

WHAT IS RIGHT AND WHAT IS WRONG IN POLITICS?:  
OBJECTS OF SATIRE IN JULIAN BARNES'  
*THE PORCUPINE*

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ABSTRACT

*The Porcupine* appears as a remarkable piece of political satire, which follows some of the most traditional satiric conventions but also subverts some others. In the novel, Barnes does not only focus his criticism on the mischievous character but also on the supposedly righteous character, something very innovative with respect to more traditional satirical writings. This article will be based on the analysis of this dichotomy but, more specifically, on the factors that are denounced and satirised in the novel and the strategies that Barnes draws on to construct his satire. The number of targets that Barnes criticises in the novel is wide-ranging but I just concentrate on those which play a more significant role, that is, the evils of totalitarian regimes, the hypocrisy of Western political leaders and the stupidity in the figure of the dictator. This paper also makes reference to the function of secondary characters, which decisively contribute to the creation of an accomplished satirical effect.

The *Satyre* should be like the *Porcupine*  
That shoots sharp quills out in each angry line  
And wounds the blushing cheek, and fiery eye,  
Of him that heares, and readeth guiltily (Hall, *Virgidemiarum*)

In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye states that “Two things....are essential to satire: one is wit and humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or the absurd, the other is an object of attack” (224). Bearing this canonical definition in

mind we can say that both wit and humour play a very significant role in the writing of an effective satire, but that these two elements alone do not make a consistent satirical writing. To be properly satirical, any piece of literature, either poetry, fiction or drama, demands as an indispensable requisite a target which is attacked by the satirist. If we take into account the most traditional definitions of satire, there is one feature which is fairly habitual in most of them: satire's main aim is to punish first and afterwards to reform and to correct all that is wrong or all that the satirist considers to be wrong. That is the reason why the satirist has to be particularly painstaking when selecting the targets, although he takes for granted that they are absolutely necessary to build up a conscientious and convincing satire. Furthermore, and as Edward Rosenheim Jr. points out: "[The satirist's] attack is designed to persuade or delight. In consequence the object of his attack must be discernible to his audience; the fiction which he constructs must be recognisable as fiction; the true position which he wishes, however obliquely, to convey must emerge clearly if his satire is to be successful" (qtd. by Bargainnier, 5). This definition reinforces two aspects of satire that are especially relevant: its inherent reforming disposition, achieved by means of criticizing and ridiculing, and its ephemeral nature. Edward Rosenheim stresses the fact that this attack has to be clear and conspicuous and that it has to be understood by the audience that reads the text. Satire loses all its effectiveness if the readership is not acquainted with the crimes or follies that the satirist is denouncing. Edward Bloom confirms this idea when he says that "Intellectual failure—the selection of inappropriate targets or mismanagement of satiric attack—can be equally disastrous" (209). Therefore, and although satirists usually recur to indirectness and irony as essential strategies, clarity and accuracy also emerge as most recommendable tools to write an accomplished piece of satire.

Therefore, this analysis will focus on the various targets that Julian Barnes criticises in *The Porcupine* (1992). This is perhaps one of the novels which follows more traditional literary patterns, and a story in which Julian Barnes momentarily abandons the literary experimentation and playfulness that had characterised his two most acclaimed novels: *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) and *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989). *The Porcupine* represents a lapse in Barnes's postmodernist fiction and his momentary entrance in the most traditional, realist conventions, something that he had already attempted with the so-called *Duffy Series* (1980). The novel is partially based on facts that actually took place in Bulgaria, when President Zhivkov was tried. Barnes uses the trial of a former President of an Eastern country (never revealed by the author) as merely an excuse to present a corrupted world, in which politicians, judges, military men, and other members of the ruling classes are severely ridiculed by the author. Thus, my purpose will be to examine all the factors, which, according to the writer, are punishable. In this sense, I will centre on discovering, first, the targets of satire in Barnes' *The Porcupine*, and also the strategies that he turns to in order to achieve a consistent satirical effect. I shall also try to prove whether Rosenheim's definition of satire is fully or just partially applicable to Barnes' novel.

It is clear from the very beginning of the story that the author conceives *The Porcupine* as a purely political satire. There are several hints in its first pages which remind us of the most celebrated political satires ever written, especially Orwell's

*Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The atmosphere that Barnes depicts in the first pages accords very much with the idea that most readers have of what a dictatorship represents. The consequences of this kind of political system can be soon perceived in the mass of women who are holding a peaceful demonstration in the street. However, Julian Barnes just takes dictatorship as an element which enables him to trigger off the narration of the story. Taking this demonstration as the novel's starting point, the author immediately passes on to the real gist of the story, that is to say, the confrontation between Stoyo Petkanov, the former President who is about to be tried because of several state crimes, and Peter Solinsky, the Prosecutor General who is appointed to charge Petkanov. The way Barnes describes these two characters establishes the first dichotomy in the novel. On the one hand, Solinsky is initially portrayed as the honest, liberal and open-minded lawyer who is ready to do away with the former totalitarian regime, so that democracy and capitalism can definitely settle down in his country. On the other, Petkanov is depicted as the cunning and shrewd politician, holder of the entire authority while he was ruling the country and who ruthlessly exercised his power without feeling any subsequent uneasiness. The reasons that Solinsky defends to charge Petkanov are certainly very legitimate: during Petkanov's administration, the country lived through a severe economic crisis, there were innumerable shortages of food and electrical power; freedom of speech, reunion and association were strongly penalised by the government. The following passage illustrates the enormous ideological and political differences that exist between these two characters:

Each morning a militiaman brought Stoyo Petkanov the five national newspapers and laid them on his table in a pile. Each morning Petkanov extracted *Truth*, the mouthpiece of the Socialist (formerly Communist) Party, and left untouched *The Nation*, *The People*, *Liberty* and *Free Times*. [...] 'The term "free newspaper" doesn't mean anything to you, does it?' Petkanov sighed melodramatically, as if the Prosecutor General were arguing flat-earth theory. 'It's contradiction. All newspapers belong to some party, some interest. Either the capitalist or the people. I'm surprised you haven't noticed.' 'There are newspapers which are owned by the journalists who write them' (41).

The huge gap that exists between these two characters is conspicuous after reading through these lines. Barnes wants to make it visible to the reader because this situation is going to change substantially as the novel unfolds. So far, we have the traditional dispute between the good, honest man, epitomised by Solinsky, and the bad, vicious character, represented by Petkanov.

The easiest way for any author to write a satirical work would have been to concentrate solely on the character who has brought about all this political corruption and social destitution. This is what Orwell does in *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949); what Swift does in *Gulliver's Travels*, and Dryden in his most outstanding poem "Absalom and Achitophel", and also Lord Byron in "A Vision of Judgement", in which, according to Matthew Hodgart, the spirit of George II represents all the foolishness and stupidity of the ancient regime (74). This is what the reader presupposes when s/he begins to read *The Porcupine*. For the habitual reader of satire, the criticism exclusively centred on the figure of Petkanov, as the corrupted dictator, would have been both the most traditional

and also predictable procedure of writing a satirical novel. However, Barnes defies this convention and articulates a plot in which both characters and, consequently the political systems they defend, are vehemently censured. Throughout the novel, we can see how Petkanov always remains the same: there is not a very significant change of mood or attitude in this character. On the contrary, Solinsky endures a noticeable psychological and ideological transformation.

Thus, these two characters become the central aims of Barnes' satire. The rest of targets, which I will proceed to deal with later on, will subsequently derive as a result of their actions. Furthermore, the originality of this novel lies basically on the fact that not only the bad character is the one who is scorned and satirised, but also the character who is supposed to be still morally upright. In this sense, we have what we can call a "two-fold" level of criticism. It is not strange, thus, that the degree of idealisation with which Solinsky is endowed at the beginning of the novel is very soon deflated by all the circumstances that surround him, and which end up overwhelming him. In an atmosphere of vice and corruption, the figure of Peter Solinsky seems to arise as the last remnant of integrity and moral righteousness. According to Alvin B. Kernan, "Everywhere the satirist turns he finds idiocy, foolishness, depravity and dirt. Somewhere in his dense knots of ugly flesh the satiric author or painter usually inserts a hint of an ideal which is either threatened with imminent destruction or is already dead" (254-5). These words fit very well with Solinsky's initial situation in the novel: all that he sees around him is poverty, destitution and, above all, corruption and villainy. It seems as though Solinsky was the last hope people can trust in this decadent world. This is the impression that the readers gather at the beginning of the novel and which is apparently maintained along the story. However, there is a crucial moment in which Peter Solinsky betrays the values that he has been upholding so far. In the course of the proceedings, Solinsky accuses Petkanov of having caused his daughter's death but he draws on fake evidences to prove this hypothesis: "The document is true, even if it is a forgery. Even if it isn't true, it is necessary. Each excuse was weaker, yet also more brutal" (113). Solinsky overtly admits that he has used false evidences, but he tries to justify this act arguing that it was completely necessary. From this very moment, Solinsky's pretended ethical values are totally discredited among the readers. Corruption and vice have also reached the last outpost of dignity that remained in the novel. We should all agree, thus, with what Michiko Kakutani points out: "By the novel's conclusion, the reader has realised that the initials of the two men are the same (though reversed), that Petkanov and Solinsky are, in fact, alter egos of one another" (qtd. by Moseley, 154). As I said before, this is where the innovation of the novel resides. Satire's power is not only directed at the wrongdoer but also at the good character who, as Kakutani observes, is eventually transformed into another vulgar double dealer.

Some lines before, I mentioned that the aspects Julian Barnes condemns in *The Porcupine* are the result of the attitudes and behaviours of its two main characters. Apart from Barnes' detailed analysis of these two main roles, there are further factors on which the author focuses his attention. It is clear that the story is structured in terms of opposites. We have already alluded to the personal confrontation between the two main protagonists. Nevertheless, what is actually significant is that this fact leads the author to establish another, and perhaps more relevant, clash: that of the old

and the incoming political order, represented by Petkanov and Solinsky respectively. In the novel, there are two political positions which are striving to, on the one hand, maintain and consolidate its former authority and, on the other, to overthrow the old regime so that democracy and capitalism can definitely take over. Again, nothing in the novel impels the reader to side with this or that standpoint, quite the opposite. Once more, Barnes makes use of this two-fold criticism and pillories both the former Communist regime and the capitalist system that Solinsky trusts so much. There are many instances in the novel in which the reader can confirm what I have just pointed out. This is what Petkanov thinks about the USA:

Petkanov always remembered one particular detail: that the place where the American President felt most safe, and where the FBI considered him most safe was in Disneyland. No American assassin would dream of shooting him here. It would be sacrilege, it would be an offence against the great gods of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck (19).

This can be regarded as the first satirical note that is put forward in the text. Although his vision is clearly one-sided, Petkanov reveals the superficiality and foolishness of the kind of society that Solinsky so fervorously admires. These words that Petkanov utters are not only applicable to the USA but also to the great majority of Western capitalist countries. In this case, it is Petkanov the one who is directly attacking the stupidity of the Western world. Nevertheless, there is a moment in which Barnes' satire becomes really lashing especially against the hypocrisy and ignorance of the leaders of the most remarkable Western governments. When Petkanov is about to be convicted, he starts recalling the long list of awards and special mentions that he received while he was President. By means of exaggeration, a very recurrent satirical strategy, Petkanov presents an incredibly long list of merits and favourable comments expressed by some of the most outstanding political personalities:

Margaret Thatcher: 'I was impressed by the personality of the President and I am left with particular impressions about him as leader of a country willing to develop her co-operation with other nations.' Richard Nixon: 'By his so profound understanding of the world's major problems, the President can contribute and does contribute to the settlement of mankind's most urgent global problems.' [...] Juan Carlos King of Spain: 'You, Mr. President, have proved, on many occasions, an active, untiring dedication to the cause of *détente*, to the safeguarding of all people's inalienable right to decide their destiny, on the path serving best their interests, to the full use of their own resources—free from the foreign interference that opposes the exertion of their own sovereignty' (122-3).

The purpose of Barnes including all these quotations of illustrious politicians and state-men seems to have a reasonable explanation. That he is criticising hypocrisy and ignorance is obvious. However, he tries to go beyond: he is also denouncing the follies of the Western political leaders and he is openly questioning the reliability of their governments. Barnes seems to be wondering whether these people, who hold positions of high responsibility, are unable to see the state into which the person they

are praising has dragged his country. The author also encourages us to cast serious doubts upon the people who are ruling us and upon the political ideologies they represent. However, what is really painful for the reader is that s/he knows for sure that we, as Westerners, are active part of this stupidity. I agree, thus, with what Charles A. Knight pinpoints in his essay "Satire, Speech and Genre." Knight says that

The position of the audience may also be dangerous. Satire usually demands an audience which either agrees with the propriety of the attack or is willing to do so for purposes of entertainment. But since the readers' willing and even conspiratorial co-operation with the satirist implicates them in the guilt of attack, as perpetrators if not as victims, their position is often uncomfortable. To accept oneself as satiric target is to admit one's guilt; to repulse attack by settling it upon the shoulders of the world is to reveal one's guilt. (32)

Not only the new political order is censured in the novel but also the regime that Petkanov had been leading until the very moment of the trial. If hypocrisy was the vice that Barnes considered to be most rooted among the Western countries, the Communist regime is not exempted from Barnes's whipping satire. Political corruption, control of the mass media, all sorts of political and public burdens imposed on people, lack of freedom of speech, reunion and association are just some of the factors that the author most heavily denounces in the novel. All these prohibitions are very common in countries where a dictatorship is the established political system. The country in which *The Porcupine* is set can be certainly regarded as such. One of the most distinctive traits of a totalitarian regime is the way it manipulates and distorts truth by means of a strict control of the mass media. The following quote illustrates this: "Which the opposition parties did not want, or at least not yet, since their structures were rudimentary and the Socialists (formerly Communists) still controlled state radio and television and most of the publishing houses and printing works ..." (21). The clash that exists between Solinsky and Petkanov as regards to this question is also conspicuous. Solinsky claims for absolute freedom and independence for the mass media, in which the government's intervention is practically non-existent, whereas Petkanov favours the government's total control of the press and audio-visual media. Freedom of speech is, therefore, absolutely excised and it is the mass media that suffer this prohibition in a highest degree. The same manipulation can be noticed in Orwell's *1984*:

For example, it appeared in *The Times* of the seventeenth of March that Big Brother . . . had predicted that the South Indian front would remain quiet but that a Eurasian offensive would shortly be launched in North Africa. As it happened, the Eurasian Higher Command had launched its offensive in South India and had left North Africa alone. It was necessary to rewrite a paragraph of Big Brother's speech, in such a way as to make him predict the things that already happened (245).

The authoritarian control exerted by Petkanov's administration affects the literary world as well. It is perhaps the so-called Devinsky Commando one of the most

significant sources of irony and satire that exist in the novel. Although their ironies are quite explicitly stated, we can say that the way they denounce the sins of the Communist government is the wittiest of all. However, they also endure the government's restrictions, which eventually drove their leader, an ironist called Devinsky, into exile. The consequences brought about by this lack of freedom for people to express themselves freely are suffered by this poet. The Government, considering Devinsky a menace for the "good and proper development" of the country, decides to get rid of him and of his threatening verses. The important point is that Devinsky is, according to his followers, a very peculiar kind of poet: he is an ironist and, thus, his influence could be much more dangerous than that of a normal poet: "Had the police investigated the Devinsky Commando, they might have discovered that the poet had a reputation as an ironist and provocateur. 'Thank You, Your Majesty' had led immediately to a three-year exile in Paris" (45). I don't know whether Barnes does this on purpose or if it's just a mere coincidence. If Barnes purposefully wants Devinsky to be an ironist, the effects that it produces on the narration are worth taking into consideration. We can have an example of literature within literature, or even more interestingly, of satire within satire. Devinsky has to draw on irony to criticise the Government, he has to use witty verses to condemn the evils of the Communist party. This is what satirists have been very often obliged to do. Moreover, and as Kenneth Burke puts it: "the conditions are 'more favorable' to satire under censorship than under liberalism —for the most inventive satire arises when the satirist is seeking simultaneously to take risks and escape punishment for his boldness, and is never quite certain himself whether he will be acclaimed or punished" (qtd. by Elliott, 265). It is widely known that the best satire has always thrived under totalitarian regimes, in which the satirist has to be extremely ingenious and indirect so that his attack remains invisible to the Government but somehow accessible to the readership. Dustin Griffin reinforces this idea in the following passage: "It is difficult or unnecessary to satirize our political leader when the newspapers are filled with open attacks on their integrity and intelligence. But if open challenge is not permitted, writers will turn to irony, indirection, innuendo, allegory, fable —to the fictions of satire" (139). Therefore, it seems that Barnes consciously chooses the figure of an ironist to give an idea of the way art in general, and literature in particular, are manipulated in dictatorial governments.

The character that imposes all these repressive measures is Stoyo Petkanov, who is the one that still believes in the supremacy of the former Communist regime, though in visible decadence. As many other dictators, Petkanov emerges as a central target of ridicule, no matter the fierce and arrogant image that he conveys in the novel. Curiously enough, it seems that this kind of authoritarian characters are more easily satirized than others. For instance, Shakespeare presented a highly foolish image of the Emperor in his play *Julius Caesar*: he is portrayed both physically and psychologically as a weak man (he is a conspicuously deaf and trouble-minded man):

Caes. I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd  
Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar.  
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf

[Act I, sc. ii, 208-210]

In the same way Cardinal Wolsey was scorned and ridiculed by Skelton's lashing satire, Stalin was degraded as a pig in Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Mussolini is laughed at in Louis de Bernières's *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. The examples of dictators who have been attacked by satirists are numerous and these are just a few cases. This information proves to be a good background to analyse Petkanov's behaviour in *The Porcupine*. His external appearance is that of a ruthless and merciless dictator, who does not care about the problems that are besieging his nation. Nevertheless, Barnes finds in Petkanov a very suitable target of criticism. There are several passages in which Barnes, by means of fantasy and exaggeration, picks on this character. Drawing on very recurrent satirical strategies such as attributing Petkanov animal features or describing scatological details, the novelist diminishes the fierceness that Petkanov initially shows and makes him appear as a mere humbug. There are occasions on which he is described as an old fox, a "swinish" man or a porcupine: "The old fox was leading them a merry dance" (75). Edward Bloom points out that "emblematic of the error of pride, the humiliating comparison of man with animals shows individuals that they are no wiser than nonrational creatures and no more deserving of respect" (219). He also involuntarily defecates when he is being transported to prison, a fact which makes the two guards that escort him burst into laughter. There are many other details in the story in which Petkanov's image is satirised. These are perhaps the most explicit and straightforward examples of satire against the figure of the former dictator. However, there is one moment in which Petkanov is very subtly and wittily ridiculed. Throughout the novel, Petkanov constantly repeats that he was the one who more effortlessly fought during the Anti-Fascist Struggle. The Devinsky Commando subtly points to the possibility that this could be just another of Petkanov's myths. In a sort of mock auction that they celebrate in the street, the members of the Commando openly laugh at Petkanov's achievements: "The pair of pigskin sandals worn by Comrade Petkanov when he had first made contact with the resistance fighters whom he was to command during the Anti-Fascist Struggle were sold for 35 million US dollars to the official representative of *the Mythological Museum*."<sup>1</sup> This last reference to the Mythological Museum is a very witty and indirect way of demonstrating that Petkanov's pride on his leadership during the Anti-Fascist Struggle was just another fantasy. Thus, by means of wit, one of satire's distinctive features, Barnes deflates Petkanov, and also the political ideology that he so passionately pleads for.

The role of the characters that are watching the proceedings on T.V turns out to be of great importance for the overall satirical effect of the novel. So I cannot agree with Hornby's opinions when he says that: "He [Barnes] only stumbles once: his Greek chorus ( a group of students watching the trial on television, whose italicised comments punctuate the proceedings) has none of the power that circumstances and convention would seem to demand" (6). My view is that their function, from a satirical perspective, is actually very relevant. We can say that most of the satirical comments that we come up with in *The Porcupine* come either from the members of the Devinsky Commando or from these characters that look forward to seeing how Petkanov is finally removed from power. Up to now, I have established a division between the aspects that Barnes criticises: Solinsky and Petkanov, the follies and incongruities of the old and the new political order. The important point about this choir, and what actually seems relevant to me, is that its members show a clearly

bitter and resentful attitude not only towards Petkanov's regime but also towards the leaders of most Western countries. It seems as though Barnes wanted to unify all the factors that he has been satirising throughout the novel. This group of people do not only throw their venomous darts against the figure of Petkanov, whom they despise, but also against all those politicians that Petkanov alluded to when he was reading that long list of merits and awards I mentioned above. These characters, whose words appear in brackets and in italics in the novel, criticise both the internal policy of Petkanov's administration but also the Queen of England, De Gaulle, Erick Honecker, Gorbachev,... The comments about the Queen of England and Gorbachev are specially important:

'The Knight of the Great Cross of the Bath Order from the United Kingdom' [*'He fucked the Queen of England.'* 'Yeah, in the bath' 'He'd do anything for his country.'] "The Lenin Order from the USSR." [*'Now we're talking. He really fucked Lenin.'* 'Does your Granny know, Stefan?' 'And Stalin.' 'And Kruschev.' 'And Brezhnev.' 'Lots of times. And Andropov.' 'Chernenko?' 'And Chernenko.' 'He didn't fuck Gorbachev?.' 'Gorbachev wouldn't fuck him. Not after he'd been with all others. Think what he must have picked up.' 'He probably gave it to the Queen of England.' 'No. That's why she made him do it in the bath'] (118-19)

This passage displays very remarkable satiric connotations. The sharpest comments are particularly directed at the Queen of England and Gorbachev, two of the most representative personalities of the Eastern and Western countries respectively. It is very likely that behind the words concerned with the Queen of England, we could find Barnes' own voice. The image that he presents of Queen Elizabeth is absolutely ridiculous and pejorative, something which might have something to do with Barnes' personal consideration of the Queen. In the same way, Gorbachev, one of the most charismatic leaders of the last decades, is also severely scorned by the choir. By means of presenting these two figures, clearly discernible for the audience, as Rosenheim claims, both the old regime, represented by Petkanov, Lenin, Stalin, Brezhnev, Andropov and Gorbachev, and the new, democratic order which is coming over, and which is represented by the Queen of England, Miterrand, De Gaulle, and many others, is also openly deprecated. This choir, apart from endowing the narration with a very accomplished satirical tone, enables Barnes to sum up in just a few lines the most distinguishable targets of satire that appear throughout the novel. Bearing this in mind, I daresay that the function of the choir, always regarding satirical considerations and not really questions of style or structure, turns out to be very interesting for the development of the novel.

*The Porcupine* emerges as a novel which combines the most distinctive traits of classical political satire but at the same time introduces some innovative elements which unquestionably contribute to enrich the story. It is traditional in the sense that it focuses on very conventional targets: the role of the dictator, hypocrisy, stupidity. But it is also innovative in the way this criticism is articulated. As I have pointed out in the paper, we find that not only the character who is presented as the wrongdoer is attacked but also that who is supposed to epitomise the most deeply rooted ethical and moral values. This is not what Byron, Dryden, Johnson or Swift did in their work

since their satire was just focused on the evils, follies and sins of very defined and recognisable people: George II, in the case of Lord Byron; the Earl of Shaftesbury, in the case of Dryden; the English Prime Minister Robert Walpole in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and also in Bollingbroke's incendiary articles in *The Craftsman*. Satirists have usually drawn their attention to knaves and fools, but never to characters who are apparently honest and dignified, as Solinsky seems to be in *The Porcupine*. It seems as though Barnes wanted to tell us that none of us is alien to foolishness and raillery, that all of us are prone to be stained by the effects of corruption and vice, no matter our integrity. The use of real characters in the story, with the exception of some of them, is also something which is not very usual in political satires. If we just look at Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Petronius' *The Golden Ass* or Aristophanes' *The Knights* we notice how the political personalities that are criticised very often appear disguised either as animals, in the case of Stalin (Napoleon) in *Animal Farm* and also in *The Golden Ass*; or with other names as in Swift's novel. Cleon, the politician-mountebank that is one of the habitual targets in most plays written by Aristophanes, is usually addressed with names which are different from his own. Therefore, it is not very usual to find real characters (Nixon, Juan Carlos, King of Spain; Lenin, Gorbachev or François Mitterrand) so openly referred to as in *The Porcupine*. Of course, this can be considered as a great novelty in the satiric panorama, but it also slightly deviates from what satire initially demands, that is, indirectness, innuendo and subterfuge. Finally, I would also like to say that Rosenheim's definition of satire suits very well with what Barnes does in *The Porcupine*. That the author attacks clear and discernible historical particulars is obvious. That the objects of attack are familiar to the audience is also clear. Thus, we can certainly apply this definition to Barnes's novel because *The Porcupine* fulfils all that Rosenheim demands from a satire to be successful.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis mine

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