peat bogs of Scandinavia were, in all probability (though from a different culture), just such scapegoated and sacrificed individuals.

Needless to say, that the so-called 'Registered Sex Offenders' are, for better or worse, the latest in a long tradition of sacrificial societal scapegoats. Quite simply, we are the modern-day *Pharmakoi*.

Will the human race ever grow up?

That some or even many people may deny and disparage the comparison of 'sex offenders' to other persecuted groups (none of which ever earned such hatred and abuse), is beside the point. The remarkable similarity in every case is the astonishing degree of hatred and intolerance felt and expressed by the people of America toward all of those groups, in equal measure - whether it was 'deserved' or not.

Even more astonishing and shameful is that many of the same people who have exhibited such hatred, then and now, have claimed to be 'Christians' - followers of Him whose dictum was to 'love one's neighbor as oneself', to 'judge not, lest one be judged', and who further preached that only 'he who is without sin among you should cast the first stone' toward 'sinners'.

Surely worth noting, in this connection, is the fact that some educated people have begun to describe such victims of societal prejudice and intolerance with an apt forensic term: the *crimen exceptum* (Latin, the 'crime that is the exception' to all other crimes). Such a crime, according to this definition, is one that is felt to be so reprehensible, so heinous (and therefore indefensible) that all ordinary laws, civilized conduct, and bounds of propriety which formerly governed the punishment of 'criminals', no longer apply, and are henceforth deemed both unnecessary and even a positive hindrance to society's right of vengeance against the hapless accused. Shades of mob-rule and summary justice at the end of a hastily-rigged noose, by Southern lynch-mobs, stalking about here. Centuries-old phenomenon under a new name. It really does not matter if one is properly found guilty or not; to be accused is often considered justification enough, in these days of mass hysteria on the subject of crimes against children.

Let us nonetheless be clear: abusing anyone, least of all a child, is truly reprehensible, and we should all seek just and proper remedies to prevent such things from happening.

But society's present actions go well beyond 'just and proper remedies', and many sane, more cautious individuals are now beginning to realize and bemoan this fact. The Founding Fathers of this nation - predicated as it is upon respect for the rights and liberties of all people (popular or not), would surely be astonished and horrified, were they alive to witness this tragic new development, this development so ominous and foreboding as regards the rights and liberties of humanity. This 'new Scarlet Letter' and the societal persecution accompanying it, may well prove to be the disastrous beginning of the end of civil liberties in this nation - and not just for despised socio-sexual minorities, but, ultimately, for all citizens.

Let us nonetheless hope and pray otherwise.

From Pete in Great Britain

Terrence's piece is superb. Here's a little outburst his moving argument sponsored in me:

When allied forces liberated Germany in 1945, the inmates of concentration camps were released. A most potent symbol of liberation for the countless Jewish men, women and children who had been entombed in these factories of genocide was the removal of the yellow Star they were forced to wear by their Hitlerite guards. But there remained many who were excluded from this symbolic liberation: those wearing the Pink Triangle of sexual stigmatisation (at that time, anyone suspected of being homosexual) remained imprisoned by the post-liberation authorities.

Sexual stigmatisation is not new (many of those forced to bear the Pink Triangle were artists, poets, intellectuals, but all were someone's son, someone's daughter) but it has undoubtedly been given a new lease of life in our new, enlightened, post-Nazi age of paedohysteria. Terrence White, whose beautiful, moving article sponsored this little outburst, is one man who – with incalculable courage and inestimable ethical strength – is daring to resist the new fascists in our midst: sexual fascists. That he has been labelled a 'paedo' by these frightening bigots (frightening because they have so much unopposed power) is all the more reason to honour his heroism: he will not be silenced, no matter what the Almighty and Infallible Guardians of Public Morality throw at him.

His writing shows a fierce and unusual intelligence, a deep and profound compassion (even for those who would spit at him and throw him in gaol) and an inspiring commitment to justice and liberty. That such an extraordinary and evolved human being should be hounded and reviled by our authorities is the predictably odious result of the fusion between politically correct victimologists and murderous fundamentalists who are currently pulling all the strings behind the child protection (exploitation) industry. It is a true perversion that the honourable cause of protecting the vulnerable and powerless from exploitation has become a front for paranoid and merciless extremists, who now make lucrative careers out of knowingly destroying the lives of talented and valuable men like Terrence White, who I suspect would rather harm himself than harm a child.

So here we are, we Westerners, going about our business in our supposedly mature, liberal democracies, while secular theocrats of a most perniciously fundamentalist stripe have seized control over a most important aspect of liberty: the rule of law. With their pious sadism and cruel compassion, they are cheerfully persecuting, imprisoning, making homeless and unemployable gifted, gentle and inspirational men like Terrence. The terms might have undergone a displacement – for 'homo' just insert 'paedo' – but the Pink Triangle, as well as the Scarlet Letter, are alive and well in our liberty-loving western democracies. Perhaps we all need to be a lot more vigilant, and a lot more militant, about the alarming sacrifice of liberty in the name of protecting children.

[Read about Terrence White's fight against injustice here.](#)