SYDNEY STUDIES IN ENGLISH

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Volume 37, 2011

Editor: David Kelly

Sydney Studies in English is published annually, concentrating on criticism and scholarship in English literature, drama and cinema. It aims to provide a forum for critical, scholarly and applied theoretical analysis of text, and seeks to balance the complexities of the discipline with the need to remain accessible to the wide audience of teachers and students of English both inside and outside the university.

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Sydney Studies in English is published in association with the Department of English, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia. Visit the Department's homepage at: sydney.edu.au/arts/english/

ISSN: 0156-5419 (print)
ISSN: 1835-8071 (online)

The Fame and Nurture of Poetry

BARRY SPURR

I

Annie Proulx, who is incapable of writing an imperfect sentence and whose prose is more genuinely poetic than much that passes for 'poetry' today, reflects in her latest book, *Bird Cloud*, that 'sometimes I don't know what poetry is'. She will 'stumble into and around poetry, frequently knocked sideways' by it. But she certainly recognises it when it is genuine, citing a poem 'I liked so much I almost fell over'. Real poems, for Proulx, have a kind of physical force and impact, being possessed of the 'Thing Which Cannot Be Explained'.[1]

Over the centuries, the onus has fallen on literary critics to identify and explain that 'Thing' and they have mightily disagreed with one another about it, in the process. One of the most famous attempts, in the twentieth century, was that of A.E. Housman, a formidable classical scholar, Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge, and himself a poet, who delivered The Leslie Stephen Lecture at Cambridge on 9 May, 1933 on the subject, 'The Name and Nature of Poetry'. It is an idiosyncratic performance, with several arresting observations and some frank concluding reflections on his own composition of poems, written usually when 'I was rather out of health, and the experience, though pleasurable, was generally agitating and exhausting'.[2]

Having been asked to give a definition of poetry, Housman recalled that

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[1] *Bird Cloud* (Scribner: New York, 2011), pp.67–69.

[2] symmachus.wordpress.com/2008/11/03/a-e-housman-the-name-and-nature-of-poetry (accessed 11 April, 2011). All references to the lecture are to this text.

> I replied that I could no more define poetry than a terrier can define a rat, but that I thought we both recognised the object by the symptoms which it provokes in us.

Then, he declares that 'poetry is not the thing said but a way of saying it' and that 'meaning is of the intellect, poetry is not'. This last statement is closest to the main thesis of the lecture: that poetry is as indefinable as the appeal to our emotions which it makes. To the extent to which we seek to interpret it in terms of meaning or intellectual content or, worse, approach it with the idea that poets write it with the appeal to those ends in mind, it ceases to be poetry (even if it is cast in recognisably poetic forms and uses what might be described as poetic diction). The reader turning to it for these kinds of satisfactions is finding elements in it that are perfectly legitimate, but not the essence of poetry. Housman gives, as an example, devout ladies who admire John Keble's poems in his collection *The Christian Year* because of the Christianity, not the quality of the verse.

In the course of the historical conspectus that provides the framework for the lecture, Housman (echoing Samuel Johnson) rejects the Metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century because of its dependence on wit, which is not only 'purely intellectual' but – worse – 'intellectually frivolous':

> Their object was to startle by novelty and amuse by ingenuity a public whose one wish was to be so startled and amused.

That Housman is writing this a decade after T.S. Eliot's essay, 'The Metaphysical Poets' (1921), which was a review of Herbert Grierson's edition of John Donne and his school, suggests either that he was unaware of the new interest that was stirring in the Metaphysicals (and as Housman was aged seventy-four when he delivered the lecture, such immunity to avant-garde movements is understandable), or that he may have been only too well aware of it and was determined to register his disapproval. Grierson's scholarship and Eliot's advocacy had yet to make their formidable impact on poetry appreciation at large, in school and university study of English Literature, yet Housman expressed admiration for Eliot's poetry.[3] This was certainly to change in subsequent decades and because of

[3] Richard Perceval Graves, *A.E. Housman: The Scholar-Poet* (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1979), p.232.

this, in retrospect, Housman's critique at this point in the essay sounds very old-fashioned. For him, such pleasure as is to be derived from Richard Crashaw's representation (in 'The Weeper') of Mary Magdalene's eyes as 'two walking baths' – whatever that pleasure may be – is 'not a poetic pleasure … poetry, as a label for this particular commodity, is not appropriate'.[4]

Moving to the long eighteenth century (from Milton's *Samson Agonistes* in 1671 – usually assumed to be that poet's last poem – to Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798), Housman dismisses it as an age of 'sham poetry'. He can admire the perfection of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, but the problem – as with Metaphysical wit – is the prevalence of 'intelligence'. It is Matthew Arnold's literary criticism and history that comes to mind now, and Housman endorses Arnold's assessment that the domination of the intellect in the Age of Reason led to 'some repressing and silencing of poetry'.

Not that Housman is an Arnoldian *tout court*. There is no idea at all in his lecture that poetry is a species of religion-substitute or even 'a criticism of life'.[5] While the influence of Arnold's essay, 'The Study of Poetry' (1880), can be discerned in Housman's reflections and procedure, the elder critic's most memorable declaration there – 'most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry'[6] – does not inform it.

Instead, when Housman does move from what poetry is not, to affirm what it is, he describes its purpose thus:

> To transfuse emotion – not to transmit thought but to set up in the reader's sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer.

This is 'the peculiar function of poetry', he declares, and he discovers 'the seat of this sensation' in 'the pit of the stomach'. Poems may contain other ingredients which their readers will admire, and, Housman argues, it is

[4] Just five years before Housman's lecture, Eliot had published an appreciation of Crashaw in *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928), although with a somewhat minimising title: 'A Note on Richard Crashaw'.
[5] 'Joubert' [1864], *Essays in Criticism* (Dent, London, 1964), p.180.
[6] *Great Books Online*: www.bartleby.com/28/5.html (accessed 20 April, 2011).

often these that readers (incapable of analysing their 'sensations') really appreciate 'when they think they are admiring poetry'.

On this theory, language can be poetic even when it says nothing in particular at all. Some of Shakespeare's loveliest verse, Housman argues, is of this kind, as in the lyric 'Take O take those lips away' (from *Measure for Measure*). Other songs by Shakespeare, which say something – such as 'O mistress mine' (from *Twelfth Night*) – are 'greater and more moving poems, but I hardly know how to call them more poetical'.

Amongst the sources of Housman's ideas would appear to be the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents' rebuttal of Victorian moralism and, more positively, the Paterian emphasis on a heightened, passionate response to an artefact:

> the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake … for art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.[7]

What is crucial is that Housman finds the connection, achieved by transfused emotion, between poet and reader, in a beauty of elevated poetic language-use (as in 'Take O take those lips away'). He identifies it in abundant quotation (similar to Arnold's 'touchstone' method), discriminating between poems which achieve it and those that fail (usually because they are 'intellectual'). Metre and its rhythmical implications and variations are part of the process.[8] The emotion thus transfused stirs a fellow-feeling between poet and reader which (as Housman describes it elsewhere) will 'harmonise the sadness of the universe'.[9] In 'Dover Beach', Matthew Arnold, in a similarly musical phrase, refers to 'the eternal note of sadness' in the human condition, but the consolation which he offers is different from Housman's. In that honeymoon poem, Arnold exclaims to his wife as his reader overhears him: 'Ah, love, let us be true to one

[7] Walter Pater, 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* [1873] In Jennifer Uglow (ed). *Walter Pater: Essays on Literature and Art* (Dent: London, 1973), p.41.

[8] In Housman's first footnote, there is detailed discussion of metre and its musical characteristics.

[9] This, Housman claimed, in a letter to his sister, was 'the essential business of poetry… [which] is somehow more sustaining and healing than prose'. In *The Letters of A.E. Housman*, ed. Henry Maas (Hart-Davis: London, 1971), p.141.

another!'[10] In the face of universal melancholy, that is to say, Arnold provides the remedy of romantic love.

This had not been available to Housman. The bitter disappointments of his homoerotic existence are expressed in various poems (too obviously, perhaps, in a lyric such as 'Oh Who Is That Young Sinner'). His fictional-poetic lad from mostly rural Shropshire (which he had not even visited prior to writing the poetry about it) provides an idealised subject, discovered and constructed in the world of male agricultural labour, in a way familiar in highly educated, middle- and upper-class Victorian homosexual poets' works.[11] In Housman's case, the fictional lad was poetic consolation for the factual but physically unattainable, resolutely heterosexual Moses Jackson, with whom he was an undergraduate at Oxford, addressed in these lines from *More Poems*:

> Because I liked you better
> Than suits a man to say,
> It irked you, and I promised
> To throw the thought away.[12]

Through his poetry, however, Housman could establish that non-specific emotional connection between poet and reader (and, indeed, in his own reading of other poets, could experience a connection with their emotions) of which, in life, he was perpetually disappointed in terms of an *amitié particulière*. Moreover, for a homosexual in Housman's generation, this poetic transfusion had (of course) none of the social stigma and legal prohibition of the precise emotional and sexual fulfilment for which he yearned. For Housman, poetry was not so much a criticism of life, as a compensation for it – certainly, for its emotional disappointments – and the

[10] *Arnold: Poetical Works*, eds C.B. Tinker and H.F. Lowry (Oxford University Press: London, 1950), p.211.

[11] Gerard Manley Hopkins is the most obvious example, with such works as his poem about Felix Randal, the farrier, and 'Harry Ploughman', where the muscular subject's very name expresses his elemental contact with the soil. Any lingering doubt about Hopkins' homosexual orientation has been dispelled in Paul Mariani's recent, authoritative biography where, in diary entries, Hopkins refers to feeling an erotic charge in drawing a male figure and regarding one of his handsome male friends (*Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life*, Viking: New York, 2008, p.53).

[12] A.E. Housman, *The Collected Poems* (Jonathan Cape: London, 1967), p.127. All references to Housman's poems are to this edition.

substitute gratification it provided was through its beauty of emotional expression.

Housman's reference to the 'symptoms' which others' poetry stirs and his testimony that he usually wrote his own when 'out of health' are not allusions to physical states alone, or even importantly so. In the following paragraph he refers to his habit of 'having drunk a pint of beer at luncheon' to give 'a sedative to the brain' from his morning's scholarly work on classical texts and to free his sensibility for the inspiration of poetry. Bodily circumstances are combined with mental and psychological conditions. Establishing intercourse (the transfused 'vibration') with the reader, poetry brought harmony, if not resolution, to life's sadness as both poet and reader experienced it.

Technique is as important in achieving this in poetry as tonality, modulation and tempi are for the composer in music and there is much that is musical in Housman's writing. His poetry shares this lyrical quality with George Herbert's in *The Temple*, as well as the characteristic that its lyricism is apparently so effortless, even artless, yet on close examination is revealed as a carefully polished contrivance of naturalness. There is another similarity too: Herbert, in bequeathing his poems on his deathbed to his friend, Nicholas Ferrar, hoped that they might 'turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul'.[13] Housman was well acquainted with dejection and poetry's ability to alleviate it, although he would have had no time for the definite religious consolations that Herbert proposes in his exquisite lyrics, in their theological dimension.

Housman practised what he preached. A combination of poetic effects, of rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, consistency of imagery devoid of indulgent elaboration, *netteté* of phrasing in which nothing superfluous is admitted but a sense of completeness in each utterance is evident are exemplified in one of his justly best-known poems from *A Shropshire Lad*:

> Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
> Is hung with bloom along the bough,
> And stands about the woodland ride
> Wearing white for Eastertide.

[13] www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/George_Herbert (accessed 3 June, 2011).

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

The sumptuousness of the opening word sets the positive tone for the first stanza: we linger over and savour its polysyllabic richness. The lushness of the repeated 'l', enclosing the generosity of the initial vowel sound, could not be more inviting. The vibration, then, is set in masterful motion as the line is impelled along in its iambic sequence with a series of sharp consonants (the 'st' of 'Loveliest' is caught up in the stressed 'trees'), as Housman knows not to linger indulgently in that initial, inviting luxury.

The enjambment of the first and second lines perfectly enacts the hanging of the blooming cherry on (as we would say) the bough, although his 'along' is the better preposition, as the line, too – devoted to that lengthening – further imitates nature's abundance. In contrasting stasis, in the third line, where the emphasis falls on 'stands', Housman varies the flowing openness of the first word and entire second line, with a firmness of sound and insistence of rhythmic emphasis that gives the vibration an agreeable variation and the fixity of an image assuredly experienced. The closing line, with its anthropomorphic sense of the catechumen's alb, is celebratory of new life, with a religious subtext of rebirth and purity.

This religious idea is pursued in the second stanza with the reference to the biblical span of a man's life, but the antithetical emotion of regret now dominates as the speaker registers the human being's sense not of endless renewal but of time passing to (and restricted by) mortality. There has been a key change to a melancholy mode in the tone of the poem and, thereby, in the emotion transfused to the reader. Ironically, in the reference to 'springs', Housman uses a substantive which has an energetic verbal equivalent – signifying springing into new life – in the context of registering his sense of life's finiteness and inevitable waning. The effect is given consummate expression in the enumeration of the wearying 'seventy' springs, where abundance conveys a kind of arithmetical tedium rather than

the spirit of generosity found in the opening stanza. Plurality can diminish, as here. The alliteration of 'seventy springs' leads to the final cruel touch in this stanza as the calculation of the twenty-year-old brings the inevitable deduction: 'It only leaves me fifty more'. The open vowel of 'only' conveys the sense of onerousness touched with anxiety.

The repeated numbering is the essence of the transfusion of emotion here and in the final stanza: 'Fifty springs are little room'. When a poet of this skill repeats a word we take particular notice. That repetition of 'fifty' years affirms at large what is experienced in small in one year's change of season from spring to winter (emphasised starkly at this point in the elimination of the mediating summer and autumn). Resignation dominates the final lines as Housman diminishes fifty even further (validating his use of the number a second time, as he interprets it – surprisingly – not as largesse but meanness: 'little room') and he leaves the blossom-laden cherry for its snowbound wintry incarnation (another, sobering kind of whiteness). The emotion is complicated at the end by the argument of the last stanza that beauty requires a larger time than the span of a man's life for its full comprehension, and the concomitant realisation that it is more suitable, at least for this speaker, to focus his attention on the end of things, rather than their promise of new beginnings.

That thought is arresting and contentious, but is subordinate to the emotions of the work which are transfused through its lyrical assurance: a sense of shared joy, followed by a sadness mixed with stoic resignation in the face of mutability and mortality. These are now being maturely understood by a speaker on the brink, at twenty, of adulthood.

II

Housman's lecture – which enjoyed great popularity, was reviewed favourably by Eliot in the *Criterion* and denounced by F.R. Leavis in *Scrutiny*[14] – and his poetry at large provide interesting examples of how the appreciation of the nature of poetry and its nurturing have been and might still be undertaken. No-one would claim that Housman's is the only approach, or that his kind of poetry – lyrical verse – is necessarily the best sort to be enjoyed. But there is no question that the name and fame of poetry have been under active threat or at best regarded with indifference

[14] Richard Perceval Graves, op. cit., pp.255, 257.

for too long, even in those very places where one might have imagined that their reputation and nurturing would have been safeguarded – in school English curricula and university English Departments. Schoolteachers of English are heard to say that they 'don't like' poetry (and, no doubt, say so to their students) and, because of sufficient syllabus flexibility, they can avoid teaching very much of it.[15] In some Australian states, such as Victoria, it is possible, at matriculation, to have taken the highest level of English study and have sidestepped poetry entirely in that senior year. Graduates in English Literature from even the more conservative university departments have lacunae in their knowledge of poetry and its history that once would have been unthinkable (no Chaucer or Milton, for example), and which are indefensible if one holds that, at the very least, an Honours graduate in a discipline should have some acquaintance with its key elements and its historical development. This idea (of an evolving canon of books – never cast in iron, in spite of what its critics routinely, tiresomely claim, but with some inevitable, recurring texts) was abandoned at least a generation ago, and it is poetry in particular which has suffered. In contemporary Australia, an additional bias against British poetry has added to this problem, with such poetry as is prescribed often being preferred merely because it is Australian. Understanding the reasons for the decline in poetry reading and appreciation is part of the process of addressing it.

The formal classroom study of poetry, while customarily sniffed at (especially by poets themselves), must be an important component of a reading culture which, more broadly, would revive, sustain and extend the appreciation of it. The centre has to be held somewhere and experts need to be trained in the teaching of verse, which depends for its success at least as much upon a love of poetry, as on well-developed skills in accounting for and communicating the language of poetic diction, poetry's various techniques and its history.

One reason for the poor regard in which poetry is generally held today is undoubtedly the now-pervasive reputation that it has for being difficult to read and understand, and – therefore – to teach. Philip Larkin contended

[15] About twenty years ago, I met a prospective highschool English teacher who was finishing her studies and already doing some teaching stints in schools. She proudly declared that, not liking poetry, she had been able, by a careful negotiation of her choice of courses, to avoid studying poetry almost entirely during her undergraduate years in which she was (nonetheless) majoring in English Literature.

that this was the result of the wilful complexity of the early twentieth-century Modernists:

> It is as obvious as it is strenuously denied that in this century English poetry went off on a loop-line that took it away from the general reader. Several factors caused it. One was the aberration of modernism, that blighted all the arts. One was the emergence of English literature as an academic subject, and the consequent demand for a kind of poetry that needed elucidation. One, I am afraid, was the culture-mongering activities of the Americans Eliot and Pound. In any case, the strong connection between poetry and the reading public that had been forged by Kipling, Housman, Brooke and *Omar Khayyam* was destroyed as a result.[16]

But there was much difficult poetry in English before the Modernists' advent – a Shakespearian sonnet has a rich, multi-layered complexity; what would the 'general reader' have made of *The Dunciad*? And Larkin and other 'Movement' poets, reacting against the Modernists, are far from innocent of abstruse and elusive meaning in their own verse. Further, as we have seen, once we start probing even the apparently straightforward lyricism of a Housman (commended by Larkin) there is a subtle finessing of meaning beneath the superficial simplicity.

Yet there is no doubt that, in academic study of it, a predominance of apparently inaccessible poetry and, what is even more damaging, equally (if not more) obscure interpretations of it by literary scholars – supposedly elucidating it, but making it seem even less accessible – are largely responsible for poetry's bad name today. Particularly as the twentieth century unfolded and as pupils stayed at school longer and, so, encountered this approach to poetry in their senior years' compulsory English classes, the sense developed that poetry, like differential calculus, was a kind of specially challenging brainteaser, the successful unravelling of which in the examination hall (a late teenage *rite de passage*) brought its undoubted rewards for matriculation purposes and then could be blessedly left behind – forever.

[16] 'It Could Only Happen in England' [an introduction to an edition of John Betjeman's poems, 1971], *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955–1982* (Faber and Faber: London, 1983), pp.216–17.

This quarantining of poetry for exercises of practical criticism and interpretation (and the more complex it was, the better it was suited for this and for testing of students' abilities in close reading), while fictional and dramatic texts tended to be treated more in thematic terms (and now, of course, are as often as not set for study in combination with their cinematic versions, making them even more attractive and teachable), further emphasised poetry's unapproachable, exclusively linguistic, arcane character. That poetry has a unique power to plumb the heights and depths of human experience in a rich inventiveness and concentration of language appropriate to such a serious, even solemn enterprise does not especially commend it anymore, either. Susan Sontag observed, as the twentieth century drew to its close, that

> taste has become so debauched in the thirty years I've been writing that now simply to defend the idea of seriousness has become an adversarial act. Just to be serious or to care about things in an ardent, disinterested way is becoming incomprehensible to most people.[17]

No-one would argue that epic and profound conceptions of character and life are not to be found in the novel or drama, and in abundance. But language, variously configured, in poetic texts seems over-pitched, too ornate or too intricately configured in an unceremonious, unrhetorical and unromantic world, and its complex, elusive and allusive subtlety of suggestion rather than plain statement frustrates the mind of a civilisation that prefers (or is only equipped to comprehend) the frankly obvious. Yet to be deprived of the 'transfused emotion' of such as a Housman lyric is surely a diminishing of literary – and humane – experience.

Even undoubted lovers of literature bring apprehensive attitudes to their reading of poetry today. The Sydney bookseller, David Gaunt, in his most recent column in the Gleebooks *Gleaner* states that if he had more time he would have a steady diet 'of the classics reread, plus knuckle down to some poetry'.[18] Something you 'knuckle down to' is something difficult which, usually, you have been avoiding but feel, often grudgingly, that you are obliged to tackle (as an amateur pianist might front up to the more

[17] Interview, 'Susan Sontag, The Art of Fiction No.143', by Edward Hirsch, *The Paris Review*, Winter 1995: www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1505/the-art-of-fiction-no-143-susan-sontag (accessed 27 May, 2011).
[18] 'David's June Reading', *Gleebooks' Gleaner*, Vol.18 No.5, June 2011, p.2.

difficult Beethoven sonatas). The pleasure of poetry reading seems to have escaped even this committed and intelligent reader – certainly, as his initial motivation.

Different from these causes but probably more fundamental to the problem is the decline in the earliest years of family life and schooling in the learning and loving of anything linguistic by heart, but especially poetry, which is essentially an oral art. Obviously, this is related to the demise of our reading culture in general, but especially of careful reading and of savouring and cherishing repeated readings. Before young people have been caught up, in their later teenage years, in the need to be syllabus-focused for such as the Higher School Certificate in New South Wales (where poetry does have a place in the Year 12 English syllabus, but mostly in unsatisfactory configurations in various modules which require it to be read in conformity with certain clichéd life experiences – change, the journey and so on) they need to be introduced to its unique power to take root, through rhythm and rhyme, and striking vocabulary and imagery, in their receptive and retentive young minds. It needs to have come alive and to have spoken to them on its own terms, and this must sustained as they mature, before they are required to dissect it and apply it to this or that Procrustean bed of interpretation and with reference to other, non-poetic texts.

A poem such as 'Loveliest of trees, the cherry now…' has its own integrity of technique and meaning, which needs no further justification, and its rhyming and rhythmical patterns make it delightful to savour.

III

The proposed new National Curriculum for Australian schools, in its draft documents for the study of English, presents a generally grim prospect for the reading and study of poetry in our era of poetry's eclipse. As it envisages a child's school years, from the ages of five to eighteen, poetry is mentioned occasionally, but more often it is gathered up under the rubric 'Texts', and, sometimes, simply omitted (possibly, deliberately excluded):

> The term 'text' refers to written, spoken or multimodal material. Texts are structured in particular ways to achieve

> their purposes, for example, to tell what happened, to provide instructions, to entertain, to explain, to argue. Texts might assume particular forms such as emails, letters, speeches, books, websites and plays.[19]

Poetry is referred to in a later, subordinate paragraph in this section that mentions 'literary texts'. But nowhere is it given priority. Neither, for that matter, are novels and plays. But they are not under a cloud today or, in certain stretches of education, simply absent. If poetry's demise is to be reversed, a national curriculum needs positively, proactively to reaffirm it, in order to resuscitate it.

Encouragingly, in the documents for the earliest years, poetry does take centre stage, under 'Literature'. The first section, here, entitled 'Recognising and responding' (for Year 1 pupils: that is, five-year-olds), recommends that they be required to

> Listen to, recite and perform children's poems, chants, rhymes and songs.[20]

Then, for Year 2:

> Identify and reproduce rhythmic patterns and word patterns in children's poems, chants, rhymes and songs…

as well as (under 'Choices and techniques'), for the same children,

> Appreciate how authors use a range of devices, including alliteration, onomatopoeia, repetition, rhyme and rhythm, to express ideas.[21]

But, by Year 5, the excellent foundations that have been envisaged here are not built upon; indeed, are unaccountably abandoned and the kinds of approaches that are to dominate and come to their climax in Year 12 are

[19] Australian Curriculum Consultation Portal, www.australiancurriculum.edu.au (accessed 6 August 2010), p.4.
[20] Ibid., p.10.
[21] Ibid., pp.13, 14.

now introduced. Under 'Recognising and responding' for Year 5 pupils, for instance, we have this direction:

> Draw connections and make inferences about the experiences of characters in literary texts and their own experiences.[22]

How could a ten-year-old child relate his or her experiences to that of the melancholic-stoic twenty-year-old Housman, in 'Loveliest of trees, the cherry now…'? Yet, in other ways, the poem's beauty of language, especially in evoking the natural world, communicates a universal emotion and appreciation, not confined to an individual reader's experiences or particular stage of maturity.

The kinds of approaches that are now prevailing are more suited, obviously, to fiction and drama. Recitation and performance have fallen completely out of sight. Yet the technical study of poetic texts is not entirely given up, and it is good to see the content description for Year 9 including reference to

> poetry (eg [*sic*] thematic study of poems drawn from a range of historical, cultural and social contexts, sonnets, lyrics, odes).[23]

But this sort of suggestion is notable for its rarity.

One of the conclusions that must be drawn from the document is that the curriculum authors regard the speaking of poetry (and the general appreciation of it as an oral art) as belonging to early childhood, along with learning and chanting the multiplication tables and trilling up and down the sol-fa scale. And this is why otherwise very gifted students reading English at the University can be tongue-tied when asked to read out loud even a stanza or two of poetry in class. They haven't done it since they were small children. Most worryingly, they haven't taken poetry to heart, not having learnt it by heart by becoming used to speaking it and reciting it. Why this should be regarded as (and relegated to) an infantile exercise and not as an ability, talent and, indeed, a pleasure that a maturing literary-minded young person would inevitably possess after twelve years in the English

[22] Ibid., p.23.
[23] Ibid., p.37.

classroom is impossible to understand. We would think that he or she was a very underdeveloped musician who could display little accomplishment in that performing art after more than a decade's instruction in it.

It is when we turn to the lists of suggested texts for Year 12, however, that we encounter nothing less than the dismantling of the study of poetry in its historical and canonical dimensions. There are four lists, for the different levels and kinds of English study proposed (Essential English, English, English as an Additional Language, Literature). In all of these, there are just four poets – Blake, Keats, Dickinson and Barrett Browning (in her case, in conjunction with F. Scott Fitzgerald) – prior to the twentieth century and most of the poets suggested are twentieth-century Australians, although arguably the greatest of these, Les Murray, is notable for his absence. Amongst twentieth-century poets, Yeats and Eliot (for example) are nowhere to be seen.

In reviewing text lists in Year 12 syllabi for more than a generation, I have never encountered such an impoverished menu of poets suggested for study. The whole wondrous world of poetry in English, from Chaucer to the beginning of the nineteenth century, has simply been eliminated. Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Jonson, Herbert, Milton, Marvell, Dryden, Pope, Gray (for example) are gone, and while there are Blake, Keats, Dickinson and Barrett Browning from the entire nineteenth century, their presence highlights the absence of the greater Wordsworth, Coleridge and Tennyson. This is the dismantling and obliteration of the poetic culture of the English-speaking peoples (to which Australians belong). It is the equivalent of studying Greek without Homer, Latin without Virgil, Italian without Dante, German without Goethe.

To take just the first of the poets who have been abandoned: Geoffrey Chaucer. It is difficult to imagine a richer or more entertaining collection of characters and insights into their humanity than he assembles in a series of telling poetic vignettes in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. I remember studying this myself in Year 12 and the delight which a classroom of boisterous, eighteen-year-old Australian boys found (under the guidance of a skilled and devoted teacher) in this cavalcade of satirical and lovable creations. But equally valuably, in showing how poetry can go to the heart of human existence, the study of this text over several weeks taught us some very important truths: that the understanding, interpreting and evaluating of human nature is a process that poets have engaged in through the centuries (and, so, for us to grow in that understanding, there is

a wealth of material through the ages to investigate and we are certainly not confined, nor should we be, to the insights of the present or even the near-present, and/or of poetry by local writers); that poetry, with its requirements of compression and suggestive revelation can communicate truths and sheer entertainment to us, even if it was written several hundred years ago (perhaps especially so, as it affirms those lasting truths by its sheer historical distance from us). We also learnt that, given Chaucer's occasional difficulty and obscurity of vocabulary, syntax and Medieval learning and references, we must always be alert to and diligent in seeking the correct meanings of words in relation to their contemporary usage and learn to enjoy the quest for understanding which such close study of a text requires. And we were required to read that poetry out loud and try to come to grips with its deliciously strange sounds and to savour them, as I do to this day.

Similar comments could be made about any of the other poets I have listed in my selective historical conspectus. The National Curriculum would dispose of both this heritage and the range of valuable pedagogical and intellectual experiences (by no means confined to poetry, but emanating from its study) attendant upon it, which I have described.

IV

For the revival of the fame of poetry and its nurture, in twenty-first-century Australia, we need to look primarily to the schools and their curricula and to committed, gifted teachers of poetry, as well as ensuring the systematic teaching of poetry from Year 1 to 12 as an accumulating, ever-expanding element in the compulsory English syllabus. For example, the emphasis on learning and recitation of poetry in the early years of the proposed National Curriculum for English should be extended throughout the twelve years of school, in graded difficulty as students proceed. Further, in selecting poets and poetry for study, the present jettisoning of the great tradition of English verse and the replacement of it by an impoverished diet of mostly contemporary Australian poetry needs to be decisively reversed. A syllabus in which the breadth of the tradition of poetry in English, including but not dominated by modern and contemporary Australian poetry, could be easily devised and, indeed, used to be in place.

In the United States, in the highly successful and burgeoning 'Poetry Out Loud' national recitation contest (which this year attracted more than a third of a million highschool student participants from across the country), the list of selected poems from which students must choose is a generous compilation of the tradition. Why should Australian schoolchildren be offered a gruel-like regime in comparison with the feast of poetry to which their American counterparts are currently being exposed?[24] The 2011 winner of the competition, from Alabama, chose Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' for his recitation.

Concomitantly, gifted and committed teachers need to be trained and this will only occur when units of study, particularly at senior and honours level, in Departments of English and Education Departments (where teachers are being specifically prepared for the classroom) are exclusively devoted to poetry and, especially, to its technical and historical aspects, and to nurturing the love of it as an oral art.[25]

If poetry is to return to its rightful position at the centre of literary study and as a cherished companion in individuals' word-stores and literary breadth of experience and to reclaim its place in the broad cultural life and memory of societies and nations whose collective ideas, feelings and beliefs it has individualistically and incomparably expressed, interrogated and celebrated in timeless language, through the ages, and into the future, all of us who are committed to professing and passing on this great legacy

[24] The list of pre-twentieth-century poems can be found here (as we remember that just *four* pre-twentieth-century poets are recommended for the Australian National Curriculum, and none prior to 1800):
www.poetryoutloud.org/poems/pre20century.html

[25] For several years, the senior unit, Reading Poetry, has been on offer in the Department of English at the University of Sydney. From the beginning, it has been one of the most popular of students' choices, decisively disproving the misgivings of some colleagues, when it was first mooted, that students would not want to spend a semester reading poetry. To our surprise, in student evaluations of the unit, it has been the more technical components of the unit – for example, lectures on metre and scansion – that students have most relished. There has never been a single complaint, from the several hundred students who have now taken the unit, about its emphasis on knowledge of the historical development of poetry and the fact, as it has turned out through no particular policy but as a result of participating colleagues' research and teaching interests, that no Australian material (and very little contemporary material) has been included.

of linguistic accomplishment, delight and wisdom in the English language must be very determined in our advocacy of it.

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The Lesson of the Master: Learning and Cognition in *What Maisie Knew*

JOHN ATTRIDGE

What Maisie Knew is manifestly concerned with learning and teaching. Maisie receives instruction from no fewer than four nurses and governesses in the novel, not to mention the edifying public lectures and books of essays gaily prescribed by Sir Claude, and rich resources of irony are discovered in the contrast between what Maisie doesn't learn in the schoolroom and the travesty of education she absorbs from her bruising encounters with the sordid, helter-skelter adult world.[1] No less manifestly, and by common critical consent, *What Maisie Knew* is also concerned with cognition or, as William James put it, 'the function of knowing' – in the words of one recent critic, the novel is 'an exploration of what it might mean for a child to "know"'.[2] Yet while questions of cognition or knowing have been a leitmotif of criticism on the novel (frequently approached under the banners of epistemology or phenomenology), and education as metaphor has been productively explored, its literal instances of learning and instruction have proven of less interest.[3] My aim in this paper is to

[1] Maisie's nurses and governesses, in order of appearance, are Moddle, Miss Overmore, the unnamed child minder employed briefly by Beale Farange, and Mrs Wix.

[2] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1950), p.271. Sally Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.325.

[3] Christina Britzolakis writes that Maisie 'has often been seen by critics as an 'experimental' precursor of modernism at the level both of structural innovation and in its concern with problems of epistemology'. Christina Britzolakis, 'Technologies of Vision in Henry James' *What Maisie Knew*', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 34, no. 3 (2001): 370. For Paul B. Armstrong, 'To know and how to know, that is the question for James the epistemological novelist'. Paul B. Armstrong, *The Phenomenology of Henry James* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), p.3. Britzolakis gives a sophisticated reading of the 'metaphor of the city as traumatic nursery' (p.372), engaging with Juliet Mitchell's

draw attention to the theme of education in *What Maisie Knew* and to read the novel's concern with cognition specifically in relation to the model of learning it entails. How one understands cognition is, after all, likely to influence how one approaches education, as is apparent from the educational applications of both modern and classical cognitive psychology. In what follows, I argue that one effect of the novel's satirical jibes at inadequate educational ventures is to throw into relief its own contrastive model of learning. While many critics have understandably found cognition and vision in *What Maisie Knew* to be tightly intertwined, close attention to the trope of learning suggests that cognition for James was just as dependent on doing as on seeing. In this respect, I suggest, the model of learning and cognition depicted in *What Maisie Knew* resembles the approach to cognition developed by William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) and in two important papers later collected in *The Meaning of Truth*: 'On the Function of Cognition' (1885) and 'The Knowing of Things Together' (1895).

William James, cognition and learning

Many critics have argued for a connection between Henry James' fiction and William James' pragmatism, often deriving encouragement from Henry's 1907 statement, made in a letter congratulating William on his *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, that 'I was lost in the wonder of the extent to which all my life I have (like M. Jourdain) unconsciously pragmatized'.[4] Some commentators also posit affinities with

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classic reading of the novel as a story of aesthetic education: 'a process of initiation into vision'. Juliet Mitchell, '*What Maisie Knew*: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl', in *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, ed. John Goode (London: Methuen, 1972), p.177.

[4] Quoted in Richard A. Hocks, *Henry James and Pragmatistic Thought: A Study in the Relationship between the Philosophy of William James and the Literary Art of Henry James* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), p.151. For Armstrong, this connection travels by way of phenomenology: 'A phenomenological approach to describing and explaining these connections suggests itself because of the close relation between James' art and his brother William's philosophy'. Armstrong, *The Phenomenology of Henry James*, p.3. See also Joseph J. Firebaugh, 'The Pragmatism of Henry James', *Virginia Quarterly Review* 27 (1951), H.B. Parkes, 'The James Brothers', *Sewanee Review* 56 (1948), William McMurray, 'Pragmatic Realism in *The Bostonians*', in *Henry James: Modern Judgements*, ed. Tony Tanner (Nashville: Aurora, 1970), Harvey Cormier,

other of William's writings, not primarily concerned with expounding pragmatist doctrine, and Sämig Ludwig and Melba Cuddy-Keane have recently elaborated the connection between the two brothers in interesting ways by introducing the third term of contemporary psychology.[5] I follow these two critics in considering William James primarily as a psychologist rather than a pragmatist philosopher. What interests me here is the 'chapter in descriptive psychology, – hardly anything more' that James offered in essays like 'On The Function of Cognition' and in *The Principles of Psychology*, and not his later explicit dispute with properly philosophical doctrines, such as rationalism or idealism, and his defence of a contradictory view under the headings of pragmatism and radical empiricism.[6] My focus on cognition does, however, have some bearing on the more general question of the relationship between Henry James and pragmatism, since the germs of William James' later philosophical stances are present in the views on cognition that he articulated as early as 1885.

In *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), William James acknowledges the puzzle posed to epistemologists and metaphysicians by the fact of knowing: 'Now the relation of knowing is the most mysterious thing in the world'.[7] As a psychologist, however, he brackets out the mysteries pondered in'*Erkenntnisstheorie* and metaphysics', proposing instead to differentiate between knowledge and non-noetic mental states ('subjective state[s] pure and simple') by using 'the tests we all practically use'.[8] This solution goes some way towards anticipating the definition of truth later elaborated in *Pragmatism*, in that these tests include the common sense expedient of asking, of a given mental state and its real-world referent, whether 'it seems to imply that reality and refer to it by operating upon it

'Jamesian Pragmatism and Jamesian Realism', *The Henry James Review* 18, no. 3 (1997).

[5] Melba Cuddy-Keane, 'Narration, Navigation, and Non-Conscious Thought: Neuroscientific and Literary Approaches to the Thinking Body', *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (2010), Sämi Ludwig, *Pragmatist Realism: The Cognitive Paradigm in American Realist Texts* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), Eliseo Vivas, 'Henry and William (Two Notes) ', *The Kenyon Review* 5, no. 4 (1943).

[6] William James (1885), 'On the Function of Cognition', *Mind*, 10(37): 28.

[7] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, p.216.

[8] Ibid., pp.216–17. James did change his mind about this five years later, as he moved towards the philosophical position-taking of *Pragmatism*. William James, 'The Knowing of Things Together', *The Psychological Review* 2, no. 2 (1895): 123–24.

through the bodily organs'.[9] However, what I would like to emphasise for the purpose of this discussion is not only the way in which this definition looks forward to pragmatism, but more particularly how defining knowledge in this way makes knowing depend on doing: you know something if your observable behaviour is consistent with what you are supposed to know. This expedient, and its affinities with the doctrines expounded in *Pragmatism*, are more fully developed in the 1885 paper 'On The Function of Cognition', later collected in *The Meaning of Truth: A Sequel to 'Pragmatism'* (1909). In that essay James likewise proposes observable behaviour as a simple test for knowledge, again bolstering his argument with an appeal to common sense:

> And thus do men invariably decide such a question. *The falling of the dream's practical consequences* into the real world, and the *extent* of the resemblance between the two worlds are the criteria they instinctively use. All feeling is for the sake of action, all feeling results in action, – to-day no argument is needed to prove these truths.[10]

This appeal to '*practical consequences*' as a test for knowledge, which James formulates elsewhere in the essay as whether or not a mental state 'operates on' a reality, points still more overtly towards his later reduction, in the lecture entitled 'Pragmatism's Conception of Truth', of true ideas to 'those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify', where 'verification and validation … signify certain practical consequences of the verified and validated idea'.[11] Mental states dispose one, directly or indirectly, actually or potentially, to action, and it is by reference to the practical consequences of this belief-driven action that 'the relation of knowing' is defined.

James explored the implications of this theory for 'representative knowledge' – knowledge whose object is not present to the senses – in the 1895 paper 'The Knowing of Things Together', also excerpted in *The Meaning of Truth*.[12] As in 'On the Function of Cognition', knowledge of absent objects in the 1895 essay is explained simply as mental 'pointing',

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[9] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, p.217.
[10] William James, 'On the Function of Cognition', p.36.
[11] Ibid., p.40, William James, *Pragmatism: a new name for some old ways of thinking; together with Four Related Essays Selected from The Meaning of Truth* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1949), p.201.
[12] William James, 'The Knowing of Things Together', p.109.

whose status as knowledge is determined by the behaviour it is apt to give rise to. Our knowledge of tigers in India, for example,

> is known as our rejection of a jaguar, if that beast were shown us as a tiger; as our assent to a genuine tiger if so shown. It is known as our ability to utter all sorts of propositions which don't contradict other propositions that are true of the real tigers. It is even known, if we take the tigers very seriously, as actions of ours which may terminate in directly intuited tigers, as they would if we took a voyage to India for the purpose of tiger-hunting.[13]

'The Knowing of Things Together' resorts to the commonsense idea of 'pointing' as a way of defining knowledge of absent objects, where the accuracy of the pointing is determined by behaviour and its practical consequences. James does allow that some of the consequences of knowing about tigers may be mental, but his examples seem to incorporate behaviour as an essential component of the concept of knowledge: to know there are tigers in India means to be able to demonstrate that knowledge in a number of ways, including rejecting, assenting, uttering and, at the limit, hunting.[14] This 'pointing' emphatically does not mean any metaphysical relation between a knower and a thing known, independent of the experiences that such knowledge might lead to: 'there is no self-transcendency in our mental images taken by themselves. They are one physical fact; the tigers are another; and their pointing to the tigers is a perfectly commonplace physical relation, if you once grant a connecting world to be there'.[15] Hence, when James encapsulates his views on cognition in the 1904 essay 'Does "Consciousness" Exist?', he proposes to dispense with the notion of 'consciousness' by focusing on 'what the knowing actually and practically amounts to – leading-towards, namely,

[13] Ibid., p.108. Like Ernst Mach and other turn-of-the-century positivists, William James believed that all knowledge was ultimately underwritten by sense impressions: all knowledge had the potential to 'terminate' in some sensory perception or other. James, 'The Knowing of Things Together', p.106–07. For a persuasive correlation of the binary theory of cognition developed in this paper and 'The Beast in the Jungle', see H. Lewis Ulman, 'A Possible Lair', 'The Tigers in India' and 'The Beast in the Jungle'. *The Henry James Review*, 12, no.1 (1991).

[15] William James, 'The Knowing of Things Together', p.108.

and terminating-in percepts, through a series of transitional experiences which the world supplies'.[16]

James elaborated the pedagogical ramifications of his psychological doctrine himself, first in an 1892 series of public lectures, and then in the book *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* (1899). James' ambition in this volume was to 'make [teachers] conceive, and, if possible, reproduce sympathetically in their imagination, the mental life of their pupil as the sort of active unity which he himself feels it to be', and its fifteen chapters largely rehearse the picture of mental life put forward in *The Principles of Psychology*.[17] The chapters on 'Habit' and 'Memory', indeed, reproduce James' *magnum opus* verbatim, and several other chapter headings are carried over directly from the earlier book. Not much attention is given to cognition per se in *Talks to Teachers*, but one can discern the lineaments of James' functional theory of knowledge underlying his insistence on the 'The Necessity of Reactions' – on, in other words, the need for pupils to act on their knowledge in order to retain it.

> An impression which simply flows in at the pupil's eyes or ears, and in no way modifies his active life, is an impression gone to waste. It is physiologically incomplete. It leaves no fruits behind it in the way of capacity acquired. Even as mere impression, it fails to produce its proper effect upon the memory; for, to remain fully among the acquisitions of this latter faculty, it must be wrought into the whole cycle of our operations. Its *motor consequences* are what clinch it. Some effect due to it in the way of an activity must return to the mind in the form of the *sensation of having acted*, and connect itself with the impression. The most durable impressions are those on account of which we speak or act, or else are inwardly convulsed.[18]

This kinetic *practice* of instilling knowledge dovetails precisely with the pragmatic *theory* of knowledge that James had articulated elsewhere. Just as knowledge of absent objects – like the tigers in India – is not an absolute or metaphysical relation, but is rather contingent on the practical

[16] William James (1904), 'Does "Consciousness" Exist?', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 1(18): 486.
[17] William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on some of Life's Ideals* (New York: Henry Holt, 1915), p.iv.
[18] Ibid., p.33.

consequences of acting on that knowledge – on the 'series of transitional experiences which the world supplies' – so the knowledge acquired by a pupil, in order really to *be* knowledge, must be allowed to condition the pupil's behaviour. One might indeed say that, for James, the claim that '*motor consequences* are what clinch it' applies just as well to knowledge in general as to pedagogy. 'The pointing of our thought to the tigers', he wrote in 'The Knowing of Things Together', 'is known simply and solely as a procession of mental associates and motor consequences that follow on the thought'.[19]

On the face of it, William James' functional approach to the problem of knowledge belongs to that side of his sensibility which readers have found least sympathetic to the literary imagination of his brother. F.O. Mathiesson, for example, identified cognition as the root of their intellectual antipathy:

> All their other discrepancies in thought and expression would seem to stem back to their contrasting conceptions of knowledge, since the knower as actor and the knower as spectator are bound to behold different worlds, and to shape them to different ends.[20]

This judgement seems intuitively apt when we think of certain touchstones of James' literary theory: most notably, the famous description of the 'house of fiction' in the Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, where the artist is described as a 'pair of eyes', a 'watcher' at the 'human scene' rather than an actor. The same passage goes on to equate personal identity with an accretion of mental states rather than with a history of deeds: 'Tell me what the artist is, and I will tell you of what he has *been* conscious'.[21] And the temperamental fissure that Mathiesson finds between the brothers seems to widen to a chasm when we turn our attention to the passage from *Talks to Teachers* above, with its cool dismissal of all passive impressions as 'waste'.

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[19] William James, 'The Knowing of Things Together', p.108.

[20] F.O. Matthiessen, *The James Family: Including Selections from the Writings of Henry James, Senior, William, Henry, & Alice James* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p.673.

[21] Henry James, *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p.46.

To be sure, more recent criticism has revised this conception of James as the poet laureate of passive spectatorship; phenomenological approaches, in particular, have refined the sense in which Jamesian centres of consciousness are always already embedded in the world, and are responsible for generating their own horizons of understanding.[22] In phenomenologically informed discussions of *What Maisie Knew*, Paul B. Armstrong and Merle A. Williams both emphasise the active dimension of knowing and its inseparability from moral action, and both critics propose an affinity between James' fiction and his brother's philosophy.[23] But although Mathiesson's distinction between the knowing spectator and the knowing agent now seems overly clearcut, the poetics of perception still tends to loom large in discussions of what and how Maisie knows. In the phenomenological tradition, Williams sees the child focaliser as enabling James to execute a Husserlian *epoché*, while a recent reading of the novel in the context of *fin de siècle* urban consumerism posits a 'metaphoric conflation of visual and cognitive experience – what one might call an ocular rhetoric of understanding – upon which the narrative turns, and which runs through the entire novel'.[24] There certainly is an important relationship between what Maisie knew and what she saw, and James does figure her improper knowledge in terms of vision: 'She saw more and more; she saw too much'.[25] However, without wishing to dispute the

[22] Paul B. Armstrong's 1983 study provides the most direct formulation of this phenomenological turn: 'For Husserl, consciousness is not a passive receptacle for contents from the outside world but, instead, directs itself actively and even creatively toward its objects to posit, constitute, and give meaning to them'. Armstrong, *The Phenomenology of Henry James*, p.7. Sharon Cameron's application of Husserl does not enlist the phenomenological project quite so programmatically, but it too argues for a more dynamic picture of consciousness in James' novels than the traditional image of the solitary watcher: 'In the novels I have described, consciousness is not stable, not subjective, not interior, not unitary, as James' Prefaces claim. But it is also, as a consequence, not dismissed or deconstructed. Rather, it is disseminated. In the novels consciousness is not in persons; it is rather between them' Sharon Cameron, *Thinking in Henry James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p.77.

[23] Paul B. Armstrong, *The Phenomenology of Henry James*, pp.37–68, Merle A. Williams, *Henry James and the Philosophical Novel: Being and Seeing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.27–48.

[24] 'Like Husserl himself, she is a perpetual beginner in her perceptual and social explorations'.Williams, *Henry James and the Philosophical Novel: Being and Seeing*, p.3; Britzolakis, 'Technologies of Vision in Henry James' *What Maisie Knew*', p.375.

[25] Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (London: Penguin, 1985), p.43.

importance of vision in the novel, I want to pursue the analogy with William James' functional model of cognition and his advice to teachers in order to suggest that doing, rather than seeing, is proposed at crucial junctures of the novel as the *sine qua non* of knowledge and learning alike. Seen in this way, an unexpected affinity emerges between William James' stern proscription on wasted impressions and Henry James' attitude toward cognition.

Learning in *What Maisie Knew*

What Maisie Knew signals its concern with pedagogy by offering several burlesques of inept, irresponsible, ill-conceived or old-fashioned approaches to education. Parts of Maisie's schooling, for example, resemble what William James dismisses in *Talks to Teachers* as 'The older pedagogic method of learning things by rote, and reciting them parrot-like in the schoolroom'.[26] Rote learning was passé enough to be dismissed out of hand in William's 1892 lectures, but it features nonetheless in the education of Maisie, who recalls, when interrogated about her 'moral sense', 'how she sometimes couldn't repeat on Friday the sentence that had been glib on Wednesday, and she dealt all feebly and ruefully with the present tough passage'.[27] James' ironic catalogue of the superior intellectual attainments of Miss Overmore, 'who could say lots of dates straight off (letting you hold the book yourself), state the position of Malabar, play six pieces without notes and, in a sketch, put in beautifully the trees and houses and difficult parts', (*WMK* 50–51) situates her in the same pedagogic paradigm: the daft miscellaneousnesss of this hodgepodge underlines not only the emphasis on memorisation, but also the way in which knowledge in this reified form is divorced from any practical application. Mrs Beale displays the same dizzy inconsequence when outlining the 'subjects' that Maisie will encounter at public lectures – 'All the most important ones. French literature – and sacred history' (*WMK* 118) – and the lectures that Maisie eventually attends at 'Glower Street' (an allusion to University College London, on Gower Street) are themselves another exhibit in the novel's *sottisier* of educational malpractice. Like Miss Overmore's lessons, these lectures are portrayed as comically far removed from practical life, with James borrowing an image from *Hard*

[26] William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on some of Life's Ideals*, p.34.
[27] Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (London: Penguin, 1985), p.260. Subsequent references are given in the text.

Times to pillory their moral seriousness and earnest futility: 'the fountain of knowledge, in the form usually of a high voice that she took at first to be angry, plashed in the stillness of rows of faces thrust out like empty jugs' (*WMK* 139).[28] The glimpses that James gives us of these lectures are enough to identify them with the rote learning and the passive reception of knowledge criticised by William James in *Talks to Teachers*. Indeed, if knowledge is defined as ideas that stand to be verified by behaviour and by its practical consequences, then what is taught Maisie by her governesses and at 'Glower Street' does not count as knowledge at all.

By contrast, the other, dominant sense of 'knowledge' in *What Maisie Knew* – the precocious knowledge that Maisie acquires of moral misconduct and the *demi-monde* – meets William James' criteria for knowledge handsomely, embedded as it is in a rich framework of risks, stakes and consequences. Maisie has ample opportunity to test her hypotheses in this sphere, and, as we will see, the consequences of error can be brutal. As I have suggested, the novel cultivates a comparison between these two kinds of knowing and learning, and it sometimes does so by showing how they are, for Maisie, confounded. 'She had not had governesses for nothing', Maisie thinks at Boulogne: 'what in the world had she ever done but learn and learn and learn?' (*WMK* 213) From one point of view, Maisie mistakes one kind of learning for another here, conflating the illicit knowledge that has prompted Mrs Wix's hand-wringing with the learning conventionally imparted by governesses. But in another sense, she is quite right to merge the two, since the 'successive stages of her knowledge' (*WMK* 213) in question in this scene have indeed been nurtured by Miss Overmore and Mrs Wix, who are responsible for neglecting Maisie's formal education and diverting her attention onto the more immediate mysteries of her entourage. Mrs Wix, who reproaches herself at Boulogne with corrupting her charge, actively blurs the line between the two kinds of knowing by introducing Sir Claude as a subject of schoolroom study: Maisie's 'lessons these first days and indeed for long after seemed to be all about Sir Claude' (*WMK* 76); he seems to hover over 'the principal dates and auxiliary verbs'; and teacher and student finally abandon Maisie's lessons in order to 'draw up to the fire and talk about him; and if the truth must be told this edifying interchange constituted for the time the little girl's chief education' (*WMK* 80). This invasion of the

[28] In the opening scene of that novel, the pupils of Mr Gradgrind's school are figured as 'little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim'. Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London: Penguin, 1985), p.48.

pedagogical by the personal repeats on a larger scale what has already occurred with Miss Overmore, who instructs Maisie in the names of her own siblings instead of the multiplication tables (*WMK* 44), and the unnamed governess briefly encountered in chapter three, who quizzes Maisie about her father rather than her lessons (*WMK* 46). Thus does the novel underscore the negligence of Maisie's reprehensible guardians and the distorted nature of her upbringing, but the same device also brings into relation two kinds of knowing: all that Maisie does not learn in the classroom, and all that she does come to know about the adult characters on whom she is dependent.

Unlike the spurious knowledge that Maisie receives about the 'position of Malabar' or 'sacred history', the knowledge she acquires of her parents and step-parents meets William James' criteria of susceptibility to verification by 'practical consequences'. By the same token, it also conforms to his lectures on pedagogy by lending itself to practical application and testing. Rather than passively receive instruction, James insists, students must implement their knowledge in the form of an 'expression', which in turn elicits a response:

> We thus receive sensible news of our behavior and its results. We hear the words we have spoken, feel our own blow as we give it, or read in the bystander's eyes the success or failure of our conduct. Now this return wave of impression pertains to the completeness of the whole experience.[29]

The novel shows us Maisie inferring rules from her own experiences, such as the reliability of governesses as opposed to parents (*WMK* 59), which she then tests and, if necessary, revises, as when her 'researches had hitherto indicated that to incur a second parent of the same sex you had usually to lose the first' (*WMK* 64). The fallibility of her knowledge is also repeatedly exposed by the responses of adults to her hypotheses, as when she is disabused by Miss Overmore of the supposition that Sir Claude might live with her as a tutor, by analogy with a governess (*WMK* 59). Maisie is, indeed, constantly reminded of mysterious lacunae in her knowledge by the adult habit of 'going off' in response to her utterances and questions (*WMK* 70–71). 'Everything', she learns, 'had something behind it: life was like a long, long corridor with rows of closed doors. She

[29] William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on some of Life's Ideals*, 86–67.

had learned that at these doors it was wise not to knock – this seemed to produce from within such sounds of derision' (*WMK* 54–55). Maisie wants to know more in order to avoid the wounding practical consequence of 'derision', with the feelings of confusion, shame and embarrassment it can produce.

Just as it is Ida who most makes her regret her direct questions – 'Find out for yourself!' (*WMK* 55) – so too it is Maisie's mother who inflicts on her the novel's most lacerating lesson in social behaviour. When, at Folkestone, Maisie unhappily breaks her own rule of silent 'diplomacy' (*WMK* 176) to relay to her horrified mother the Captain's gallant tribute to her 'goodness', James again invokes the imagery of formal learning to underline the way in which Maisie's *faux pas* is related to learning and knowing:

> Her mother gave her one of the looks that slammed the door in her face; never in a career of unsuccessful experiments had Maisie had to take such a stare. It reminded her of the way that once, at one of the lectures in Glower Street, something in a big jar that, amid an array of strange glasses and bad smells, had been promised as a beautiful yellow was produced as a beautiful black. She had been sorry on that occasion for the lecturer, but she was at this moment sorrier for herself. (*WMK* 176)

Unable to foresee the many shades of offence potentially contained in her statement – not least of which is the mere impropriety, as ever, of her own blasé allusions to moral indecency, and the reflection cast by this unwitting impropriety on her mother – Maisie is made painfully aware, once again, of the fallibility of her knowledge. Whereas the lectures at 'Glower Street' are divorced from the active lives – the behaviour – of their audience, the 'failure of [her] conduct' in this instance is present to Maisie as a felt affective wounding: 'nothing had ever made for twinges like mamma's manner of saying: "The Captain? What Captain?"' (*WMK* 177). Maisie has only a distant sympathetic involvement with the 'experiments' she witnesses, feeling kindly 'sorry' for the lecturer, but this vicarious emotion can't compare with the practical consequences of experiments that she performs for herself.

Knowing how and knowing that

The imagery of this passage invites us to consider Maisie's 'experiments' as directed towards the acquisition of knowledge, in a sort of counterpoint to the academic knowledge imparted at the 'Glower Street' lectures, but at the same time it doesn't seem quite right to ascribe Maisie's gaffe to something she doesn't know. What she tells Ida is, after all, correct; what Maisie lacks is not fact but tact: the tact that would have told her not to risk making an indelicate allusion. It will be helpful to borrow a classic distinction from analytic philosophy to supplement the vocabulary used so far in this essay to describe different kinds of knowing in *What Maisie Knew*. In an influential 1946 essay and then in the second chapter of *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Gilbert Ryle argued that large problems in the philosophy of mind stemmed from a failure to understand the relationship between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that', and specifically from a tendency to make the former kind of knowledge depend upon the latter. Ryle's forceful analysis of 'mental conduct verbs', sometimes labelled philosophical behaviourism, bears certain affinities to the pragmatic attitude to cognition elaborated by William James. To be sure, James, unlike Ryle, retained a logical distinction between 'representative knowledge' as a cause and behaviour as an effect, but on the occasions when he refers to the cash value of knowledge – 'what the knowing actually and practically amounts to' – it seems clear that his definition of cognition, in most contexts, is inextricably linked to behaviour. For him, drilling down into what it means to know an object will almost always lead to talk of actions and practical consequences – as with the rejecting, assenting, uttering and hunting we find in the tiger example. Ryle's vocabulary will be useful here in order to clarify how Henry James, too, approached cognition as unavoidably bound up with doing.

It is customary to assume, Ryle says,

> (1) that Intelligence is a special faculty, the exercises of which are those specific internal acts which are called acts of thinking, namely, the operations of considering propositions; (2) practical activities merit their titles 'intelligent', 'clever', and the rest only because they are accompanied by some such internal acts of considering propositions.[30]

[30] Gilbert Ryle, 'Knowing How and Knowing That', in *Collected Papers, Volume II: Collected Essays 1929–1968* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), p.212.

Ryle argues, however, that this dualistic view of intelligent practices – 'the mythical bifurcation of unwitnessable mental causes and their witnessable physical effects' – is mistaken, and that:

> Intelligently to do something (whether internally or externally) is not to do two things, one 'in our heads' and the other perhaps in the outside world; it is to do one thing in a certain manner.[31]

Playing chess, for example, does not involve consulting an inward register of the rules of chess and then making moves in accordance with those rules. Knowledge-how of this kind refers to a disposition or capacity to act in certain ways, and not to the possession of certain pieces of knowledge-that:

> When a person is described by one or other of the intelligence epithets such as "shrewd" or "silly", "prudent" or "imprudent", the description imputes to him not the knowledge, or ignorance, of this or that truth, but the ability, or inability, to do certain sorts of things.[32]

Ryle's analysis of knowledge-how has particular relevance to the context of education. Ryle draws largely in *The Concept of Mind* on his experiences in educational institutions and in the military to expound the common sense force of his thesis; to show how:

> In ordinary life … as well as in the special business of teaching, we are much more concerned with people's competences than with their cognitive repertoires, with the operations than with the truths that they learn.[33]

At the same time, however, he believes that education in particular is liable to be mistakenly associated with the imparting of such truths: 'The

[31] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1949), p.33, Ryle, 'Knowing How and Knowing That', p.214.
[32] Ibid., p.28.Accordingly, 'when we characterize people by mental predicates, we are not making untestable inferences to any ghostly processes occurring in streams of consciousness which we are debarred from visiting; we are describing the ways in which those people conduct parts of their predominantly public behaviour'.Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p.50.
[33] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p.28.

uneducated public erroneously equates education with the imparting of knowing-that'.[34]

An over-investment in 'knowing-that' certainly characterises James' satire of the university extension lectures at 'Glower Street', which are supposed to conceive knowledge as the contents of a jug rather than a disposition to act in certain ways. It is also characteristic of the titbits of knowledge that Miss Overmore has memorised – even her playing of the piano is presented as a quality rather than an ability, part of a catalogue of attributes. By contrast, the knowledge that Maisie desperately tries to glean of how to get along in the world without being laughed at or otherwise mortified is very much a matter of knowing how. This distinction is underlined when Maisie becomes aware of the use being made of her by her parents and resolves to suppress, rather than relay, their oblique or direct messages to one another. What Maisie suppresses is, of course, knowledge-that, whose affinity with the knowledge imparted at 'Glower Street' is driven home by the duplication of the metaphor:

> The evil they had the gift of thinking or pretending to think of each other they poured into her little gravely-gazing soul as into a boundless receptacle. (*WMK* 42)

It is in these terms that Beale and Ida judge Maisie's behaviour as 'stupid', a failure of the 'receptacle' to retain knowledge, failing to recognise that Maisie's behaviour is not a deficiency of knowledge-that but an adroit application of knowledge-how. James' memorable description of how Maisie discovers at this moment a Rousseauian 'inner self' might lead us to construe what happens here as a phenomenon of inward depth, in the realm of what Ryle calls 'unwitnessable mental causes', but to this interpretation we would have to add that Maisie has at the same moment acquired a skill or an art: the 'pacific art of stupidity', to be exact (*WMK* 77). Her newfound ability not to tell her parents everything has the character of 'diplomacy', which, Maisie discovers to her chagrin at Folkestone, she is capable of exercising ineptly as well as adroitly. It does not have the nature of a rule or proposition that she can call to mind and obey; indeed, Maisie is painfully conscious of her ignorance of any such explicit formula:

> The child's discipline had been bewildering – it had ranged freely between the prescription that she was to answer when

[34] Gilbert Ryle, 'Knowing How and Knowing That', p.225.

> spoken to and the experience of lively penalties on obeying that prescription. (*WMK* 66)

The choice of whether or not to speak is akin, rather, to the non-thetic knowhow of 'tactful manners', whose 'canons', as Ryle puts it, 'remain unpropounded without impediment to the intelligent exercise of those gifts'. [35]

The fact that Maisie's parents are represented as engaged in a game also suggests that what appears from one point of view as a private enlargement of Maisie's inner life can be read just as well as the acquisition of a skill. Games are a pervasive image in the novel, and James compares Maisie to a 'shuttlecock' here to suggest the ludic and competitive nature of this third-party baiting, in which she is a pawn (*WMK* 42). A cognate image will occur to Maisie herself later, when she compares the struggle of which she is the object to a game of football (*WMK* 101). At one point or another almost all the adult characters accuse one another of playing a game rather than acting sincerely, and Ida applies the metaphor to her own conduct as she contemplates a coming change in the rules, when Maisie will be exploited more as a burden to the other parent than as a trophy: this will constitute 'a sort of game in which a fond mother clearly wouldn't show to advantage' (*WMK* 46). When Ida and Beale deplore Maisie's 'stupid' inability to retain knowledge-that, they ironically fail to see that she, too, is playing the game intelligently.

Maisie's fatal aptitude for bluffing also involves knowledge-how that is irreducible to knowledge-that. Maisie seizes every opportunity to exploit her guardians' tendency to take what she knows for granted, as when, having inquired about Mrs Wix's intentions, she quickly assents to Sir Claude's flattering 'Oh, you know!':

> 'Yes – I know!' What she knew, what she *could* know is by this time no secret to us: it grew and grew at any rate, the rest of that day, in the air of what he took for granted. (*WMK* 184)

Rather than refuse a compliment to her maturity, Maisie eagerly colludes with Sir Claude to preserve a cloak of vagueness over just what she knows, while Sir Claude for his part foregoes any 'attempt to test her knowledge'. But at the same time that Maisie misses an opportunity to enlarge her store

[35] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p.30.

of knowledge-that, she demonstrates an ability to make use of knowledge-how – a kind of tact – to avoid the disagreeable consequences of seeming naive.

Related to this knack for seeming to know more than she does are the moments in the text where Maisie makes a precocious-seeming remark instinctively, without reflection and even without being able to explain her words to herself. This occurs when Sir Claude responds with wry amusement to the news of a 'they' waiting in Ida's cab during her visit to Mrs Wix: Maisie feels that she has an intuitive grasp of the reason for his laughter, but 'could scarce have told you if it was to deepen or to cover the joke that she bethought herself to observe: "Perhaps it was her maid"' (*WMK* 189). It seems unlikely that Maisie's intuitive grasp of the joke really does get at the sense of Sir Claude's laughter: the combined chagrin, exasperation, incredulity and disgust underlying his response to this further news of his wife's extramarital carryings-on. But what is certain is that this kind of explicit understanding is irrelevant to her ability to participate in banter, or give the impression of precocity: Maisie is able to catch the tone of the conversation and respond aptly without knowing precisely what she means.

A similar trick of unreflected utterance occurs during one of Maisie's earnest *tête-à-têtes* with Mrs Wix in Boulogne, when, before Maisie can respond 'So do I' to Mrs Wix's declaration that she 'adore[s]' Sir Claude,

> something took place that brought other words to her lips; nothing more, very possibly, than the closer consciousness in her hand of the significance of Mrs Wix's. Their hands remained linked in unutterable sign of their union, and what Maisie at last said was simply and serenely: 'Oh I know!' (*WMK* 218)

Here again, Maisie instinctively chooses one conversational move over another, and would, one suspects, be just as hard pressed as in the previous example to explain her reply. Suppressing her first impulse, she opts rather for the words that will best give the impression of sharing in this moment of 'unutterable … union', as well as seizing the opportunity, once again, to affect knowingness.

The tension between this kind of social knowledge-how and the knowledge-that that characterises Maisie's formal education comes to a

head at the climax of the novel, when Mrs Wix badgers her to produce signs of a 'moral sense' (*WMK* 211). 'For James', as Tony Tanner notes, 'morality is not such an easy business as the edict-mongering Mrs Wix makes out', and her insistence that Maisie 'condemn' (*WMK* 214) the liaison between Sir Claude and Mrs Beale is portrayed as simple-minded priggery.[36] Mrs Wix demands that Maisie demonstrate a knowledge she doesn't possess – the knowledge that for her step-parents to live together would be a 'crime' (*WMK* 215) – and Maisie is, as ever, anxious to deflect the inquiry and dispel the imputation of ignorance:

> Never so much as when confronted had Maisie wanted to understand, and all her thought for a minute in the effort to come out with something which should be a disproof of her simplicity. (*WMK* 215)

Unable to produce the knowledge of moral transgression that Mrs Wix requires, Maisie falls back once again on her knowledge-how: her empirically acquired skills in placating and, here, hoodwinking her guardians. Following adroitly the cues that Mrs Wix gives her, Maisie hits upon an improvisation of jealousy as 'the way to show she was not simple', declaring her willingness to kill Mrs Beale as a way to 'guarantee her moral sense' (*WMK* 217). Sally Shuttleworth describes this action aptly as a 'performative lie', noting that Maisie 'has become, indeed, more adept at the social intricacies of performance than that dissolute socialite, her father'.[37] What I want to emphasise here is how this performative know-how is ironically contrasted, in this scene, with the crude knowledge-that on which Mrs Wix's ethics and pedagogics are based. The interchange between pupil and governess, which culminates in Maisie's inspired 'Oh I know', seems guided more by an instinctive feel for the right script than by a considered understanding of what Mrs Wix is driving at: instead of learning the lesson of the moral sense, Maisie deploys a different kind of knowledge to feign understanding and appease her inquisitor.

When, in the hotel at Boulogne, Maisie's 'moral sense' is again called into question for Mrs Wix, her sense of despair is explicitly compared to her experiences in the schoolroom.

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[36] Tony Tanner, *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Realism in American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1965), p.291.
[37] Sally Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840–1900*, p.333.

> It brought back to the child's recollection how she sometimes couldn't repeat on Friday the sentence that had been glib on Wednesday, and she dealt all feebly and ruefully with the present tough passage. Sir Claude and Mrs. Beale stood there like visitors at an 'exam'. She had indeed an instant a whiff of the faint flower that Mrs. Wix pretended to have plucked and now with such a peremptory hand thrust at her nose. Then it left her, and, as if she were sinking with a slip from a foothold, her arms made a short jerk. What this jerk represented was the spasm within her of something still deeper than a moral sense. She looked at her examiner; she looked at the visitors; she felt the rising of the tears she had kept down at the station. They had nothing – no, distinctly nothing – to do with her moral sense. The only thing was the old flat shameful schoolroom plea. 'I don't know – I don't know'. (*WMK* 260)

This passage marks the total failure of Mrs Wix's legislative moralism, which is, like the 'subjects' she vaguely plans to teach Maisie, utterly disconnected from Maisie's practical, affective life. The novel's flawed pedagogic models are invoked to underline how distant this abstract moral code is from 'practical consequences', just as James had earlier marked the contrast between the bitterly painful lessons Maisie learns from social blunders like her mention of the Captain and the impersonal experiments she observes at 'Glower Street'. Here, definitively, the model of cognition as a disembodied knowing of propositions, without reference to the pragmatist test of practical consequences on the 'bodily organs', is found wanting.

Crucially, James repudiates such a model of cognition at the level of narrative technique, by renouncing the omniscient narrator's prerogative of reducing this experience to an intelligible content. As in the moments of Maisie's virtuoso verbal improvisations, James exuberantly surpasses the cognitive model of Mrs Wix's trite moral lessons, portraying Maisie as a far more complex knowing subject than that model allows. Contrasted as it is with the trite lessons of the schoolroom and the moral sense, this 'moment of grotesque physicality, almost of automatism' (as Christina Britzolakis aptly puts it)[38] can be read as a superior fiction of the learning

[38] Christina Britzolakis, 'Technologies of Vision in Henry James' *What Maisie Knew*', p.384.

body, conforming closely to William James' prescription for durable impressions:

> Its *motor consequences* are what clinch it. Some effect due to it in the way of an activity must return to the mind in the form of the *sensation of having acted*, and connect itself with the impression. The most durable impressions are those on account of which we speak or act, or else are inwardly convulsed.

Maisie's inward convulsion sets the seal on a durable impression, to be added to the other cruelly affective learning experiences that James has dramatised. The content of Maisie's inner life is occluded here, situating her crisis on a level of physiological opacity far removed from the factitious intelligible truths of the 'moral sense'. What is clear, however, is that Maisie's effort at introspection has immediate practical consequences for her beside which the propositional knowledge sought by Mrs Wix is exposed as an intellectualist mirage.

What is put to the test here is, of course, a conative rather than a moral awareness: Mrs Wix's melodramatic catechism forces Maisie to cleave publicly to the terms of her ultimatum to Sir Claude. This resolution to give up both Mrs Wix and Mrs Beale in order to be with Sir Claude is itself a form of knowledge, albeit of a different order than that implied by the 'moral sense', as James makes plain some pages later: 'What helped the child was that she knew what she wanted. All her learning and learning had made her at last learn that' (*WMK* 262). Here the quasi-pun on 'learning' that James has sustained throughout the novel, where that word is used to designate both Maisie's farcical formal education and her hard-won social knowledge, recurs to define Maisie's choice of what she wants as a cognitive attainment – a learned ability. In positioning this practical choice at the apex of the novel's narrative arc, James emphatically refuses a model of cognition as transparent inward consciousness of knowledge-that. However we interpret Maisie's choice, nowhere in the novel's final chapters does James represent a process of reflective deliberation that would allow us to pinpoint the reasons, desires and beliefs that could function as putative mental causes for this decision. This crowning obscurity, familiar as a marker of the novel's proto-modernism, entails a position-taking on the question of cognition. Maisie's climactic choice is not made to depend on knowledge-that, as it would have if, for instance, the 'moral sense' had not been exposed as a chimera, and Maisie had indeed acted consciously in accordance with a learned moral principle.

Rather, the climax of Maisie's 'learning' is a practical knowledge of what she wants to do, and the novel's representation of this knowledge is conspicuously devoid of any duplicate mental process shadowing the words and actions by which she enacts this knowledge. In this way, the novel's denouement is foreshadowed by those earlier instances of unreflective speech in which Maisie demonstrates knowhow in the absence of knowledge-that. At the same time, this conative cognition, collapsing the distinction between knowing and wanting, is a radical extension of William James' theory of knowledge, making knowledge not only dependent on 'practical consequences' but indivisible from them: no knowledge is of more immediate practical consequence than knowing what one wants.

When one thinks of knowledge in Henry James, it's natural to think hermeneutically: of transitions from imperfect understanding to more astute readings of the social text. Hypocrisy, imposture and intrigue lurk latent in every social situation, and it is the task of the Jamesian protagonist to move from myopia to perspicacity in the reading of personal relations. This idea of knowledge as something hidden that can be brought to light is encapsulated in such affirmations as this, from the Prefaces:

> The real represents to my perception the things we cannot possibly *not* know, sooner or later, in one way or another; it being but one of the accidents of our hampered state, and one of the incidents of their quantity and number, that particular instances have not yet come our way.[39]

It also seems to be implied in the image, from 'The Art of Fiction', of experience as a 'spider-web' which 'converts the very pulses of the air into revelations', as though the novelist were a kind of bionic ear whose super-sensitive tympanum relayed knowledge inaudible to the common listener.[40] As it happens, we encounter precisely the same image in *What Maisie Knew*, when Maisie has the impression, at Boulogne, of being on the road to omniscience:

> She looked at the pink sky with a placid foreboding that she soon should have learnt All. They lingered in the flushed air till at last it turned to grey and she seemed fairly to receive new information from every brush of the breeze. (*WMK* 213)

[39] Henry James, *The Art of the Novel*, p.31.
[40] Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', in *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature American Writers English Writers* (New York: Library of America, 1984), p.52.

In the thirteen years separating 'The Art of Fiction' from *What Maisie Knew*, however, this image of answers blowing in the wind seems to have acquired an ironic tint. Maisie's fascinated sense of sliding inexorably towards total knowledge is fanciful, an instance of childish magical thinking, and is, moreover, determined by the influence of Mrs Wix: in this complex passage, it is quite explicitly Mrs Wix's melodramatic idea of Maisie's abominable 'knowledge' that imprints her imagination. The narrator admits, indeed, to encountering a technical difficulty in representing Mrs Wix's attitudes via Maisie's apprehension here, and there is no doubt that the linear, mechanical image of expanding knowledge that Maisie intuits and then imitates is originally an image 'for Mrs Wix' (*WMK* 212).[41] In other words, the image of the novelist as hypersensitive membrane in 'The Art of Fiction' is ironised and relativised in *What Maisie Knew*, becoming another sign of Mrs Wix's crude and superstitious approach to both knowledge and morality. In this novel, James' only full-length use of a child protagonist, the hermeneutic model of cognition is inadequate, for Maisie does not arrive at the kind of explicit, thetic understanding of her situation that so preoccupies Mrs Wix. What is required for this portrait of a young learner is an altogether different model of cognition, one which accommodates the phenomenon of knowing-how without reducing it to an effect of knowing-that. In his careful representation of such a model of cognition and such a process of learning, James came closer, perhaps, than anywhere else in his fiction to the pragmatic theory of knowledge espoused by his brother.

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[41] 'I so despair of courting her noiseless mental footsteps here that I must crudely give you my word for its being from this time forward a picture literally present to her' (*WMK* 212).

Bloody Sunday: National Trauma and National Cinema

JENNIFER BECKETT

On 30 January 1972, members of the British Special Forces, Paratrooper Unit 1, opened fired into a crowd of civil rights protesters in the Catholic city of Derry. By the end of that day 13 civilians were pronounced dead and another 14 were seriously injured, one of whom later died as a result of his injuries. The day would become known as Bloody Sunday and the subsequent Widgery Inquiry into the event, which backed up the military's line that it had acted appropriately, would ensure that it would remain one of the most contested and politically explosive events of the 'Troubles'. As part of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, the British Labour government, led by Tony Blair, publicly recognised the historical position of Bloody Sunday as a 'great gaping wound'[1] in the history of Northern Ireland. Acknowledging the role the British had played in the creation and perpetuation of the trauma surrounding the event, Blair overturned the rulings of the Widgery Inquiry and set up the Saville Inquiry to reopen the investigation into the events of that day in a transparent manner[2] with the hope of achieving justice for all involved. On the 15th of June 2010 the long awaited report of the Saville Inquiry was passed down. Saville found that the British Army had responded with unnecessary force and that, worse, some of those involved in the event had made false statements to justify their actions. David Cameron, the recently elected conservative Prime Minister, stood in front of the Parliament at Westminster and issued a public apology to the people of Derry. In this historic speech he charged that:

[1] Paul Greengrass, *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*, dir. Paul Greengrass, 2002.
[2] The findings of the Saville Inquiry were handed down on 16 June 2010. Background to the Inquiry, hearing transcripts, rulings and judgements, reports and statements, press notices and the final report of the Inquiry can be found at www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk/

> the conclusions of this report are absolutely clear. There is no doubt, there is nothing equivocal, there are no ambiguities. What happened on Bloody Sunday was both unjustified and unjustifiable. It was wrong.[3]

He was equally clear, however, that:

> Lord Saville finds no evidence that the events of Bloody Sunday were premeditated, he concludes that the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland governments and the army neither tolerated nor encouraged the use of unjustified lethal force.

He makes no suggestion of a government cover up.[4]

In this paper I wish to examine Paul Greengrass' 2002 docudrama *Bloody Sunday*, paying particular attention to the way in which the film operates within the sphere of trauma therapy. As part of this argument I will be looking at the role the film plays in re-narritivising or demythologising the historical event and how this helps to achieve a coming to terms with the violent break in the history of Northern Ireland that Bloody Sunday constitutes. In order to do this I focus on the way in which Greengrass has attempted to achieve, in his own words, 'an account [of the story] we can all broadly share'[5] through his use of the documentary aesthetic, non-actors, binary characterisations and large amounts of improvised dialogue in his script. Finally, I explore the way in which the film breaks with traditional narratives of the event and the effect this had on its reception in both Ireland and Britain.

For both sides Bloody Sunday became a pretext for continuing violence, while the British Government's response to the event, the subsequent findings of the Widgery Inquiry, and the unwillingness on the British part to enter into meaningful dialogue, set the tone for future interactions around events such as the Dirty Protest and subsequent Hunger Strikes by IRA prisoners in The Maze's notorious H-Block in the late 1970s and

[3] David Cameron, 'Bloody Sunday: PM David Cameron's Full Statement', (UK: BBC News Online www.bbc.co.uk/news/10322295; accessed 11 November, 2011).
[4] Ibid.
[5] Paul Greengrass interviewed as part of: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*, 2002.

1980s.[6] The British Government's decision to establish the Saville Inquiry marked an acceptance of potential culpability around Bloody Sunday, but it also denoted a shift in 'ownership' of the story. Traditionally, narratives surrounding the 'Troubles' have formed part of what could be termed a Catholic Canon of Northern Irish discourse. In his book *Shooting To Kill: Filmmaking and 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland*, Brian McIlroy points to the dominance of Nationalist and Republican stories in 'Troubles' filmmaking,[7] a finding reiterated by John Hill.[8] This is by no means a trend found solely in cinematic narratives of the conflict but is, in fact, part of a wider interpretation of the 'Troubles' as Catholic/Nationalist dominated. This portrayal is by turns negative – constructing violence as 'irrational and atavistic',[9]a traditionally British point of view – or positive, grounded in political activism, reflecting the Catholic/Nationalist position.

While the history of Bloody Sunday has been seen in both these lights the effect of the Widgery Inquiry was to close the British side of the narrative, meaning that the story, until recently, has coalesced exclusively around anti-British and pro-Republican sentiment. The event has thus become a site of closed identity belonging only to a set Catholic/Nationalist community and thus has come to be a symbolic event within the wider trauma of the 'Troubles'. This prevents 'outsider' access to the discourse, either Northern Irish Protestant or British.[10] The denial of outsider access to

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[6] These are themselves significant traumas within the 'Troubles' and have been the subject of a number of films such as *Some Mother's Son* (1996, director: Terry George, Eire/USA), *H3* (2001, director: Les Blaire, Eire) and, most recently, *Hunger* (2008, director: Steve McQueen, UK/Eire). See David McKittrick & David McVea, *Making Sense of the Trouble*: *the story of the conflict in Northern Ireland* (London, UK: Blackstaff Press, 2000), pp.63, 157, 260.

[7] Brian McIlroy, *Shooting to Kill. Filmmaking and the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1998), p.7.

[8] John Hill, 'Images of Violence', *Cinema and Ireland*, eds. Kevin Rockett, John Hill and Luke Gibbons (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), John Hill, *Cinema and Northern Ireland. Film, Culture and Politics* (London: British Film Institute, 2006) pp.197, 208.

[9] Fidelma Farley, 'Ireland, the Past and British Cinema: *Ryan's Daughter* (1970)', *British Historical Cinema. The History, Heritage and Costume Film*, ed. Claire & Amy Sargeant Monk (London: Routledge, 2002), p.130.

[10] Indeed James Nesbitt – who played protagonist Ivan Cooper, the Civil Rights leader and Derry politician in the film – commented that Bloody Sunday was entirely elided from the history taught at his Protestant school in Coleraine, a town situated within the greater County of Derry (Interview with James Nesbitt: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*).

and therefore of alternative voices within the canonical narrative, and the closure of the British story, established the history of Bloody Sunday as a perpetual site of conflict between Irish Catholic/ Nationalist communities on the one side and Protestant/Loyalist communities and Britain on the other. This effectively kept the trauma frozen open, rendering it a story the Irish couldn't forget because the British wouldn't remember. In re-apprehending the event through the Saville Inquiry and re-entering the dialogue in the context of the peace process, the British government made it possible for the traumatic space of Bloody Sunday to be re-examined within an environment of reconciliation.

By focusing on a Protestant protagonist in the person of Ivan Cooper, *Bloody Sunday* operates at a remove from the specifically Catholic milieu in which the event usually finds expression. Further, by portraying the event through the eyes of all involved Greengrass has re-placed the event, in the sense that it now exists within a dual sphere of ownership across the collective psyches of Northern Ireland and Britain. In effect this requires that the film occupy the same contested space and history within which the Saville Inquiry operated. The director's aim in doing this was, he has stated, to attempt to create a broad account of the history that can be 'recognized across the islands' of Britain and Ireland.[11] Greengrass' purpose was not solely to explore the veracity of accounts of the day but also to provide a shared acknowledgement of a day which, as Nesbitt has said 'is as much an English tragedy as it was an Irish tragedy'.[12] In doing so, I believe that Greengrass has created a film that speaks to the goal of reconciliation, both with respect to the peace process and in context as the final aim of trauma therapy, in a way films which emphasise the plight of the victims, such as Jimmy McGovern's *Sunday*, do not.

Within the sphere of trauma therapy the aim is to re-narrativise the original site of the trauma in such a way as to breakdown the memorial scar tissue surrounding the wound. The focus is on rupturing the mythologies of memory, so that the patient can reorder and thereby renegotiate the trauma. This process allows the traumatised individual to move through the trauma with purpose, considering all aspects of the situation. At times this move towards reconciliation (for that is the purpose of this phase) may require the traumatised individual or group to reorder or rethink the sequence of events and in doing so recontextualise them so that they come to a greater

[11] Paul Greengrass interview: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*.
[12] James Nesbitt interview: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*.

understanding of the trauma itself.[13] By examining the event itself in detail[14] I would argue that Greengrass' film provides a similar functional space to that of the guided narrative journey of remembrance within a clinical setting – a point I will I return to later on in this paper.

One of the underlying aspects of narratives around manmade traumas such as Bloody Sunday is the psychological need to create a black and white version of events, one with clearcut victims and perpetrators who engage in clearly amoral and/or unethical behaviour without any regard for the consequences of their actions. Such a polarised account of history allows little room for movement across the opinion divide and certainly no room to consider that the perpetrators may in fact be victims of circumstance themselves. Understandably, such histories, in which both groups cast the other in the role of perpetrator, can also lead to continued resentments towards either party.[15] Reconciliation, on the other hand, requires that both sides are able to accept a *joint* history irrespective of their role. This is not possible within an ontological dynamic that favours one group's narrative over the other.

Part of the continued trauma around Bloody Sunday is the result of disabled history. Essentially this is an effect of a conflict between what Joep Leerssen refers to as 'society remembrancing' or 'official history' and 'community remembrancing'[16]. Monumental in mode, 'society remembrancing' is marked by what could best be termed an 'agreed forgetting', that is, it ties up loose ends and turns history into 'the past'. In contrast, 'community remembrancing', with its emphasis on victim suffering, disables the past tense of history. It is this latter mode that has

[13] Luke Gibbons, 'History without the Talking Cure: Bloody Sunday as "Modern Event"', *Hidden Truths: Bloody Sunday 1972*, ed. Trisha Ziff (Santa Monica: 1998), Michael Hanna, *Misconceptualizations of Trauma* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2003), p.19, John P Wilson, *Trauma, Transformation and Healing: An Integrative Approach to Theory, Research, and Post-Traumatic Therapy*. (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1989), p.203.

[14] Rather than its aftermath, as do films such as McGovern's *Sunday*, released in the same week.

[15] Nyla R. Branscombe, Ben Slugoski and Diane M. Kappen, 'The Measurement of Collective Guilt: What It Is and What It Is Not', *Collective Guilt: International Perspectives*, eds. Nyla R Branscombe and Bertjan Doosje (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.18–19.

[16] Joep Leerssen, 'Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance', *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.215.

dominated accounts of Bloody Sunday. Leerssen points out that this mode 'resists revisions and has a pious sense of its established truths'[17] and while this is not necessarily a bad thing *per se* it does tend to engender a sense of moral outrage around the event that does little to promote the open discussions required for true reconciliation. In addition to this, the constant re-performance of the past in the present further entrenches the accepted status quo, further alienating the perpetrators from their own history and rendering them increasingly unable to access the historical space from which to acknowledge fault, which is the opposite of what is intended. The iterate nature of 'community remembrance' thus stalls the acceptance of collective guilt which is necessary for the success of any process of reconciliation.

In their studies of the mechanism of collective guilt in relation to ethno-political war crimes such as the Holocaust or, more recently, the ethnic cleansing during the Bosnian-Serbian conflict, Nyla Branscombe et al have found that:

> Acceptance of collective group guilt is greatest when the focus is on the ingroup's [perpetrators] role in perpetrating the harm done compared to when the focus is on the suffering experienced by the outgroup [victims]. With the assignment of collective guilt, the focus is shifted to the outgroup, and the emphasis is on how members of that group should feel about their group's harmful actions towards the in-group.… Collective guilt acceptance involves a belief that one's group has done wrong to another group with the guilt reflecting what *we* have done.[18]

By positioning his film as one of 'reconciliation', Paul Greengrass is essentially operating within the parameters of collective guilt acceptance and as such he is required to reopen discussions and to bring the story into the grey areas between both sides. This, in effect, acts as a re-rupturing of the initial event requiring both 'victims' and 'perpetrators' to confront their own levels of culpability in the conflict that followed. *Bloody Sunday* is, thus, not just a film that speaks to a single event but one that promotes a

[17] Joep Leerssen, 'Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance', p.220.
[18] Nyla R. Branscombe, Ben Slugoski and Diane M. Kappen, 'The Measurement of Collective Guilt: What It Is and What It Is Not', *Collective Guilt: International Perspectives*, eds. Nyla R Branscombe and Bertjan Doosje (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.18.

wider acceptance of collective guilt around the whole of the 'Troubles'. As such we must consider that Greengrass' portrayal not only ruptures the accepted narratives surrounding a key moment in the conflict but also ruptures the perception that the 'Troubles' is somehow all the fault of the British. By suggesting that some of the blame for the ongoing violence may, in fact, be internal, *Bloody Sunday* challenges the dominant mythos of 'Troubles' related cinema. By concentrating only on the twenty-four hours around the event, rather than showing it as 'continual history', contextualising it within a framework of prior Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) violence at the 1968 civil rights march in Derry and the psychological violence of the Widgery Inquiry, Greengrass has to a large extent[19] freed the event from the weight of politics that surrounds it. This is not to say that *Bloody Sunday* discredits the accounts of those Derry citizens present at the march. Nor does it justify the actions of the British army on the day or – contrary to the opinion of critics such as Eoghan Harris[20] – justify subsequent IRA reprisals. Rather it seems that Greengrass understands innately that Bloody Sunday has come to signify more in the Anglo-Irish realpolitik than just one event. By bringing us back to that 'one event' the film takes a step back and requires the audience to make (or attempt to make) their own sense of what happened that day and how it could have occurred. This encourages the viewer to create a new foundational myth. In effect the film mimics the position of remove that one expects from a psychologist within the clinical therapeutic environment.

Within that clinical environment the psychologist facilitates the movement through trauma to the point of integration, which I call the moment of 'coherent history'. What one might then expect to follow is a work of mourning in which this 'coherent history' becomes 'cathartic history'. In order to achieve a cathartic drama which transforms 'inability to mourn into ability to mourn',[21] Greengrass here must transform the

[19] Bloody Sunday, as an event, is so deeply connected to Anglo-Irish relations and politics that it would be an impossible task to free it completely.
[20] Ruth Dudley Edwards, 'When the Real Victim Is Truth', *The Daily Mail* (2002), 8 January, Eoghan Harris, 'Why No Enniskillen Movie on Protestant Suffering?', *Sunday Independent* 20 January 2002, Damien Kiberd, 'This Film Will Really Make Your Blood Boil', *The Sunday Business Post* 13 January 2002, Helen Murray, 'Northern Protestants Acting the Part', *Sunday Tribune* 13 January 2002, Kathy Sheridan, 'About Bloody Time', *The Irish Times* 19 January 2002.
[21] Richard Kuhns, *Tragedy: Contradiction and Repression* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1991) p.25.

inability to remember into an ability to remember by piecing together fractured remembrances. Functioning in a way similar to the guided narrative in the therapeutic setting, *Bloody Sunday* attempts to integrate the fractured remembrances of both sides of the Bloody Sunday story in order to create a more 'whole' narrative around the event.[22] To do this Greengrass brings us back to the moment just prior to the rupture and then takes us through the event play-by-play based on news footage, eyewitness reports, submissions to the Saville Inquiry and parliamentary documents relating to the affair. He employs a range of devices from style and script to character choice to (re)assemble a *mise-en-scène* that portrays as best as possible both the sense of confusion on the day and a story that both sides can share.

Playing on the concept of journalistic immediacy and unbiased reportage much of the aesthetic for this film is based around the establishment of an 'on-the-ground' point of view that depicts event simply 'as what they are'. In order to create this point of view Greengrass employs a limited *cinéma vérité* mode of filmmaking. Such a realist approach is one that requires filmmakers to place their subject within a natural environment and to capture as much footage and sound as possible in order to tell their story. In essence this is a style of filmmaking that mimics aspects of news reportage. It is also a style of filmmaking, like photojournalism, that is marked by an intrinsic acceptance of the limitations of what can be captured. In this mode, dialogue is often unscripted or loosely scripted ensuring that actors respond to events as they might in real-life. Greengrass extended this concept of 'real-life response' to the use of non-actors – such as ex-SAS officer Simon Mann (Colonel Wilford)[23] – who had personal experience of the roles they undertook in the film. He used Derry residents, many of whom had been present on the day, to recreate the march, and hired ex-British Army soldiers, all of whom had undertaken a tour in the

[22] It must be noted that, as with any film, some aspects of the decision to march that day are left out of the film, notably the objection of Civil Rights Leader John Hume who, as noted by Annmarie Hourihane, feared exactly the kind of violence that occurred. Annmarie Hourihane, 'Know Him from Adam', *The Sunday Tribune* 13 January 2002.

[23]Ruth Barton made special mention of Simon Mann's casting in 'Irish National Cinema', *National Cinemas*, ed. Susan Hayward (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p.172, as did Damien Kiberd in 'This Film Will Really Make Your Blood Boil'.

North, to portray the regular army and paratroopers deployed that day.[24] The interactions of people within these groups and their responses to the action in the film were unscripted in order to ensure that their dialogue remained action driven and was appropriate to their role. Key examples of this are the reaction of British military personnel to orders and their environment as well as their descriptions of life in the North. The sense of authenticity that these unscripted encounters create is enhanced through the use of a naturalistic soundtrack to the film in which conversational dialogue overlaps, snatches of unrelated background dialogue are overheard, or words are simply lost in the noise (including the important order to pullout). The fracturing of the film's aural footing in this manner is emphasised by the absence of a non-diegetic soundtrack that would ordinarily serve to facilitate our emotional and intellectual comprehension of the film.

Similarly, the visual elements of *Bloody Sunday* destabilise our accepted knowledge of the day. At a basic level the use of fast-paced and sometimes disjointed editing – jumping between different factions on the day, seemingly in real-time – gives the movie a sense of urgency and confusion that a more recognisably formal structure would have lacked. It is the camera work and lighting, conforming to the realist mode, that really serve to create a sense of a 'new' history. Often the camera appears to be 'with' the central characters of the film, rarely shooting outside their direct sphere of influence, as they move through their day. Points of contact, verbal (including the naming of another area or central character) and physical, are used as a means of connecting one place or person to the next. There are also very few establishing shots within the film giving the impression of the audience being dropped into the midst of the scene. This is emphasised by Greengrass' habit of happening upon his actors in mid-conversation (often the camera makes its way through a door or shoots through a window). In turn, this makes the 'unnatural' (for the cinema) editorial jumps appear as effortless extensions of the previous scene. However naturalised they may be, these sharp breaks also create compartments within the story that examine the different contexts within which each group was operating on the day. Hence we have the perspective of the citizens of Free Derry, that of the paratroopers behind the walls, the British Army at Headquarters, the RUC and leaders of the civil rights movement. What is evident from each of these perspectives is the manner

[24] Don Mullan in: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews* and Tony Keily, '30.1.72', *Film Ireland*, 85 (2002): 15.

in which each side has come to view the other. The film's focus on Ivan Cooper as mediator and, by extension, a figure of reconciliation as he interacts with community members and attempts to mediate for the civil rights movement with the official forces of the RUC and the British Army, allows the film to flow *between* these different narratives rather than pit them one against the other. The result is a sense of the extant stories intertwining into a meta-narrative of the day.

Once the march is underway, Greengrass extends the journalistic element of *cinéma vérité* further in the sequences depicting the riot at the barricades and the scenes of panic once it is evident that the military is firing live rounds. In order to achieve this, Greengrass captured the events of the march, riot and shootings from multiple perspectives, sending a team of cameramen into the crowd with handheld cameras and instructing them to shoot what they could in natural light amidst the action. Further, he gave no warning to the cameramen or crowd about when the first shots would be fired, creating a situation in which people responded naturally. This in turn meant that the cameramen became part of the ensuing melee,[25] deliberately recreating 'the *disadvantage* of the TV reporter'.[26] The effect of this stylistic device is to lend a sense of immediacy to the footage that Greengrass uses in the film, grounding it within the time it depicts. Here, the past is allowed to be the past.

The decision to create a narrative 'disadvantage' in this manner is a significant choice when one considers that much of the internationally available narrative surrounding the events of Bloody Sunday is actually formed from press photographs and television news footage. Highlighting the drawbacks of this has two implications: firstly for the existing trauma narrative, and secondly for the idea that Greengrass' film is in effect mimicking the re-narrativisation aspect of trauma therapy. By bringing to our attention the uncaptured footage, the audience is asked to consider the idea of 'missing' images (missing memories) that are absent not through intent but through circumstance. From this we are left to wonder what those images may have shown and how their absence has affected our interpretation of the event. Further it reduces the 'truth'[27] of the image to that of simulacrum creating a disjointed movement from event to depiction to remembrance to narrative. Such a disjointed movement disrupts viewers'

[25] Paul Greengrass: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*.
[26] Tony Keily, '30.1.72', p.15.
[27] By this I mean not that the images are contrived and somehow depict a falsified version of events but rather 'truth' in its full epistemological sense.

ability to take refuge in any previously accepted history of the event, helping to break the cycle of trauma as a 'wound-licking impulse which returns to, and revives, the painful memory in an ongoing recurrence'.[28] This effect is actually strengthened by the staging of iconic press photographs from the day amidst the action, in particular the image of Father Daly waving a white handkerchief as Jackie Duddy's body is carried to safety (taken by Italian war photographer Flavio Grimaldi) and a shot of Bernard (Barney) McGuigan's dead body (taken by Gilless Peress).[29]

In addition to these reproduced photographs Greengrass recreated scenes from published eyewitness accounts of the day, notably those of the crowd tackling a gunman out of the action and a scene in which an RUC officer plants nail bombs on the dead body of Gerry Donaghy.[30] Within the hectic

[28] Joep Leerssen, 'Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance', p.220.
[29] Marion McKeone, 'A Black and White Atrocity', *The Sunday Tribune* 27 January 2002.
[30] This was actually a true contention as a submission to the Saville Inquiry makes clear:

> Mr Gallagher QC, for the natural siblings, submits that two factors warrant their separate representation of his interests. They point out that it has been alleged that he [Gerard Donaghy], alone of the deceased and wounded, was found with weapons on his person, namely, four nail bombs were found in his pockets while being taken to hospital. In turn, it is alleged on his behalf that the bombs were planted by either the Police or Army. Thus, they argue, as Mr Donaghy has been singled out for having weapons in disputed

pace of the film the stillness of these images and scenes appear almost out of place, drawing attention to themselves and, consequently, to their memorial role within the formation of 'Bloody Sunday' as remembered history.

A further aspect of the potency of these images, in particular those that recreate photographs taken on the day, is that they are themselves a part of the contested history of the event. With the exception of the scene involving a gunman in the crowd, they are in direct conflict with the 'official' history of the event as found by the Widgery Inquiry and yet, in the case of the recreated photographs, operate within the memorial space that official history occupies. Indeed, these scenes caused controversy at the time of the film's release with some of the paratroopers who had been involved in Bloody Sunday continuing to deny that they had ever taken place.[31] The scene with the gunman, however, provides a third site of 'history' between the official remembrance and the community remembrance. The British Army have long alleged that Provisional IRA (PIRA) members had infiltrated the march and had fired on soldiers. For their part, the marchers have always denied that this was the case. Along with scenes in which Ivan Cooper pointedly asks members of the PIRA to stay away, the presence of this gunman backs up the British Army assertions. By counteracting this with shots that clearly show the response of the crowd and the disarming of the gunman before he can take any action Greengrass also appears to confirm the marchers' version of events, that no shots were fired from the crowd and that the intent of the march had been peaceful protest. Having said this, the inclusion of this scene and the earlier scenes requires that 'community remembrance' acknowledge that the PIRA were present at the march and were armed and that the army were justified in making that assumption. This scene is important in that, by conceding a point – the presence of PIRA members – it allows an opening for those on the side of the army to gain access to a history that has previously been closed to them.

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circumstances, the task of representing him will be a heavy one requiring separate representation.

From 'Rulings and Observations of the Tribunal on the Matters Raised at the Preliminary Hearing on 20th and 21st of July 1998' dated 24/07/98. Available from the Saville Inquiry website at webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101103103930/http://bloody-sunday-inquiry.org/ (accessed 11 November, 2011).

[31] Damien Kiberd, 'This Film Will Really Make Your Blood Boil', Catherine O'Mahony, '"Bloody Fantasy" Reports Lead to Call for Boycott of Associated Newspaper Titles', *Sunday Business Post* 13 January 2002.

Another way in which Greengrass creates access points into the story is the careful way in which he chooses his central characters in order to create what is in effect a triple stranded story that helps to break down both the usual narrative dynamics of victim/perpetrator and Catholic/Protestant. He does this by twinning key protagonists – one from each side – in the story who were of similar experience, age and psychological positions on the day. Each character is then used as the access point to their particular group's perspective and acts as agents of interconnectedness, operating both as individuals and as a 'whole'. The focus on these 'real people' characters further blurs distinction between the mimetic event *Bloody Sunday* and the historical artefact, lending greater credence to Greengrass' narrative, and raising questions about our own. Our 'accepted history' of the event is further challenged by these characters being positioned in such a way as to shift the psychological impetus of the stereotypes we expect them to align with.[32] I will now take a closer look at these twinned characters and the roles they play both within the story and in the wider context of the trauma therapy based narrative.

The first pair I will look at are Ivan Cooper and Major General Ford. As representatives of the ruling elite these men represent the opposing political ideals of the day. Despite the fact that they never meet, their situational relationship is one of antagonism. In between these two men we have Superintendent Lagan and Brigadier Maclellan (Nicholas Farrell) who, rather than being oppositional, represent the middle ground of the film. Although they answer to Stormont and the British Government, respectively, their goal is to maintain security and to act with a degree of caution. In this respect they provide us with empathetic authority figures. The final pairing, that of Gerry Donaghy (Declan Duddy) and Soldier 027 (Mike Edwards), represent those caught up in the conflict. As with Cooper and Ford, they represent opposite sides of the divide. As with Lagan and Maclellan, they also provide us with sympathetic figures on the ground. In essence they are both victims of their situations. During the course of the film they both raise questions for the viewer as to their own side's motivations on that day and to the continuing violence. Through these pairings, Greengrass creates an intersection between the major forces at play on the day: politics, security, and real-world experience.

[32] With the clear exception of Major General Ford (Tim Pigott-Smith), about whom I will have more to say.

As I have previously mentioned the film's main protagonist is the Civil Rights leader and Derry politician Ivan Cooper. He is presented in the film as a charismatic, personable and optimistic man, his natural *bonhomie* making him clearly popular with and trusted by his primarily Catholic constituents. As the local member and as one of the main organisers of the Civil Rights March that day Cooper's role is to act as an intermediary between all groups: the more radical elements within Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA) who are determined to march to the Guildhall despite the military presence in the area; the PIRA; the young boys on the barricades; the RUC; and through them the military. The film's focus on the conciliatory nature of Cooper as man and politician, his consistent message that this was a peaceful protest and his determination to create an environment in which the march could safely go ahead, places an emphasis on the difference between the political activism of the civil rights movement and the later IRA/PIRA/Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)/Ulster Defence Force (UDF) violence. Central to his concern is 'the right to march in our own city', a desire, coming from him, that is unmarred by the geopolitical connotations of place that takes up much of the psychological space in other 'Troubles' dramas.

James Nesbitt as Ulster politician and civil rights advocate Ivan Cooper

As a Protestant focal point within what is traditionally a Catholic story, however, Cooper is also an agent of rupture through re-narrativisation, creating a secondary situational opposition within the meta-narrative Greengrass creates. The choice to focus on Cooper is also significant in that it positions the Civil Rights movement as a political

rather than Nationalist/Republican or Catholic cause. As such, he also represents insider opposition to the policies of the ruling Stormont government of the day that deliberately disadvantaged Catholics. So, whilst acknowledging the fact that the issues that NICRA protested almost exclusively affected Catholics, by focusing on the character of a Protestant politician as a leader of the fight for rights, Greengrass has moved the story beyond the traditional sectarian nature of 'Troubles' issues. He also provides an empathetic entry point to the history of the march for Protestants who may feel excluded by the Catholic emphasis the day has taken.

By making the events of the day his centre of attention, Greengrass creates a situation in which the usual narrative of loss around Bloody Sunday, which focuses on the families of victims, can be dispensed with. Instead it is Cooper who provides us with an idea of the personal sense of loss that Bloody Sunday meant. Through this we are able to focus not only on the loss of life but also upon the loss of a political solution. By the end of the film the viewer gets the sense that Cooper is weighed down with a sense of responsibility and foreboding for the future. Along with images of young men lined up to join the PIRA, Cooper marks the moment of rupture with a direct comment to the British Government through the media:

> I just want to say this to your British Government. You know what you've done don't you. You've just destroyed the Civil Rights Movement and you've given the IRA the biggest victory it will ever have. All over this city tonight, young men, boys, will be joining the IRA, and you will reap a whirlwind. Thank you.[33]

As a result of his position as politician, as Protestant and as Derry resident, Cooper is one of the mechanisms by which Greengrass combines the official and community remembrances. In doing so the film creates a shared memorial space and re-emphasises the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland that saw all people as equals, giving the film a greater sense of power. The character of Ivan Cooper then comes to embody the potential for resolved trauma.

In contrast to the natural *bonhomie* and sense of personal responsibility that characterises Ivan Cooper, we have Major General

[33] This was a scripted comment and I can find no evidence of the historical Cooper having spoken those words, though he does mention their power in the DVD commentary of the film.

Robert Ford, who was Director of Ground Forces in the North at the time.[34] From the outset Ford is characterised as a cold and arrogant man who sees the residents of Derry as a belligerent group of people determined to make trouble. Further to this, he also personifies the colonial mindset of the British Army at the time. Where Cooper is continually forced to justify his political position of power – repeatedly stating that he is 'a member of parliament' in the face of the unwavering military and police presence – Ford *is* the authority here. Ford, unlike Cooper, is not a mediator speaking to all sides. His character is one for whom the concept of negotiation (either with other military or RUC figures) has been removed. His sarcastic dismissal of local authority (in the character of the RUC Superintendent Lagan) offers further proof.

Tim Pigott-Smith as General Ford

This dismissal of local authority also extends to the manner in which he treats information that Brigadier Maclellan gives him. It is as if he is unbothered by the real-life aspects of the exercise. Ford's goal is made clear in an exchange between him and an officer explaining the deployment of troops on the day:

> **Officer**: [The paras are] ready to move in if there is any trouble.
> **Ford**: I don't think there's any doubt about that, there will be.

[34] Kathy Sheridan, 'About Bloody Time'.

His behaviour at the frontline – his blatant disregard for the order to hold by command, and his appearing almost to cheer as the military move in on the rioters – marks him as a man who relishes the idea of military confrontation, the very antithesis of the political ideals of the Civil Rights Movement. The above exchange also makes it clear that Ford is determined from the outset that his forces will go in to Derry (which he markedly refers to by its colonial name 'Londonderry'). Effectively a declaration of intent, it accords with a later account of the day by Lord Carver, the Chief of General Staff at the time, who, in his memoirs, expressed surprise that more people were not killed. Carver states explicitly that they had expected the number to be 'at least thirty'.[35]

The political aspects of the Army's actions are further underscored by Ford's awareness of the importance of propaganda even before the march has commenced. In an early conversation at Command Headquarters he implies that the decision to pick up the Derry Young Hooligans during the march is in effect a propaganda exercise stating that 'winning the propaganda war is essential'.[36] The speed with which Ford speaks to the press, as opposed to the late night press conference of Cooper, confirms this stance. This aspect of the creation of the 'official remembrance' haunts Major General Ford's interactions with the press immediately after the riot and shooting has ended. Standing amidst the debris he speaks to the press, denying the use of excessive force and holding the line that there were only three deaths despite being confronted by an American journalist who states that he has personally seen more bodies. Ford's propagandistic position is one of plausible deniability in which the discrepancy between the actual and his reported death tolls can later be explained by an understandable absence of information.

As *Bloody Sunday* does not follow the Widgery Inquiry, Ford, with his impassive manner and perfunctory replies in this scene, comes almost solely to represent the Army's position. Through this we can see that, like Cooper's actions, Ford's are grounded in the politics of the day. As such,

[35] Katy Jones quoted in Sheridan, 'About Bloody Time'.

[36] Indeed 'at a meeting on 1 February, 1972 the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, told Lord Chief Justice Widgery that "it had to be remembered that we were in Northern Ireland fighting not only a military war but a propaganda war"'. The confidential document recording this conversation was discovered in the Public Record Office in London on 4 August, 1995'. Patrick Grant, *Literature, Rhetoric and Violence in Northern Ireland 1968–98* (Hampshire (UK), New York (USA): Palgrave, 2001) pp.44–45.

within the psychological space of the film, Ford comes to represent the British position as a whole. The entirely unsympathetic rendering of his character can then be viewed as a function of the 'closed' nature of the British narrative surrounding the event. Not only are the actions of Ford within the film antagonistic to the goals of NICRA, but within the function of a trauma narrative his character comes to represent the unacknowledged and unresolved trauma of the day and, to some extent, the fears that the findings of the Saville Inquiry would uphold those of the earlier Widgery Inquiry.

While Ivan Cooper and Major General Ford represent the opposite ends of the spectrum both politically and historically, Superintendent Lagan (Gerard McSorley) and Brigadier Maclellan (Nicholas Farrell) offer the viewer a midground. Whilst neither man has a large role in the film, or is a particularly sympathetic character, it is through them we gain an insight into the local concerns around and planning of security on the day. As with all of the pairings they also represent the British and Northern Irish narrative of the day. Superintendent Lagan is a particularly interesting character in this respect. Like Ivan Cooper, he is a man out of place within both the community and official remembrances of the day. Lagan is a Catholic, an uncommon occurrence in the RUC, even more so for the position of power he holds.[37] While his character is largely ineffective, snidely derided by Ford because of his Catholicism ('so nice to have a man on the inside'), his inclusion nonetheless challenges the Catholic-as-victim, Protestant-as-perpetrator based narrative the story of *Bloody Sunday* usually follows. Lagan's actions throughout the day also break with the traditional narrative that sees the RUC as a contributing element within the traumatic dynamic of Bloody Sunday. Our introduction to Lagan, a meeting with Ivan Cooper in which he reiterates that the march is banned, makes it clear that whilst his role is to uphold the law, he is also a realist. When it becomes obvious that the march will go ahead despite the ban, he is willing to enter into negotiations in an attempt to limit the possibility of violence. He extends this further by ensuring that Cooper is aware that the army will have a presence behind the wall and that a barricade has been set up at the Guildhall. Having got assurances from Cooper that the march will be diverted away from the Guildhall, Lagan then, as his job requires, liaises with the armed forces. He informs them that the intended march is going ahead, of the new route it will take, and that it is intended as a peaceful

[37] David McKittrick notes that the RUC were 'more than 90% Protestant throughout its history', *Making Sense of the Troubles*, p.11.

protest by the residents of Free Derry. He also receives assurances from the army that they will use minimum force as they go about their operations. It is from Brigadier Maclellan that he receives this assurance.

Brigadier Maclellan, unlike Major General Ford, had been posted to Northern Ireland for quite some time by the time the events of Bloody Sunday take place. As a result he has an interest in ensuring good community relations and, like Lagan, the avoidance of violent confrontation where possible. Maclellan thus offers us a moderate character within the British Army on the day, again a role that conflicts with the dominant trauma narrative surrounding the event. In his dealings with Major General Ford there is a clear sense that he does not completely agree with his superior's assessment of the situation. For example, in direct contrast to the exchange between Ford and the communications operator at Headquarters given above, in the briefing prior to the march, Maclellan makes it clear that the paratroopers will be sent in 'only if violence and only if there is clear separation between the march proper'.
As the breakaway section of the march begins to throw stones and bottles at the forces at Barricade 12, tensions begin to build at Command Headquarters. An exchange between Maclellan and Lagan at this point serves both to highlight McLellan's struggle to understand and control the situation from Headquarters and both men's desire to prevent the situation from escalating further:

> **Maclellan:** Use gas at discretion.
> **Lagan:** What are you doing?
> **Maclellan:** I'm trying to use minimum force.

McLellan's direct reference to Lagan's earlier request also indicates that, unlike Ford, he has respect for Lagan as the head of the local authorities. When the use of water cannons and tear gas at the barricades fails to disperse the rioters, Maclellan asks if they have separation between the rioters and the rest of the march. Ground communications reply that '[they] have as much separation as [they're] going to get'. It is McLellan, here, who gives the order to hold. In this manner it is through McLellan that we come to some understanding of the way in which communications between command at Headquarters and the positioned ground forces on the day broke down.[38] Further, it is important to note that the order to hold is given

[38] As a point of interest Greengrass extends this motif in his later film *United 93* (2006, Fr/UK/USA) about the hijacked plane brought down by its passengers on 11 September 2001.

at almost precisely the same time as the first live round is heard, cracking over the noise of the riot. Thus, this juncture in the film also serves to emphasise the very real difference between the on-the-ground picture and that of Command Central operating from a remote location.

At the same time we see that Cooper and Ford, who are also present at the scene, are themselves operating from a 'removed' position. I accept that this is a contentious statement to make. It is, however, a view that *Bloody Sunday*, in my reading, supports. Cooper at all stages stays with the main body of the march, although he does send people to attempt to clear the breakaway section of the march from the barricades. He does this in order to make a point about the power of peaceful protest, stating emphatically:

> **Cooper**: If we're going to give those young lads a future we have to show them that non-violence works. If we don't it won't just be rocks they're throwing.

Unfortunately this ideal clashes with Ford's desire for confrontation. Standing at a remove from the barricades, Ford is a cheerleader for the paratroopers, shouting 'Go the Paras' as he returns to the safety of his vehicle. With this in mind I turn to the final pairing in the film, a pairing that represents the on-the-ground perspectives of a participant in the march (and later at the riot at the barricades) and of a member of the paratroopers.

It is through this pairing of Gerry Donaghy (Declan Duddy) and Soldier 027 (Mike Edwards) that Greengrass explores the greater psychological issues around the atmosphere in Derry on that day and the trauma as a whole. Both characters have direct experience of the difference between a 'policy' in theory and the challenges it creates for those affected by it once in practice. Gerry Donaghy has experienced first hand internment without charge; it is made clear on the day of the march that he has only been released from prison for three weeks having been gaoled for rioting. Similarly Soldier 027 and his company have experienced abuse from Derry residents simply for being members of the British Army. Despite this, for both Donaghy and Soldier 027 the events of Bloody Sunday create a crisis of conscience. Both of them overtly question the rationale behind violent confrontation either through action – Donaghy's character is seen trying to get people away from the barricades – or through words – Soldier 027 questions the logic behind the operation when those they are after are 'just kids'. It is clear, too, that both see that there is a more rational, civic-led approach to ending the 'Troubles', a view that is

reflective both of the aims of the Civil Rights Movement at the time and of the political approach towards a resolution of the 'Troubles' that the peace process represents. Within the film the pull between their desires and the circumstances in which they find themselves is enacted on two levels. On one level both men serve to provide an on-the-ground view of the march from the level of participant: Gerry Donaghy was in the fray at Barricade 12, whilst Solider 027 is a member of Paratrooper Regiment 1 (Para 1) responsible for the shootings. It is through Greengrass' portrayal of their movements leading up to and during the march and the subsequent riot that we gain an insight into the contributing factors that led to the shootings.

Throughout the day we see Donaghy and his mates gearing up to attend the march. Despite a conversation with Father Daly (Don Mullan) in which he exhorts them to be on their best behaviour during the march, we see that there is a strong feeling that there is a need to 'stand our ground' and not be bullied by the authorities. There is a very real sense that these young men are, to some degree, caught between the position of the PIRA leader to whom Ivan Cooper speaks – who states that 'it's all very well for [Cooper] sitting pretty with [his] Westminster paycheck each week. Marching is not gonna solve this' – and the desire to live a life separate from the 'nationalist cause'. Again it is Donaghy's character, engaged to a Protestant girl but participating in the march and riot, who embodies this conflict.

While Donaghy appears reluctant to participate in any further 'troublemaking' the events of the day lead him on the opposite path. During the march glimpses are caught of military lookouts on the walls of Derry. The presence of the military lends a different atmosphere to the aim of the march and, when it is diverted, a group consisting of Donaghy's friends who have persuaded him to join them in breaking from the main body of the march move toward Barricade 12 whilst others unwittingly follow in their wake. The action of this group could be construed as deliberately inflammatory, particularly since they immediately start to taunt the security forces, but it is also clear that although they expect to provoke a response, they do not expect the violent reaction they get. As Paul Greengrass points out in the DVD commentary there was a 'thinking [that] you were safe if you threw stones, you didn't get shot if you threw stones, you got shot if you threw nail-bombs'.[39] Through the tenor of their

[39] Interview with Paul Greengrass: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews.* Further to this, conversations with my parents, both of whom have direct

conversations that day and the manner in which they respond to the diversion of the march, egging each other on to break away, we can see that their attitude comes from previous experience that shows this behaviour to be 'safe' and, more importantly, 'justifiable'.

On the other side of the Derry wall we are brought into the world of the ground forces and the paratroopers. Here we see how orders are missed and/or misinterpreted; how commanding officers prepare their units for action, and the sheer logistical confusion of such a large-scale operation. While some attention is given to the commanders, Greengrass primarily uses the scenes behind the wall to concentrate on the psyche of the soldiers who go into Derry. He does so by focusing on Soldier 027 who is working Communications for the unit that goes into Glenfada Park. Huddled with his group we are made aware of how little the soldiers know of what is happening on the other side of the wall. From this position the sheer noise of the march overwhelms much of the dialogue and there is a palpable element of fear on the part of some of the soldiers gathered. Amidst the chaos of this situation the soldiers in Para One discuss their sentiments around the operation to pick up the Derry Young Hooligans. As I mentioned before, it is through these discussions that we get some idea of the experiences of this group of young soldiers in Derry. Rather than couching these discussions as general conversation, however, Greengrass utilises the questioning figure of Soldier 027 to create a dialogue that allows the viewer to come to a deeper understanding of the 'cause and effect' nature of the soldiers' attitudes. Specifically this occurs around discussions on the reasons for picking up the Derry Young Hooligans, a title, it must be noted, that fosters an environment around the operation in which violent confrontation is expected. In this we can see how the attitude of Ford comes to be passed down to those on the ground. Despite this, Soldier 027 expresses doubts about 'kids' being considered as enemies, a view his fellow unit members vehemently shout down, giving examples of being spat at and abused by 'kids' in Derry despite 'coming in to help them' as evidence enough for the operation. It becomes apparent during the discussions that these soldiers are as much intent on 'showing them [the residents of Derry] who's boss' in retaliation for this abuse as they are in carrying out their orders. Soldier 027, however, provides the viewer with an empathetic character within the Paratrooper Regiment. Like the young

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experience of marches in Northern and Southern Ireland during the period leading up to Bloody Sunday, back up Greengrass' contention.

men of Derry, he too feels caught between the force of his experiences and his desire to perform his duties in line with the ethics of protection.

From the above we can see the way in which the roles of Soldier 027 and Gerry Donaghy provide the viewer with a means of coming to an understanding of the environment in which this event unfolded. In light of this aspect of their characters' function, it is in their other role as 'victim' and 'perpetrator' that they have a greater significance within the re-narrativisation of Bloody Sunday. This significance stems from the fact that they provide us with a direct route between the events depicted in the film and the subsequent trauma narratives that built up as a result of the unacknowledged history of the day, whilst simultaneously providing a link to the Saville Inquiry.

As an initial participant in the riot at Barricade 12 Donaghy is a symbolic scapegoat for the British Army, providing evidence of exactly the attitude they claimed was endemic in Northern Ireland at the time. Further, as a recently released rioter he is more than likely on the list of the Derry Young Hooligans the paratroopers are charged with picking up and, as such, legitimises the army's presence on the day of the march. Donaghy is also a dual 'victim' not only in the physical sense but also in the fact that, in death, he is made a scapegoat for the military's actions when nail-bombs are planted on his corpse (in Greengrass' film by RUC officers) in order to back up the army contention that nail bombs had been thrown that day. Eyewitness accounts from the day refute this claim, much less that Gerry Donaghy was carrying nail bombs on his person, and it is these that Greengrass points to as a reason for the inclusion of this scene in the movie.[40]

Soldier 027, on the other hand, provides us with the counterpoint to Donaghy. As the Communications operator for his unit it is actually Soldier 027 who gives the command that a ceasefire has been called *prior* to Para One entering Glenfada Park. Despite this knowledge, at the film's end we witness him corroborating the evidence of his fellow unit members. In his excellent analysis of both the film and the criticism it received Tony Keily

[40] Despite repeated statements from civilian eyewitnesses who consistently claimed that there were no nail bombs present that day, in its final report the Saville Inquiry concluded that Donaghy was the 'probable exception' in a group of unarmed people. See the testimonies available at: Saville, *Website of the Saville Inquiry*, Saville, *Saville Inquiry Findings*, 2010, available: report.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org/volume01/chapter003/#the-report, (accessed 20 June 2010).

also points out that this character's eventual failure to become the 'conventional Good Thief' within the active narrative of the film is one of its strong points as it underlines 'what his [Greengrass'] film isn't doing' and that that 'is what hurts here'.[41] It is Soldier 027, through his *active* participation in both the incursion and subsequent cover up, rather than Ford, who becomes the site around which the film coalesces the later trauma of unacknowledged history. Having set the character up in this manner, however, Greengrass is equally quick to stop his viewers segueing neatly from his film to the pre-existing trauma narratives. The intertitles that close the film point out that Soldier 027 has since recanted and is currently in witness protection. According to Greengrass 'he is the only soldier to give an account that differs from the standard British Army [one]'.[42]

The staging of these two scenes – the planting of nail bombs on Donaghy and Soldier 027's moral failings both at the scene and later in questioning – immediately invoke the findings of the Widgery Inquiry. The film, however, is made within the spirit of the Saville Inquiry and these scenes actually serve as a locus for discussions about the role of that inquiry in breaking the cycle of the trauma by creating a 'coherent history' of the day. The location of the expected fulfilment of Soldier 027's conventional role as 'Good Thief' within the textual, rather than visual, epilogue of the film, however, indicates that Bloody Sunday, as both event and film, would remain unfinished business at least until the findings of Saville were handed down.

I would suggest, then, that the film's reception within the public and critical eye was as much a result of Greengrass' approach to the subject matter as it was to both fears and attitudes surrounding the then ongoing Saville Inquiry and the historical role of Bloody Sunday within the wider 'Troubles'. Given this, it is unsurprising to find that attitudes towards the film were split. For the most part the film was considered to be an even-handed account of the day despite some controversy around the disputed scenes mentioned above. Critics such as Gareth McClean called the film 'a masterpiece' and discussed the merits of its realistic style and unbiased nature.[43] Others noted the shift in narrative dynamic, pointing to an

[41] Tony Keily, '30.1.72', p.13.
[42] Paul Greengrass, *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*, dir. Greengrass.
[43] Gareth McLean, 'Troubles in Mind', *The Guardian* 29 January 2002, and noted in Keily, '30.1.72'.

uncharacteristically silent Bernadette Devlin as evidence.[44] On the other side of the fence Ruth Dudley Edwards of the *Daily Mail* chastised the film for its anti-British, anti-army stance.[45]

Of more interest with respect to the role *Bloody Sunday* has played within the ongoing trauma of the 'Troubles', however, is Eoghan Harris' article in the *Sunday Independent* entitled 'Why no Enniskillen movie on Protestant suffering?'[46] In this article Harris was quick to defend Dudley Edwards, claiming that people who questioned her point of view were buying into the 'national pieties' that protected the stories around events such as Bloody Sunday and therefore their portrayals, citing Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* as a further example. Further, he chastised James Nesbitt for being the 'latest to join the jostling throng of Northern Protestant thespians who have nothing good to say about their own traditions'.[47] The tenor of both Harris' and Dudley Edward's articles point less toward an issue with the contents of the film, than to a sense of disenfranchisement amongst Protestant communities surrounding public 'remembrances' of Northern Irish history. Whilst I do not agree with either Dudley Edwards or Harris' reading of the film as anti-Protestant (or anti-British for that matter), I would suggest that their reactions exemplify those of communities who have been locked out of aspects of their own history either through elision (as Nesbitt alluded to in his commentary on the film[48]) or through 'protected narratives' that favour one remembrance over another.

It is precisely because of such feelings that attempts to re-narrativise events such as Bloody Sunday, to create inclusive histories, are so important for successful trauma recovery both at the personal and national level. The evidence for this is perhaps best explained through reference to the personal experiences of the Derry residents and British Soldiers who took part in the film. Ivan Cooper, Paul Greengrass and James Nesbitt all reported that the filming had proved a cathartic experience for both groups, with each expressing that they had not understood what the other side had

[44] Annmarie Hourihane, 'Know Him from Adam'.
[45] Dudley Edwards, 'When the Real Victim Is Truth'. Dudley Edwards, also noted in: Eoghan Harris, 'Why No Enniskillen Movie on Protestant Suffering?', Kiberd, 'This Film Will Really Make Your Blood Boil', Murray, 'Northern Protestants Acting the Part', Sheridan, 'About Bloody Time'.
[46] Eoghan Harris, 'Why No Enniskillen Movie on Protestant Suffering?'
[47] Ibid.
[48] James Nesbitt in: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*, dir. Greengrass.

gone through, either on the day or throughout the 'Troubles'. By providing a narrative that enables both sides to see the contributing factors that played a role in the day and take appropriate responsibility for them the film is able to create a dynamic that allows for collective guilt acceptance to occur. Don Mullan, speaking of the film with respect to the role of Bloody Sunday within the 'Troubles' as a whole, sums this up:

> I think the fact that the inspiration ... and the motivation to make this movie happen [came] from two Englishmen is very, very significant and I think that in many ways it's part of the peace process.[49]

Or, as Greengrass succinctly put it:

> there is no hierarchy of victims … very many innocent people have died in the conflict … Catholic people and Protestant people.[50]

Writing in a commentary piece on the film in *The Guardian* Paul Greengrass observed that, after watching the reactions of the families involved in the tragedy that day at the screening as well as the positive interactions between the Derry residents and the ex-soldiers who took part in the filming, he 'thought of the core of the civil rights message – that in the future we should celebrate our diversity rather than fight over it, as we have done in the past'.[51] By creating a film that challenges the dominant mythologies around the moment of rupture created by Bloody Sunday, Greengrass moves the film from the usual closed position of its closed remembrances to a position of openness and reconciliation, and by so doing has been able to move his audience through the event. The realist style in which he has shot the film, with its allusion to the manner in which existing news footage is contextualised within both official and community remembrances**,** draws our attention to the problems of reading history from a position of trauma (either as perpetrator or victim). He further destabilises viewers' historical understanding by creating either incongruities between the roles of characters and their casting, as in the case of Cooper and Lagan, or highlighting their similarities, as with Donaghy and Soldier 027. The effect is to create a film that I believe achieves exactly the aim of the narrative drama in trauma therapy: to reconcile the 'traumatised' and

[49] Don Mullan interviewed in: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews.*
[50] Paul Greengrass in: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*, dir. Greengrass.
[51] Paul Greengrass, 'Making History', *The Guardian* 11 January 2001: 5.

'actual' stories of the day. In doing so the film opens the door for a wider reconciliation.

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Money, 'Money', *Money*: Cultural Transactions between Philip Larkin and Martin Amis

PETER MARKS

Philip Larkin was far more important to Martin Amis than Martin Amis was to Philip Larkin. Larkin appears more frequently in *Experience*, the first volume of Amis' autobiography, than any writer other than the author's father, Kingsley, and the person who might be thought of as his surrogate father, Saul Bellow. A photo in *Experience* shows Larkin, slightly menacing, standing in front of a bookcase, the caption reading simply, 'Larkin'; the poet in this context needs no further introduction. (By way of comparison, a group photograph has Robert Graves' full name). Larkin features repeatedly in Amis' critical writing, for example in *The War Against Cliché*, where he earns his own titled section – only Nabokov and Updike receive the same star treatment. Amis' extended defence of Larkin, 'The Ending: Don Juan in Hull', appears there, having been first published in the *New Yorker* in 1993. Amis also wrote the Larkin obituary for *Vanity Fair*, reproducing it later in his collection of journalism, *Visiting Mrs Nabokov and Other Excursions*. And the *Martin Amis Website* has a section on Larkin under the page titled 'Affinities', which 'features links to writers with important connections to Amis'. There, Amis gets classified a 'Larkinholic', a term neither he nor Larkin would have liked. Yet in *Selected Letters of Philip Larkin* Amis barely gets a walk-on part, and then chiefly because he is Kingsley Amis' son. Admittedly, this epistolary absence depends on Amis having lost many of the letters Larkin sent him, but the sketch Larkin produces of Amis in these letters is tellingly faint. In a 1972 effort to Norman Iles, Amis receives the briefest of character references: 'he was all right – got a first in English'.[1]

[1]Anthony Thwaite ed., *Selected Letters of Philip Larkin 1940–1985* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p.460.

If Larkin here is rather offhand about the adolescent Amis, the adult Martin remains a zesty champion of the poet. In 'The Ending' Amis comes not to bury Larkin, nor necessarily to praise him, but to act as advocate for someone now travestied by others as an almost diabolical figure. Not because Larkin is a particularly honourable man, but because Amis detests the response to revelations of Larkin's political, cultural and sexual views set out in *Selected Letters* and Andrew Motion's 1993 biography. Amis declares:

> In 1985, the year of his death, Philip Larkin was unquestionably England's official laureate, our best-loved poet since the war: better loved, *qua* poet, than John Betjeman, who was loved also for his charm, his famous giggle, his patrician bohemianism, and his televisual charisma, all of which Larkin notably lacked. Now, in 1993, Larkin is something of a pariah, or an untouchable. He who was beautiful is suddenly found to be ugly.[2]

The overreaction, Amis writes, 'has been unprecedentedly violent, as well as unprecedentedly hypocritical, tendentious and smug'.[3] I do not wish to wade into the now-cold pool of that debate, but I do want to establish biographical and textual links between the novelist regularly described as 'the best writer of his generation' and the poet sometimes seen as the best Poet Laureate Britain never had. I aim to use these connections, and a sense of Larkin and Amis *fils* as in certain respects representative of their times, to make some general claims about developments in British writing in the second half of the twentieth century. Obviously, I am painting with a very broad brush, so to add definition I will focus specifically on money – the commodity itself, as well as the title of Larkin's poem from *High Windows*, and of Amis' astringent comic novel of 1985. These works, and their respective conceptions and depictions of money, I will argue, help measure an important distance between postwar and postmodern life and literature in Britain.

The connecting thread between the two writers, of course, was Kingsley Amis. As his son reports: 'It was love, unquestionably love, on my father's part. He wanted to be with Larkin *all the time*'.[4] And from the outset, money (the spendable, hoardable kind) bound the three together,

[2] Martin Amis, *Experience* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p.153.
[3] Ibid., p.153.
[4] Ibid., p.238.

even if Martin was too young to recognise the fact. 'I was very short of money when I was a baby', writes Amis mock-pathetically in *Experience*:

> I slept in a drawer and had my baths in an outdoor sink.... Kingsley would sometimes write to Philip Larkin pleading for the loan of a fiver – or even a quid. It was really tough; but I don't remember any of it.[5]

What he does remember, from the age of four or five, and writes of in the Larkin obituary, is the odd financial ritual indulged in when the poet visited the Amis family in Swansea. Larkin, as godfather and namesake to Amis' brother Philip, would 'tip the boys':

> At first it was sixpence for Philip against threepence for Martin; years later it was tenpence against sixpence; later still it was a shilling against ninepence: always index-linked and carefully graded.[6]

He corrects this account in *Experience*, but downwards, labelling the earlier memory 'a gross exaggeration: it was fourpence for Philip and three pence for Martin'.[7] Larkin's frugality, as interpreted by the young Amis, differed alarmingly from that of Martin's own godfather, Bruce Montgomery. In the *Vanity Fair* piece Amis suggests that Larkin's 'meanness was legendary',[8] while he describes Montgomery in *Experience* as 'a legend of generosity'.[9] The obituary argues that Larkin's 'feelings about money were complicated and pleasureless. He pronounced the word *bills* as if it were a violent obscenity'.[10] And Amis adds to this personal memory the assessment that '[m]oney meant work, and there was a priestly stoicism in Larkin's devotion, or submission, to his job as Librarian at Hull'.[11] More figuratively, in *Experience* he locates in Larkin an 'emotional parsimony',[12] one he feels can be detected in Larkin's complex and slowly cooling relationship with Kingsley.

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[5] Ibid., p.44.
[6] Martin Amis, 'Philip Larkin 1922–1985', *Visiting Mrs Nabokov and Other Excursions* (London: Penguin, 1994), p.205.
[7] Ibid., p.241.
[8] Ibid., p.202.
[9] Ibid., p.242n.
[10] Ibid., p.202.
[11] Ibid., p.203.
[12] Martin Amis, *Experience*, p.245.

In both these retrospective pieces, Amis quotes the first and last stanzas of Larkin's 'Money' as a way of exploring the poet's character, his relationships, and his achievements. Particular attention is paid to money's reproach in that poem ('I am all you never had of goods and sex') itself read in contrast to Kingsley Amis' early disappearance 'past all recall, into a carwash of goods and sex'.[13] Larkin, by implication, never entered that wet, soapy world. Martin then recounts a revealing conversation he had with the poet:

> – You should spend more, Phillip.
> He didn't answer.
> – You've just bought the car and that's good. Now you –
> – I wish they wouldn't keep sending me these *bills*.
> – For the car.
> – They keep sending me these *bills*.
> – You can afford them. Now you should –
> – I wish they wouldn't keep on sending me all these *bills*.[14]

Amis works this personal interchange for comic effect, but adds a broader note, that 'it was altogether characteristic of him (of him, of his time, of his place) that having identified the difficulty he did nothing to relieve it ... he just hugged it to him'.[15] Emphasising his sense that Larkin was wary of spending money, he adds: 'Someone else would have had to get the goods and the sex. But Larkin did get the poems'.[16] For Amis, then, Larkin's emotional as well as financial parsimony signify a time and place now consigned to cultural history. In that world, a particularly English postwar environment, goods and sex, even if available, might be spurned for the best of reasons. Kingsley Amis' time in America in the late 1950s allowed relief from the pinched world of Britain, and an array of opportunities denied Larkin. Yet Kingsley's belief that 'dodging your share made you an idler and a niggard' meant that Martin's more relaxed attitude to money was dismissed as 'young, modern, ignorant, corrupt'.[17]

Still, in Larkin's case, out of this 'hugging' of difficulty came the poems. The dynamics between Larkin, money and writing generally are figured in various ways in *Experience*. In addition to Amis' character

[13] Ibid., p.244.
[14] Ibid., p.242.
[15] Ibid., p.242.
[16] Ibid., p.243.
[17] Ibid., p.185.

analysis of Larkin's by way of his supposed attitude to money, the novelist reveals that Larkin's poem 'Money' is one of his favourites. And he recalls Larkin's reaction in a letter to *his* novel of the same name:

> Unlike my father, he succeeded in finishing it. But in his reply he made it inoffensively clear that he disliked the postmodern liberties I took with the reader, and that he found the prose too dense and worked-at. Parts of the book amused him.[18]

Kingsley Amis, Gavin Keulks suggests, thought the novel 'literary blasphemy, unreadable and contemptuous'.[19] Although he did not keep Larkin's letter, Martin Amis remembers a key sentence in it that suggests a slightly more positive if only fleeting reaction from the poet: 'My big shriek came on page 275, line 3'.[20]

I will return to that big shriek shortly. But having given Amis most of the opening statements, some right of reply seems in order. In the *Selected Letters*, Larkin, having noted Amis' first in English in 1972, next mentions him more revealingly in a letter to Robert Conquest six years later: 'Martin Amis writes to say he has just returned from a mediterranean cruise: "singalongs and bingo in the Cockatoo bar" – and cock too, I suspect. Strange pleasures!'[21] The association of Amis *fils* and strange pleasures (for which read something more than singalongs and bingo) recurs the following year in a letter to Amis *père*:

> And your son Martin going on about porn in the shops: let him come up to Hull and find some. All been stamped out by police with nothing better to do. It's like the permissive society they talk about: never permitted me anything as far as I can recall.[22]

Martin of the strange pleasures is a child of that permissive age, a beneficiary of its permission. The profligate consumption of goods and sex, rejected by those like Larkin, are from his perspective greedily and unashamedly taken up by Amis and his peers, a generation set free from the economic privations and social strictures of the decades of austerity that followed World War II. The permissive society, alas, grants its licence

[18] Ibid., p.243n.
[19] Ibid., p.198.
[20] Ibid., p.243.
[21] Anthony Thwaite ed., *Selected Letters of Philip Larkin 1940–1985*, p.588.
[22] Ibid., p.596.

chiefly to the young. It is worth recalling that when sexual intercourse supposedly began in 1963, as Larkin recounts in 'Annus Mirabilis', he was already a ripe old 41; Amis was then a ripe young 14.

Whatever envy Larkin felt about Amis' easy access to pornography and bingo, his own status as a writer allows him a form of artistic reprisal. In 1981 he comments in a letter to Anthony Thwaite that Amis' new novel, *Other People*, 'sounds piss'.[23] That's all, apart from a positive review of Thwaite's review (it 'read very well') and a swipe at Bernard Levin: 'who says he can review novels by the way?'[24] Notice that Larkin's pithy dismissal of *Other People* involves not having read the book – his virtual review is based on Thwaite's actual effort in the *Observer*. Brief as the references to Amis are, they link him to two of Larkin's abiding interests, writing and sex. And, in Amis' fifth and final appearance in the *Selected Letters*, a third concern is added, the largest. 'What are you doing about a literary executor?' Larkin asks Kingsley Amis in 1982:

> I don't know anybody under fifty except Douglas Dunn and Andrew Motion. I suppose you'll nominate Martin. NOT THAT I BLOODY WELL CARE what happens when I am amber dust, but one has to say something. The whole business depresses me.[25]

Larkin was so preoccupied with writing, sex and death, and writing about sex (obliquely) and death (more directly), that even a figure who appears in his letters as infrequently as Martin Amis will pick up the scent of them in Larkin's work. These connections to Amis, sex, writing and death especially, are intriguing in terms of Larkin's response while reading *Money*.

What caused Larkin's big shriek? *Money*'s protagonist, John Self, is a creature of life-threatening excess and squalor: an Olympic-level boozer and junk food guzzler, unabashed pornography devotee, sexual thug, moral and cultural moron. By his own admission he is 'just junk'[26] and 'addicted to the twentieth century'.[27] Apparently the London-based son of an English father and an American mother, in the passage Self is in New York talking

[23] Anthony Thwaite ed., *Selected Letters of Philip Larkin 1940–1985*, p.642.
[24] Ibid., pp.624–23.
[25] Ibid., p.664.
[26] Martin Amis, *Money* (London: Penguin, 1985), p.265.
[27] Ibid., p.91.

to his American 'money man and pal' Fielding Goodney. They are hoping to produce Self's semi-autobiographical film, sometimes titled *Good Money*, sometimes *Bad Money*. Goodney suggests they visit an expensive place on Fifth Avenue, and sketches an enticingly lurid picture:

> You go in, right? Ambrosia on the rocks with a twist. The Queen of Sheba takes you to her boudoir and with a combination of head and hand gives you the biggest hard on you ever had. You ever saw. You look down and you think, *Whose dick is this*? You look up and the panels of the ceiling fold back. And guess what?
>
> [John Self] A ton of shit comes down on you.[28]

That made Larkin shriek. Amis comments:

> And I found *that* funny. Because Larkin seized on a moment where extravagant (and expensive) sexual temptation is greeted by the prediction of extravagant (and deflationary) disappointment.[29]

Money, sex and the prospect of a ton of shit – strange pleasures, indeed. But it is the fall from extravagant temptation to extravagant disappointment that Amis recognises as likely to amuse, even thrill, Larkin. The poet's 'Money' does not put it like that, but a disappointed relationship between money and sex emerges. Perhaps that is why Amis calls it a favourite of his and suggests that it uncovers something substantial about Larkin. The longest section on Larkin in *Experience*, the one that contains the first and last stanzas from 'Money', is headed 'He Hugged It To Him'. *He* is Larkin; *it* is money, but it is also *difficulty*.

Is Larkin's poem similarly money-hugging? Larkin commentators have seen more than simple miserliness at work in 'Money', Stephen Regan reading it as the 'quintessential statement of alienation'.[30] He notes the rhythmic banality, the verbal flatness of the first stanza, through the 'drollery of its middle stanzas into the sublimation of its own worldly anxieties'.[31] Regan quotes the same stanzas as Amis does:

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[28] Ibid., p.292.
[29] Martin Amis, *Experience*, p.243n.
[30] Stephen Regan, *Philip Larkin* (London: Macmillan, 1992), p.136.
[31] Ibid., p.137.

> Quarterly, is it, money reproaches me:
> 'Why do you let me lie here wastefully?
> I am all you never had of goods and sex.
> You could get them still by writing a few cheques'.
>
> I listen to money singing. It's like looking down
> From long french windows at a provincial town,
> The slums, the canal, the church ornate and mad
> In the evening sun. It is intensely sad.

For Regan, the last stanza

> employs a self-conscious and seemingly incongruous poetic simile, 'It's like looking down …', – as a way of reasserting the role of the imagination in a modern civilisation that appears hollow and deprived of value. The poem's intensity of feeling is a measure of that absence and emptiness.[32]

This ascent above the deprivations of modern civilisation, with the attendant effort to reassert the role of the imagination, could hardly be further from the grotesquely aroused figure trapped beneath a ton of shit imagined by John Self. In 'Money' distancing is necessary for self-preservation; in *Money*, distancing is impossible. Without money, there is neither self nor Self. And money, as Self tells us, is to blame: 'You cannot beat the money scandal. You can only join it'.[33]

Stan Smith, while not dealing specifically with 'Money', examines the notion of distance in Larkin's work, which in certain poems 'places the observer in a secure frame'.[34] 'Only the abstracted, distanced observer really preserves his individuality', Smith writes, and judges that this

> condescension, turning to resentment ... pervades the poetry of the post-war period. It expresses the renewed anxiety of a traditional liberal-individualism that has survived into an era of welfare state social democracy, where mass tastes and values prevail, and the charming yokels of an earlier pastoral have turned into menacingly actual fellow companions, claiming

[32] Ibid., p.137–38.
[33] Martin Amis, *Money*, p.288.
[34] Stan Smith, *Inviolable Voice: History and Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), p.172.

> equal rights with the egregious and refined spectator of their shoddy ordinariness.[35]

Certainly, a distancing bordering on condescension (if not quite resentment) can be detected in the figure looking down at a provincial town. And while Smith naturally does not consider Amis' *Money* in his study of Larkin's poetry, his sense of a significant change in the power relationship between classes holds true for the novel, John Self being anything but the charming yokel. At one point, for instance, he verbally confronts the novel's likely readers:

> I hate people with degrees, O levels, eleven pluses. Iowa Tests, shorthand diplomas ... And you hate me, don't you. Yes you do. Because I'm one of the new kind, the kind who has money but never use it for anything but ugliness. To which I say: You never let us in, not really. You might have thought you let us in, but you never did. You just gave us some money.[36]

Larkin's speaker never spends money; John Self never spends it on anything but ugliness.

The class differences, the cultural differences, are bleak, obvious and unsettling. One voice is straitjacketed, intensely sad, while the other emerges strident, angry and seemingly powerful. If Larkin's is the anxious voice of liberal-individualism in an era of welfare state social democracy, that projected by Amis is the aggressive voice of the Britain of 1981, hurtling towards a post-nannystate of rampant and unabashed materialism. Hurtling, perhaps, towards something approaching America, to which the Anglo-American John Self is by heritage and inclination addictively drawn, where he spends so much of his time and energy, talent and money. With Larkin money sings, while with Amis (to quote Bob Dylan) it swears. In the poem money is hoarded, reproachful, the gratification it might provide remaining (to the speaker) denied. Money in the novel is a potent force, the instant and repeated source of gratification, the generator and currency of junk, and the means to its consumption. John Self's economic theory is a crude form of chaos theory:

> Money, I think, is uncontrollable. Even those of us who have it, we can't control it. Life gets poor mouthed all the time, yet you

[35] Ibid., p.176.
[36] Martin Amis, *Money*, p.41.

> seldom hear an unkind word about money. Money, now this has to be some *good* shit'.[37]

Money remains omnipresent and omnipotent, whether as good shit or as a ton of it. And here one might distinguish Self's economic theory from Amis'. As Jon Begley argues in an astute reading of the economic forces at work in *Money*, the novel registers the political and economic instability in play through a barely aware Self who notices but does not fully comprehend the relationship between an Arab oil-hike and the fact that 'ten years later [an insane] big whiteman windmills his arms on Broadway for all to see'.[38] Begley states:

> It is the economic and political instability that underpins Amis's vision of money as an arbitrary and inexplicable global 'god', an impervious and self-sustaining agency responsible for fracturing the consensual bonds of urban communities and capable of 'pussy whipping' both individuals and nation-states.[39]

Crucially, that vision is Amis', not Self's, the latter being both tool and focus of the former's satire. Against this dark take on the 1980s celebration of money's liberating potency, Stephen Regan suggests that Larkin's poem catches the dissenting spirit of the young Karl Marx, to the effect that money robs the world of its value and values.[40] Liberating potency here is replaced by a sense of corrosive devaluing.

Other Larkin commentators have addressed more obviously literary matters. Andrew Motion, for example, detects symbolist attributes in 'Money', though he recognises that

> Larkin's exploitation of symbolist techniques does not always guarantee him absolute freedom from time and its ravages. At the end of 'Money', for instance, a gloomily rationalising tone of voice is abandoned only to confirm despair....The visual freedom here and the sense of being raised above immediate

[37] Ibid., p.153.
[38] Ibid., p.7.
[39] Ibid., p.82.
[40] Ibid., p.137.

> circumstances, cannot deny the force of the poem's final sentence.[41]

And Andrew Swarbrick, arguing that 'Money' persuades because 'it remains exact to feelings of anger, self-reproach and finally an impersonal dismay', contends that in *juxtaposing* rather than *integrating* contrary modes of expression, this and other 'self-reflexive poems' in *High Windows* signal 'the adventurously post-modernist Larkin'.[42] But though juxtaposing contrary modes of expression might be a necessary condition of postmodernity, it hardly seems sufficient. And the final 'impersonal dismay' Swarbrick detects, something approximated in Regan's note about the 'sublimation of anxieties' and Motion's on 'confirmed despair', suggests some form of *completion* at odds with the emphasis on *process* foregrounded in postmodernist texts. There's also the question of the transfer 'from the worldly to the imaginative, from a kind of truth to a kind of beauty' that Swarbrick notes in the 'mysterious simile'[43] of the final stanza, and which is picked up in different ways in the readings by Regan and Motion. Transcendence is not usually taken as a postmodern marker.

The argument for Larkin as intermittently postmodern looks decidedly weaker when the poem is placed alongside Amis' novel. If 'Money' is a statement of alienation, as Regan thinks, it is the alienation of the anxious liberal individual Smith mentions. Certainly there is intensity in *Money*, but not the intensity of the static individual, detached, looking down, sad, with the sadness perhaps a product of the intensity of perception. In *Money* intensity of perception and consumption supercharges the whole culture: fastpaced, superficial, pornographic; junk culture perhaps, but addictive despite or because of that. And *Money* is not merely a novel about the postmodern world; it is a piece of postmodernism itself. The novel playfully disintegrates cultural distinctions, satirises and celebrates junk culture, exposes and mocks its own motiveless action, its fake characters, its narratorial structures and rhythms. And it does so in a quintessentially postmodern move: John Self meets, befriends and briefly assumes the name of a writer called Martin Amis. 'Amis' it is who occasionally explains the twists of the plot to the bewildered Self, assuring him that it will all turn out right in the end. 'Amis' notifies him that the

[41] Andrew Motion, *Philip Larkin* (London: Methuen, 1982), pp.49–50.
[42] Andrew Swarbrick, *Out of Reach: The Poetry of Philip Larkin* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 1995), pp.134–35.
[43] Ibid., p.134.

other characters are just actors, discusses the relationship between author and narrator, and theorises about the 'blackness of modern writing':

> Like everyone else these days, writers have to get by without servants. They have to take in washing and do all their own. No wonder they're morbid.[44]

Consequently it comes as no surprise when 'Martin Amis' succumbs to the lure of money and agrees to rewrite the filmscript for John Self (at double the original offer) on one condition: 'The cheque doesn't bounce'.[45]

Money's postmodernism in fact is there before the beginning of the novel proper, in the preface:

> This is a suicide note. By the time you lay it aside (and you should always read these things slowly, on the lookout for clues and giveaways) John Self will no longer exist. Or at any rate that's the idea. You can never tell, though, with suicide notes, can you? In the planetary aggregate of all life, there are many more suicide notes than there are suicides.
>
> To whom is the note addressed? To Martina, to Fielding, to Vera, to Alec, to Selina, to Barry – to John Self? No. It is meant for you out there, the dear, the gentle.
>
> MA
> London, September 1981.

Here one can see the postmodern liberties Amis takes with the reader that displeased his father and Larkin. The extract also exemplifies the prose Larkin found too dense and worked-at. Compared to the supposed rhythmic banality and verbal flatness of parts of Larkin's poem, Amis' style is day-glo, urban and knowing. And intense, right across a broad canvas. But intense sadness is not possible, nor is it worked towards in *Money*. Joke characters with their joke suicide notes can be comically sad and sadly comic, but not intensely sad, or sadly intense. Not that that matters. For John Self only *money* matters, even when he finds out that, despite what he has believed all along, he has none:

[44] Martin Amis, *Money*, p.272.
[45] Ibid., p.239.

> Without money you're one day old and one inch tall. And you're nude too. But the beauty of it is, there's no way of doing anything to you if you haven't got any money. They could do things to you. But if you don't have any money, they can't be fucked.[46]

No abstracted, distanced observer here; John Self is embedded in the world of money, the slave to its caprices, the dwarf before its gigantic power, in this case its peculiarly American power. Self grew up in the U.S. of the 1960s, where he

> collected many subliminal tips on wealth and gratification. I did the groundwork for my addictions to junk food, sweet drinks, strong cigarettes, advertising, all day television – and perhaps to pornography and fighting.[47]

John Self, postwar child of Britain, child of permissiveness, is culturally a child of America. Compare this to the repressive streets of 1970s Hull Larkin complained about to Kingsley Amis, streets he challenged Martin Amis to find pornography in. Self does more than merely consume pornography in industrial quantities; he also makes it.

Like John Self, Martin Amis spent formative years in America, the result firstly of his father's appointment as Visiting Fellow in Creative Writing at Princeton in 1958. Returning to Swansea the following year Kingsley wrote apologetically to Larkin about his lack of correspondence while away, before noting that in the second half of the trip 'I was boozing and fucking ... practically full-time'.[48] Consequently, he admits to having a 'very fine time indeed', judging that the Americans

> have more energy than we have, and are better at enjoying themselves. They are not complacent or woman-dominated or death-wishing or insecure or naïve – especially not that. Mind you, you have to go there to see this: I can't make anybody here believe it quite.[49]

[46] Ibid., p.383.
[47] Ibid., p.206.
[48] Zachary Leader, *Letters of Kingsley Amis*, p.599.
[49] Ibid., p.560.

Larkin wrote to Robert Conquest, after receiving this report, that Amis' 'view of Yankland is more sympathetic than mine'.[50] Larkin would never go to Yankland, though he joked later to Conquest that 'I am really tempted to go and see it if, for me, US would be full of fishy winds, trolley buses, girls like plethoric sausages etc'.[51] To Barbara Pym he wrote that Amis' 1963 novel, *One Fat Englishman*, 'takes its place among all the other books that don't make me want to visit America'.[52] This already hardened dislike is given satirical vent in a 1977 song Larkin wanted Robert Conquest to sing to Donald Davie (who, like Conquest, was then at Stanford University):

> California here I come
> Watching out for drink and bum;
> My thesis
> On faeces in *Ulysses*
> Has knocked em'
> From Stockton
> Grammar School to Los Angeles –
> California, you're my perk,
> Help me to indulge my quirk,
> Otherwise I'll have to work –
> California, here I come![53]

John Self has no such fear or loathing. And Martin Amis (the *real* Martin Amis) writes fondly of America throughout *Experience*. Like Self, he picked up American addictions, and addictions to America, including the mannerisms of American literary style. Compare the clipped hesitancy of the opening line of Larkin's 'Money' ('Quarterly, is it, money reproaches me') with the pacy opening of Amis' *Money*:

> As my cab pulled off FDR Drive, somewhere in the early Hundreds, a low-slung Tomahawk full of black guys came sharking out of lane and sloped in fast right across our bows.[54]

This affectionate parody of gritty American realism laced with street-wise mannerisms is one of the voices of John Self. At other moments he will

[50] Anthony Thwaite ed., *Selected Letters of Philip Larkin 1940–1985*, p.306.
[51] Ibid., p.307.
[52] Ibid., p.362.
[53] Ibid., p.561.
[54] Martin Amis, *Money*, p.1.

sound like a Cockney wide boy, and the novel moves regularly, effortlessly back and forth across the physical and cultural boundaries of the Atlantic. For Jon Begley and Dominic Head[55] this suggests that *Money* is a transatlantic work, although Joseph Brooker[56] and Philip Tew[57] argue in different ways that although the narrative bounces between London and New York, homebase is always England.

More generally, *Money* is symptomatic of how writers of Martin Amis' generation drew inspiration, techniques, and subject matter from beyond Britain. For Amis, Julian Barnes and Salman Rushdie, to name three of the literary stars of the 1980s and 1990s, America, along with places such as France and India, are spiritual and sometimes actual homelands. Their respective literary outputs incorporate the histories, sensibilities and literatures of these 'foreign' places back into Britain and British literature and culture generally. Rushdie, for example, argues in the 1982 essay 'Imaginary Homelands' that Indian writers in England were 'inescapably international writers at a time when the novel has never been a more international form'.[58] He adds that one of the freedoms of the literary migrant was to choose his parents, in Rushdie's case Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville, Machado de Assis.[59] The eclectic list contains writers from three continents and five countries, but none from England itself. Martin Amis' literary idols – Saul Bellow and Vladimir Nabokov – make regular appearances in his essays, time spent with the latter's wife even providing the eponymous sketch for *Visiting Mrs Nabokov*. And the acknowledged Francophile Barnes paid homage to another American monolith, John Updike, in the *New York Times Review of Books* soon after that writer's death in 2009:

> Hearing of John Updike's death in January of this year, I had two immediate, ordinary reactions. The first was a protest –

[55] Jon Begley, 'Satirizing the Carnival of Postmodern Capitalism: The Transatlantic and Dialogic Structure of Martin Amis' *Money*', *Contemporary Literature* XLV, 1 (2004): 79–105; Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p.31.
[56] Joseph Brooker, 'The Middle Years of Martin Amis', *British Fiction Today*. Eds. Philip Tew & Rod Mengham (London: Continuum Press, 2006), p.3.
[57] Philip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel* (London: Continuum Press, 2004), pp.94–95.
[58] Salman Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', *Imaginary Homelands; Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (London: Granta, 1991), p.20.
[59] Ibid., p.21.

> 'But I thought we had him for another ten years'; the second, a feeling of disappointment that Stockholm had never given him the nod. The latter was a wish for him, and for American literature, the former a wish for me, for us, for Updikeans around the world.[60]

In different but interlocking ways, Amis, Rushdie and Barnes all recognise themselves as literary global citizens, and welcome that internationalism.

Rushdie's consciously wide-eyed gaze signals and implicitly celebrates the postcolonial world of the 1980s. By contrast, Blake Morrison notes that the Movement writers of the fifties, including Larkin and Kingsley Amis, were ambivalent about the decline of British power after 1945:

> There was a public insistence on the inevitability of the dissolution of empire, and on the 'moral leadership' which Britain would enjoy instead. But there was also nostalgia for the power that the country once enjoyed, and misgivings at a certain 'narrowing of horizons'.[61]

Morrison nominates Larkin's 'Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album' from *The Less Deceived* (1955) as emblematic of this sensitivity 'to loss, regret, wistfulness, the immediate past'.[62] Twenty years on, the poems in *High Windows* more regularly indicate nostalgia for a personal rather than a national or imperial past, though in 'Going, Going' the feared death of England before that of the speaker sharpens the personal despair:

> Despite all the land left free
> For the first time I feel somehow
> That it isn't going to last
>
> That before I snuff it, the whole
> Boiling will be bricked in
> Except for the tourist parts –

[60] Julian Barnes, *Flights*, at www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/jun/11/flights/ (accessed 15 November, 2011)
[61] Blake Morrison, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980), pp.81–82.
[62] Ibid., p.82.

> First slum of Europe ...
>
> And that will be England gone,
> The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
> The guildhall, the carved choirs.[63]

But the doomed 'England' pictured here, one of shadows, meadows and carved choirs, has a startling insubstantiality, not so much nation as notion. 'Homage to A Government', by contrast, adopts a satirical tone, a polemical stance. Instead of defending the lost cause of postwar England, the poem aggressively records the loss of imperial power. The change of focus is significant, for the 'country/That brought its soldiers home for lack of money' is not England (which does not have a separate government as such) but Britain. And while the gloomy prediction of 'Going, Going' is swathed in the uncertainties of the future (the speaker might be lucky enough to 'snuff it' in time) 'Homage to a Government' concentrates on a specific historical moment, the withdrawal of British troops from Aden. And money, so the first and third stanzas argue, is both the cause and the legacy of this lamentable decision:

> Next year we are to bring the soldiers home
> For lack of money, and it is all right.
> Places they guarded, or kept orderly,
> Must guard themselves, and keep themselves orderly.
> We want the money for ourselves at home
> Instead of working. And this is all right.
>
> Next year we shall be living in a country
> That brought its soldiers home for lack of money.
> The statues will be standing in the same
> Tree-muffled squares, and look nearly the same.
> Our children will not know it's a different country.
> All we can hope to leave them now is money.[64]

Money here enjoys several functions, depending on how and why it is used or not used. Honourably employed in the service of benign British imperial power, it ensures security and order in places prone to insecurity and disorder. And yet, should the same nation that provides order renege on its

[63] Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*, ed. Anthony Thwaite (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), pp.189–90.
[64] Ibid., p.171.

imperial duty and choose to indulge itself, money becomes the index of waste and sloth, of work dodged. It is worth remembering here Martin Amis' view that for Larkin money meant work, and that he submitted to his job with a priestly stoicism. Work, whether in Aden or in Hull, is honourable employment. The internal and international failures provide the impetus for a different, tarnished country, in which money assumes a third function, that of a tainted legacy, a debased substitute for ideals and responsibilities.

'Homage to a Government' has been criticised for its unsubtle political analysis, although Larkin considered it more an historical than a political poem.[65] Stan Smith, for example, charges that it displays a colonialist naivety,

> as if presumably, the troops had not been stationed out there for what, in the long term, were financial reasons: to preserve the investments, raw materials, and cheap labour of an imperial economy.[66]

And Andrew Swarbrick describes the poem as 'a mess of inchoate feelings', that while tentatively opposing the 'values of "money" ... fails to construct a genuine dialectic or engage with real feelings'.[67] Smith and Swarbrick, from different starting points, suggest shortcomings or problems with the ways in which money is treated and not treated in 'Homage to a Government'. Clearly, though they both appeared in *High Windows*, we are some distance here from 'Money', a poem whose limited setting and individualised sensibility define and refine the chastening power of money over the solitary speaker. Larkin's attempt to register the social, or sociopolitical impact of money in 'Homage to a Government' remains sketchy and undigested. The self-aware speaker of 'Money' grasps grim personal truths from his perch above the provincial town, while the speaker in 'Homage to a Government' rises only to the height of a soapbox.

If the postwar movement of Larkin and Amis' *père* harboured a sense of nostalgia for British decline, and feared the demise of the liberal individual, what might be judged the postmodern or postcolonial Movement of writers such as Amis *fils*, Barnes and Rushdie barely

[65] Philip Larkin, *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955–1982* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), p.52.
[66] Stan Smith, *Inviolable Voice: History and Twentieth-Century Poetry*, *p.*179.
[67] Andrew Swarbrick, *Out of Reach: the poetry of Philip Larkin*, p.140.

mourned the Empire's passing. Instead, they welcomed the edgy possibilities of a future offering cultural and personal pluralism. 'Money' and *Money* register some of these changes and distinctions. But the fact that Larkin managed to read the novel and offer the reserved judgement that parts of *Money* amused him, as well as Martin Amis' respect for Larkin as a writer, caution against making too much of the dislocations and differences. Kingsley Amis' letter to Larkin about *Money* does not invalidate the response:

> I laughed heartily at your excellent jest about Martin's book. You almost had me believing that you sort of, well, *enjoyed* it or something, ha ha ha. If I didn't know you better I'd, [etc].[68]

One can detect a fear on the father's part that his respected friend might rate the son's work highly. Indeed, though Larkin disliked the postmodern manoeuvres Amis made in *Money*, he was an enthusiastic reader of that very postmodern novel, *Flaubert's Parrot*, by Amis' then great friend and rival, Julian Barnes. As Larkin wrote to Barnes himself:

> Dear Mr Barnes,
> I much enjoyed *F's P*, in fact read 2/3rds one night, and the rest in bed between 5&6a.m. the next day. Couldn't put it down, as they say. That is the strongest compliment I can pay . ... it's you who have written a most extraordinary and haunting book I dread trying to reread, for fear it won't work a second time.
> I rather dread rereading this letter, but you gather, I hope, that I enjoyed it immensely. Thank you![69]

Money came out at the same time, so Larkin could scarcely be thought of as having changed his literary standards. But the differences in his reviews suggest that the faults he found in *Money* were not simply the result of an aversion to postmodernist liberties. *Flaubert's Parrot*, he suggests to Barnes, evokes 'the "resonance of despair" ... the subtle echoes and repetitions, the stark misery that gets at you through this most unexpected and unlikely framework'.[70] Against the strident celebration of junk captured in *Money*, the stark misery Larkin hears in *Flaubert's Parrot* is better attuned to his ear. There is a subtle criticism in Larkin's fear of re-

[68] Zachary Leader, *Letters of Kingsley Amis*, p.989.
[69] Anthony Thwaite ed., *Selected Letters of Philip Larkin 1940–1985, p.*721.
[70] Ibid., p.721.

reading Barnes' novel (surely an extraordinary book should survive rereading) but even so it is tempting to see in his response Larkin's sense of Barnes as a postmodern version of himself.

If comparisons between the postwar Movement and a postmodern Movement have some validity, we might speculatively see Barnes as an updated Larkin, while Amis *fils* certainly fits the bill as a latter day version of his father. We need not take this musing too far, especially as the friendly if cagey rivalry between the two older writers has not been played out by the younger duo. Martin Amis and Julian Barnes were close friends in the manner of Kingsley Amis and Larkin, but fell out when Amis changed literary agents after 23 years; the agent in question happened to be Barnes' wife, Pat Kavanagh. Not only did he change agents but he did so from the British Kavanagh to the fiercely bargaining American, Andrew Wylie. Amis' reward was a massive advance on his then unfinished novel, *The Information*, which charts the cagey and not so friendly rivalry between two literary friends. When it became publicly known that Amis, like John Self, needed massive and expensive dental work that was being paid for by the advance, Amis was subjected to a weaker rerun of the attacks made on the posthumous Larkin. A representative headline quoted in *Experience* reads: 'Martin Amis in Greed Storm'.[71] The words Amis used to defend Larkin have a wonderfully ironic resonance in the later context: 'He who was beautiful is suddenly found to be ugly'. Happily, painful, extended and costly surgery paid for by *The Information* restored Amis' dental beauty. Money can perform such surface (one might say postmodern) miracles, even if, Larkin's poem reminds us, it remains incapable of relieving existential unhappiness. As the era of neoliberal economic orthodoxy windmills its arms on Broadway for all to see, both the poem and novel offer thought-provoking assessments on the past, present and future of real and imagined money, on how we use it, and how it uses us.

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[71] Martin Amis, *Experience*, p.247.

Gilliam was published in 2009, and *George Orwell the Essayist: Literature, Politics and the Periodical Culture* in 2011.

Reflecting Back, or What Can the French Tell The English About Humour?

WILL NOONAN

> L'humour anglais souligne avec amertume et désespoir l'absurdité du monde. L'humour français rit de ma belle-mère.
>
> (English humour highlights with bitterness and despair the absurdity of the world. French humour makes fun of my mother-in-law.)
>
> (Pierre Desproges, *Les étrangers sont nuls*)[1]

Leaving aside the inevitable jokes about incompatible national styles of humour, the gulf between what speakers of French and English mean by the term 'humour' has attracted surprisingly little critical attention. Henriette Walter's comparative study of French and English etymology classifies 'humour' and '*humour*' as 'partially friendly homographs': words with the same spelling whose broadly related meanings can mask important differences in usage.[2] By and large, speakers of English tend to treat humour as a broad and nebulous category covering any and all notions related to laughter and the comic, a category that is not restricted to a particular time or place. This umbrella view is mirrored in the emerging academic field of 'Humour Studies', which brings together research in fields as diverse as literature, philosophy, sociology and psychology, and that divides attempts at explaining the mechanisms of humour into broad

[1] Pierre Desproges, *Les Etrangers sont nuls* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p.14. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from French in this article are my own. For reasons of clarity, translations will precede the original text; the original text of translated quotations in the body of the article will be given in footnotes.

[2] Henriette Walter, *Honni soit qui mal y pense: L'incroyable histoire d'amour entre le français et l'anglais* (Paris: Laffont, 2001), p.136.

categories such as 'superiority', 'incongruity' or 'relief' theories.[3] The French word *humour* is used occasionally in this broad sense (particularly in contemporary popular usage, more tolerant of casual anglicisms than literary or scholarly French usage), however it has traditionally denoted a restricted subset of a conceptual category for which the usual umbrella terms are *le rire* (laughter) and *le comique*. The phrase *avoir de l'humour* implies not simply the capacity to laugh, but the reflexive capacity to laugh back at oneself, as in the English phrase '*sense* of humour'. In contrast to its older cognate *humeur* (-eur), used to refer to the ancient theory of bodily humours (and which in modern French usage denotes personal mood), *humour* (-our) is marked as an eighteenth-century borrowing from English. This has led to peculiarities in usage that, paradoxically, are unlikely to be recognised by most Anglophones: not only is *humour* often understood as a particular type of comic discourse restricted to texts that postdate the entry of the word into the French language, but it is also traditionally associated with quintessentially 'English' forms of behaviour. While an increasing number of French commentators have called this highly circumscribed view into question, it still retains a degree of critical and popular currency. As Georges Minois comments:

> On sait par exemple les débats ubuesques auxquels se sont livrés certains spécialistes dénués d'humour à propos de l'usage du mot « humour ». A-t-on le droit de s'en servir à propos des Grecs? Cicéron a-t-il de l'humour? Ou faut-il réserver le mot et la chose, comme une appellation contrôlée, à l'Angleterre depuis le XVIIIe siècle?
>
> (We can take as an example the ubuesque debates that certain specialists with no sense of humour have engaged in about the usage of the term 'humour'. Do we have the right to use it to talk about the Greeks? Did Cicero have a sense of humour? Or must we restrict the word and the concept, like an appellation of origin, to England since the eighteenth century?)[4]

[3] These three groups represent probably the most widely accepted typology of humour theories in English. For one useful discussion with examples, see John Morreall, ed., *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987). Information on current interdisciplinary research in humour can be found at the websites of the International Society for Humor Studies (www.hnu.edu/ishs/) and the Australasian Humour Studies Network (sydney.edu.au/humourstudies/), among others.

[4] Georges Minois, *Histoire du rire et de la dérision* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), p.11–12.

Without attempting a direct answer to Minois' question, the present essay will explore the conceptual and historical differences between Francophone and Anglophone understandings of humour. This comparative approach suggests a means to circumvent the age-old trap of trying to define humour: as Paul Gifford notes, in a 1981 article that has remained a seminal work in English on the French understanding of humour, the notorious resistance of humour to definition means that it 'also has the interesting property of defining its would-be definers'.[5] While Gifford argues that successive attempts by French scholars to classify and define the imported concept of humour offer a basis for a 'reciprocal definition' of the French scholarly mind, this essay aims in a different direction, seeking to show how the more specific French understanding of humour offers a useful foil for thinking about the broader English concept, and particularly how the reflexive dimension associated with *humour* has particular applications for the study of self-conscious literature. Given the relative paucity of Anglophone scholarship on the topic, it will outline the debates surrounding the notion of *humour* in the French critical tradition, set against the historical development of humour as a concept in both languages. While the purported cultural and historical specificity of humour remains problematic to an Anglophone readership, the essay will end by considering how the reflexive dimension of French *humour* is echoed in other theories relating both to humour and to literary self-consciousness.

Written in English but from a French perspective, Louis Cazamian's classic *The Development of English Humor* sets out what is still an orthodox position in France: while, 'for many, no doubt, humor is simply what causes laughter', his introduction places humour firmly as a 'province' within the broader 'empire' of the comic.[6] Writing in the 1980s, Henri Baudin emphatically rejects what he perceives as a growing tendency to conflate the meanings of *l'humour* and *le comique*, arguing instead that the former should be understood as a specific type of the latter characterised by its relationship to affect.[7] Jean Emelina ascribes the

[5] Paul Gifford, 'Humour and the French Mind: Towards a Reciprocal Definition', *MLR* 76 (1981): 538.

[6] Louis Cazamian, *The Development of English Humor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1952), pp.4–5.

[7] Henri Baudin, 'Comique et affectivité : l'humour', *Cahiers du comique et de la communication* 3 (1985), 133–50. For a more recent and somewhat more nuanced position, see Henri Baudin's 'Deux modalités de métissage culturel en Europe au XXe siècle', *Humoresques* 18 (2003), 38–53.

difficulty of defining *l'humour* to 'a perpetual drift between a narrow and a broad sense, between a disposition of character particular to the speaker or receiver, and the comic "material" itself'. [8] However, both of these senses are much narrower than the usual understanding of humour in English, which Emelina places in rough equivalence to the culturally untranslatable French notion of *le comique*. Criticising the growing use of *humour* as a '*plus chic*' alternative to *le comique* to describe the general quality of phenomena like burlesque, satire, parody, caricature, dirty jokes and puns, Emelina casts his own view of the distinction in both linguistic and cultural terms: 'Is English, less rigorous and less Cartesian [than French], responsible for this assimilation of *humour* to the comic in general?'[9] Nevertheless, a trend in French literary scholarship towards critical anthologies of humour suggests a degree of uncertainty about the term sufficient to require demonstration by example.[10] Anticipating Gifford, who ascribes the French propensity for rigidly Cartesian definitions of humour to 'a culture of highly rationalized intelligence [which] does not find in humour the most natural mode of perception or accommodation to the world', Escarpit contrasts the relative lack of anxiety about defining humour amongst Anglophone scholars with the practice of many French anglicists, 'for whom these speculations play roughly the same role as squaring the circle for mediaeval mathematicians'.[11] As Escarpit notes, French is unique amongst European languages in distinguishing between

[8] Jean Emelina, *Le comique : essai d'interprétation générale* (Liège: SEDES, 1996), p.126: 'La difficulté vient d'abord, dans l'acception française et contemporaine du terme, d'un *flottement perpétuel entre un sens étroit et un sens étendu*, entre une disposition d'esprit propre au locuteur ou au récepteur et la « matière » comique elle-même'. Emphasis in original.

[9] Jean Emelina, *Le comique*, pp.129–30: 'L'anglais, moins rigoriste et moins cartésien, est-il responsable de cette assimilation de l'humour au comique en général ?'

[10] On the French tradition of critical anthologies of humorous literature, see the introduction to Daniel Grojnowski and Bernard Sarrazin's collection *L'esprit fumiste et les rires fin de siècle* (Paris: Corti, 1990), p.39. Other prominent examples include André Breton's *Anthologie de l'humour noir* (Paris: Pauvert, 1966), Albert Laffay's *Anthologie de l'humour et du nonsense* (Paris: Masson, 1970) and more recently Jacques Rouvière's *Dix siècles d'humour dans la littérature française* (Paris: Plon, 2005).

[11] Paul Gifford, 'Humour and the French Mind', 538; Robert Escarpit, *L'humour*, p.8: 'On comprend pourquoi les Anglais n'aiment guère disserter sur l'humour, alors que c'est le péché mignon des anglicistes français pour qui ces spéculations jouent un peu le même rôle que la quadrature du cercle pour les mathématiciens du Moyen Age'.

humour and *humeur*, resulting in a tendency to historicise the concept of humour in parallel with historical developments in the usage of the word.[12] Cazamian argues that *humour* (as opposed to the generic, ahistorical *rire* or *comique*) can represent a valid category for analysing ancient or mediaeval literature, although this is tempered by his claim that 'Modern humor hardly came into its own until the Renaissance; prior to that the mental complexity which it requires was not very much diffused'.[13] Arguing that 'any investigation of humour should be grounded in Elizabethan culture', Jonathan Pollock follows a French critical tradition that emphasises the evolution of 'humour' in early modern English, from its medical origins to something resembling modern usage.[14] Most often cited in this regard is a passage from the prologue to Ben Jonson's 1600 play *Every Man Out of His Humor*:

> So in every human body,
> The choler, melancholy, phlegm, and blood,
> By reason that they flow continually
> In some one part, and are not continent,
> Receive the name of humours. Now thus far
> It may, by metaphor, apply itself
> Unto the general disposition:
> As when some one peculiar quality
> Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
> All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
> In their confluctions, all to run one way,
> This may be truly be said to be a humour
> But that a rook, by wearing a pyed feather,
> The cable hat-band, or the three-piled ruff,
> A yard of shoe-tye, or the Switzer's knot
> On his French garters, should affect a humour!
> O, it is more than most ridiculous.[15]

[12] Robert Escarpit, *L'humour*, p.10.
[13] Louis Cazamian (1952: 4). Part of the contrast with the previous example can be attributed to the gap between the original publication of the first part of Cazamian's monograph in 1930, and the second part in 1952.
[14] Jonathon Pollock (2001: 38): 'toute investigation de la nature de l'humour doit s'ancrer dans la culture élisabéthaine'.
[15] Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of his Humour*, ed. Helen Ostocitch (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), Prologue, ll.96–112.

These lines can, in effect, be read as mapping a conceptual transition from the four 'humours' (choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic and sanguine) that were thought in ancient medical theory to define temperament, to a more 'metaphorical' understanding in which an imbalance of humours serves to describe an involuntary and eccentric disposition of character which can, in turn, become a form of voluntary affectation. This shift reflects the evolution of the French term '*humeur*' from its older medical sense to its more recent, psychological one. However, it is the last five lines, describing not an involuntary but a deliberate eccentricity, which correspond more accurately to the usual French understanding of *humour*. While the final description 'more than most ridiculous' suggests that such behaviour is to be laughed at, the shift from passive affliction to deliberate affectation implies a form of self-conscious laughter that knowingly anticipates its observers' reactions.[16]

A similar movement can be observed in other English commentaries charting the coalescence of humour as a concept through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Conceived as a response to Thomas Hobbes' account of laughter in his 1651 treatise *Human Nature* as

> nothing else but a sudden glory arising from sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmityes of others, or with our own selves formerly,

Shaftesbury's 1709 *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* argues that an essentially gentle and tolerant practice of 'true raillery' should replace aggressive ridicule as a mode of interaction and when necessary as a social corrective.[17] While Shaftesbury uses the term 'humour' to denote both an eccentric disposition and a particular form of discourse, or 'airy way of

[16] On this point see Michael Billig, *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p.62, who notes that the term 'ridiculous' preserved a broader and more neutral connotation than its present sense until at least the eighteenth century.

[17] Thomas Hobbes, 'Human Nature', in *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic: Human Nature and de Corpore Politico* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), Ch. 9, sect. 13, pp.54–55. On Shaftesbury's recasting of Hobbesian laughter as a means to correct moral deformities, see Werner von Koppenfels, 'Nothing Is Ridiculous but What Is Deformed: Laughter as a Test of Truth in Enlightenment Satire,' in *A History of English Laughter*, ed. Manfred Pfister (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp.58–59: 'Ridicule, seen in Shaftesbury's way, is the consensus of a mature and tolerant society as to what constitutes social abnormality; and laughter is the means of exposing and thereby dismissing it'.

Conversation and Writing',[18] Corbyn Morris' 1744 *Essay towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire and Ridicule*, distinguishes the involuntary humorist, 'obstinately attached to sensible peculiar Oddities of his own genuine Growth, which appear in his Temper and Conduct' and the consciously laughing 'Man of Humour', whose role is to 'happily exhibit and expose the Oddities and Foibles of an Humourist, or of other Characters'.[19] This transition from essentially passive humorist to essentially active Man of Humour points forward to the modern English usage of 'humour'.

French commentators seem to have developed an interest in humour at about the same time as the word developed its modern sense in English. A letter by Voltaire, dated August 20, 1761, describes 'humour' as one of the many originally French words 'which have become outdated in France, or are even entirely forgotten, but which our neighbours the English make joyful use of'.[20] Voltaire explains that:

> Ils ont un terme pour signifier cette plaisanterie, ce vrai comique, cette gaieté, cette urbanité, ces saillies qui échappent à un homme sans qu'il s'en doute ; et ils rendent cette idée par le mot humeur, *humour*, qu'ils prononcent *yumor* ; et ils croient qu'ils ont seuls cette humeur ; que les autres nations n'ont point de terme pour désigner ce caractère d'esprit. Cependant c'est un ancien mot de notre langue, employé en ce sens dans plusieurs comédies de Corneille.
>
> ([The English] have a term for this type of joking, this true form of the comic, this gaiety, this urbanity, these remarks which escape from a man without him realising it; and they express this idea by the word *humeur*, 'humour', which they pronounce *yumor*; and they believe that they are the only ones

[18] Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury (Earl of), *Sensus Communis: an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (London, 1709; New York, Garland Publishing reprint, 1969), p.61.

[19] Corbyn Morris, *An Essay Towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire and Ridicule* (London, 1744; New York: Augustan Reprint Society, 1947), p.15.

[20] Voltaire, 'Lettre à M. L'Abbé d'Olivet, Chancelier de l'Académie Française', in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 9 (Paris, 1853), p.219: 'Je trouve, par exemple, plusieurs mots qui ont vieilli parmi nous, mais dont nos voisins les Anglais se servent heureusement'.

> to possess this *humeur*; and that other nations have no word for expressing this type of wit. However it is an old word from our own language, which is used in this sense in several comedies by Corneille.[21])

This passage offers an early example of the terminological confusion between the English term 'humour', and the related but distinct French doublet of *humeur* and *humour*. One oddity of Voltaire's account is the suggestion that *humour* consists of 'remarks which escape from a man without him realising it': this corresponds to the connotations of *humeur* as represented in the character-based comedy of humours, but appears to contradict the sense of wit and gay urbanity presented elsewhere in the same passage. Minois suggests that Voltaire is mistaken in his characterisation of *humour*:[22] an alternative reading of Voltaire's letter as implying 'remarks which *appear to* escape from a man without him realising it' would offer something closer to the modern French understanding of *humour* as related to (the perceived 'English' qualities of) whimsy and cultivated eccentricity. Arguing that Voltaire seems to be 'clearly behind the times in thinking of humour as an involuntary and passive manifestation of natural dispositions',[23] Gifford goes on to cite a letter by the Abbé Le Blanc written some twenty years earlier, which 'already shows a developed awareness of the distinction between 'humour' and *humeur*':

> C'est quelque habitude, quelque passion ou quelque affectation particulière à une seule personne. Mais ce n'est pas là le seul sens que ce mot […] ait dans leur langue ; il se dit aussi bien d'un ouvrage d'esprit […] et signifie dans ce cas un certain tour de plaisanterie qui ne soit pas trop près du ton naturel et qui cependant n'y est pas totalement opposé.
>
> ([Humour] is a type of habit, passion or affectation which is particular to a given person. But this is not the only sense of the word in English; it can also refer to a witty work of literature, and in this case signifies a certain manner of joking that is not

[21] Ibid., p.219.
[22]Georges Minois, *Histoire du rire et de la dérision*, p.388: 'Voltaire fait erreur sur la marchandise : l'humour n'est pas du tout la plaisanterie involontaire, bien au contraire'.
[23] Paul Gifford, 'Humour and the French Mind', 536.

> too close to natural speech but at the same time is not totally removed from it.[24])

As Gifford notes, Le Blanc offers a glimpse of 'the humorist's reflexive *sense* of humour […] even though its importance is not fully elucidated'.[25] Importantly, this account also describes humour as a quality of works of literature as well as of people: Le Blanc's description of a 'manner of joking' resembles a form of marked discourse, set apart but not totally removed from 'natural speech', that not only underpins typical Anglophone characterisations of humour as a form of incongruity but also many Francophone characterisations of *humour* as something more subtle than farce or slapstick.[26]

Roughly contemporary with Voltaire's letter, Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* shows considerably more enthusiasm about the growing French acceptance of humour. *Humour* is given an entry separate to that for *humeur*, and is defined as a term of ethics (*morale*) which denotes both originality and eccentricity, and a distinctly seriocomic potential for practical effect:

> les Anglois se servent de ce mot pour désigner une plaisanterie originale, peu commune & d'un tour singulier. Parmi les auteurs de cette nation, personne n'a eu de l'*humour*, ou de cette plaisanterie originale, à un plus haut point que Swift, qui, par le tour qu'il savait donner à ses plaisanteries, produisit quelque fois, parmi ses compatriotes, des effets qu'on n'auroit jamais pû attendre des ouvrages les plus sérieux et les mieux raisonnés, *ridiculum acri*, &c.
>
> (the English use this word to designate an original form of joking, which is not common and has a particular turn to it. Among the authors of this nation, nobody has possessed *humour*, or this original joking, to a greater degree than Swift, who, by the turn he was able to give to his jokes, was sometimes able to produce effects among his compatriots, which one could never

[24] Jean-Bernard Le Blanc, *Lettres d'un Français* (Le Hague, 1741), quoted in Paul Gifford, 536. My translation.
[25] Paul Gifford, 536, emphasis in original.
[26] For one discussion opposing the refinement of humour to the grossness of farce, see Henri Baudin, 'Comique et affectivité : l'humour', 133.

> have expected from the most serious or reasoned works, *ridiculum acri*, etc.[27])

Like Le Blanc's text, this account presents humour both as a personal quality which individuals may possess to varying degrees (corresponding roughly to the English expression 'sense of humour') and as a distinctive form of comic discourse, which is particularly associated with English culture. The entry goes on to cite Swift's *A Modest Proposal* as an archetypal example of literary humour: while its claim that Swift's text had a measurable effect on British policy in Ireland is unfounded, *A Modest Proposal* has remained a stock example of humour for French lexicographers, and occupies pride of place in André Breton's *Anthologie de l'humour noir*. However, the *Encyclopédie* also flags what has become a recurring tension between the French notions of *humour* and *comique*: originality and understatement are acknowledged as 'English' cultural traits, yet the unnamed contributor suggests that humour should, by rights, be 'better suited to the light-hearted spirit of the French, than to the serious and reasonable turn of mind of the English'.[28]

Something closer to the modern French usage of *humour* appears in Madame de Staël's short essay "De la plaisanterie anglaise" (On English joking: 1800), in which lugubrious English humour is opposed to the more exuberantly French 'true spirit of gaiety'.[29] De Staël claims that

> Il existe, cependant, une sorte de gaîté dans quelques écrits anglais, qui a tous les caractères de l'originalité et du naturel. La langue anglaise a créé un mot, *humour*, pour exprimer cette gaîté qui est une disposition du sang presque autant que de l'esprit ; elle tient à la nature du climat et aux moeurs nationales ; elle

[27] *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, edited by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (Neuchâtel: 1751–72; reprint, Paris and New York: Pergamon Press, 1969), s.v. The full Latin tag (*ridiculum acri fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res*, from Horace, *Satires*, Book 1, Ch. 10, l.14) can be translated as 'A joke often decides weighty matters better and more forcibly than can bitterness'.

[28] Ibid.: 'même en général cette sorte de plaisanterie paroit plus propre au génie léger et folâtre du François, qu'à la tournure d'esprit, sérieuse et raisonnée, des Anglois'.

[29] Madame de Staël, 'De la plaisanterie anglaise', in *De la littérature, considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (Paris: Garnier, 1998), p.206: 'vrai génie de gaîté'.

> seroit tout-à-fait inimitable là où les mêmes causes ne développeroient pas. Quelques écrits de Fielding et de Swift, Peregrin Pickle, Roderick Random, mais sur-tout les ouvrages de Sterne, donnent l'idée complète du genre appelé *humour*.
>
> (There exists, however, a sort of gaiety in some English writing, which displays every appearance of being original and natural. The English language has created a word, *humour*, to express this gaiety which is a disposition of blood as much as it is of spirit [*esprit*, potentially also signifying 'wit']; it derives from the nature of the climate and from the nation's manners; it would be impossible to imitate in the absence of the same causes. Some of Fielding's and Swift's writings, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Roderick Random*, but especially the works of Sterne give a complete idea of the genre termed *humour*.[30])

This passage reiterates the view of humour as an English national characteristic, whether deliberate or otherwise, but also highlights a connection with the eighteenth-century tradition of the self-conscious novel, represented to a greater or lesser extent by 'humorists' like Fielding, Swift, Smollett and Sterne. Significantly, the essay concludes with a near quotation from the blackly humorous gravediggers' scene in Act V of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: 'The English depict odd characters with a great deal of talent, since they have many of them in their country'.[31] Gifford credits de Staël with providing 'albeit embryonically and in some disorder, a veritable theory of English humour ... as a mode uniting natural disposition and conscious invention', which involves (among other characteristics) an 'essential link with oddity of character as cherished by a nation uniquely tolerant of eccentrics'.[32] Gifford's claim that this equates to a 'substantial and penetrating account of humour as it had come to be understood in England' offers pause for thought: while de Staël is writing in French for a French audience, her position as an astute external observer of English culture allows an acute sense of the distinctiveness of humour that has influenced French commentators in her wake.

For over a century following de Staël's essay, French lexicographers and encyclopaedists tended to emphasise the status of *humour* as an

[30] Ibid., p.210.
[31] Ibid., p.211: 'Ce que les Anglais peignent avec un grand talent, ce sont les caractères bizarres, parce qu'il en existe beaucoup parmi eux'.
[32] Paul Gifford, 'Humour and the French Mind', 537.

English word and concept. Pierre Larousse's encyclopaedic *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe siècle* (1866–70) includes an entry for *humour*, identified as 'an English word formed from the Latin root *humor*, [meaning] *humeur*'.[33] Humour is defined as a 'turn of wit which is most original and more or less particular to the English; and it is this quality which gives many of their writers the greater part of their savour'.[34] Expressing both a lexicographer's and an encyclopaedist's frustration at the problem of defining humour, Larousse goes on in the same entry to ask whether:

> Quand nous aurons dit que l'humour est tantôt une gaieté sérieuse et flegmatique, tantôt une raillerie pleine d'amertume, mais cachée sous la forme du panégyrique, tantôt une mélancolie qui tourne au sourire ironique, aurons-nous bien défini ce charme qui s'attache à la lecture de Sterne, de Steele, de Macaulay, de Charles Lamb, de Butler et de Dickens ? Pas le moins du monde, et il faudra encore les lire pour avoir une idée.
>
> (After saying that humour is sometimes a serious and phlegmatic form of gaiety, sometimes a bitter raillery dissimulated in the form of a panegyric, sometimes a form of melancholy turning on an ironic smile, will we have properly defined the charm of reading Sterne, Steele, Macaulay, Charles Lamb, Butler and Dickens? Not in the least, and we will still need to read them to get an idea.)

The list of examples cited is fairly typical for the period: Sterne has remained (along with Swift) a mainstay of French definitions of humour since the eighteenth century, while the focus on nineteenth-century authors can be understood both as contemporary reference and as a reflection of a broader French enthusiasm for English literature at the time Larousse's dictionary was compiled. Anticipating Gifford's argument that understanding the French conception of humour may lead to an understanding of the French scholarly mind, this passage also suggests – in a manner that seems to demonstrate the concept under consideration – that

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[33] *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, ed. Pierre Larousse (Paris: Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, 1873), s.v.: '(u-mour – mot angl. formé du lat. *humor*, humeur)'.

[34] Ibid.: '*L'humour* est une tournure d'esprit très-originale et à peu près particulière aux Anglais ; c'est cette qualité qui donne presque toute leur saveur à un grand nombre de leurs écrivains'.

the key to the otherwise unsolvable problem of defining humour might be found in an understanding of the English, and vice versa.

Contemporary with Larousse, the influential dictionary of Emile Littré (1863–77) defines *humour* as an 'English word which signifies a gaiety of imagination or comic verve'. Littré first gives an approximation of the English pronunciation (*iou-meur*), but notes that 'some people pronounce it in the French manner, *u-mour*'.[35] Citing the letter by Voltaire quoted above as well as Corneille's 1645 comedy *La suite du menteur*, Littré highlights the word's parentage with the older term *humeur*, which he claims 'used to be used in this sense and has now come back into use'.[36] The much longer entry for *humeur* gives as its eighth and final sense a 'penchant for joking or facetious originality, more or less in the sense of the English "humour", which is itself a borrowing from French'.[37] Compared with Larousse's more modern usage, Littré's attempt to draw the notion of *humour* back towards the earlier sense of *humeur* seems a retrograde step that has drawn criticism as an exercise in linguistic nationalism and imaginative etymology: as Jean-Jacques Mayoux dryly observes, 'the quotations from Corneille invoked by Littré certainly do not have the sense he gives them'.[38]

Reflecting both the foreign origins of the word and the linguistic conservatism of the French Academy, the term *humour* did not appear in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* until its most recent complete edition, published in 1932–35. This edition defines *humour* as:

> Mot emprunté de l'anglais. Forme d'ironie à la fois plaisante et sérieuse, sentimentale et satirique, qui paraît appartenir particulièrement à l'esprit anglais.

[35] *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, ed. Emile Littré (Paris: Hachette, 1961), s.v.: 'Mot anglais qui signifie gaieté d'imagination, veine comique' ; '(*iou-meur ; quelques-uns le prononcent à la française : u-mour*)'.
[36] Ibid., s.v. *humour*: 'pris anciennement en ce sens et revenu aujourd'hui en usage'.
[37] Ibid., s.v. *humeur*: 'Penchant à la plaisanterie, originalité facétieuse, à peu près dans le sens de l'anglais *humour* (voy. ce mot), qui est d'ailleurs un emprunt fait à la langue française'.
[38] Jean-Jacques Mayoux, 'L'humour anglais', *Critique* 67 (1952), 1011: 'Les citations de Corneille invoquées par Littré n'ont certainement pas le sens qu'il leur donne'.

> (Word borrowed from English. A form of irony that is both playful and serious, sentimental and satirical, which seems to belong particularly to the English spirit.[39])

Again, this definition emphasises the 'English' identity of both the word humour and the object to which it refers. The characterisation of humour as a 'form of irony' – and thus as a sub-subcategory of *le comique* – highlights the relatively narrow scope of the French term. The entry for *humorisme* cites Swift and Sterne as 'celebrated English humorists'. Again, this choice of examples demonstrates a particular focus on English literature in French definitions of humour, while the choice of authors also hints at an association with literary self-consciousness.

The currently incomplete ninth edition of the *Dictionnaire* offers a definition somewhat closer to that of Littré. *Humour* is described as an eighteenth-century borrowing from the English term 'humour', itself ultimately borrowed from the old French *humeur*, and defined as an 'Original form of wit, simultaneously joking and serious, which tends to highlight, with detachment but without bitterness, the ridiculous, absurd or unexpected aspects of reality'.[40] While the Academy's definition does not directly describe humour as a specifically English concept, the phrase '*L'humour britannique*' is given as the first of a list of examples of suggested uses. In a further shift, the definition of *humoriste* replaces the examples of Swift and Sterne with those of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French humorists Alphonse Allais and Tristan Bernard, suggesting a late canonisation of indigenous French literary humour. However, the cultural position of these *humoristes* is subject to some debate: while Allais and Bernard belong to a broadly Anglophile tradition that is linked to another linguistic and conceptual borrowing, *le nonsense*,

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[39] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 1932–25 ed., s.v. On the late entry of *humour* into the dictionary, see Robert Escarpit, *L'humour*, pp.66–67.

[40] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 9th ed., s.v. Entry originally published in section '*homérique* à *idyllique*' in the French *Journal Officiel* no. 13 (1997); available online at www.academie-francaise.fr/dictionnaire/ (accessed 2 March, 2011):

> HUMOUR n. m. XVIIIe siècle, *houmour*. Emprunté de l'anglais *humour*, de même sens, lui-même emprunté de l'ancien français *humeur*, au sens de 'penchant à la plaisanterie, originalité facétieuse'.
> Forme originale d'esprit, à la fois plaisante et sérieuse, qui s'attache à souligner, avec détachement mais sans amertume, les aspects ridicules, absurdes ou insolites de la réalité.

Pollock argues that the limited importance of these writers in the canons of French literary history serves to demonstrate the relatively marginal position of humour in indigenous French culture.[41]

Amongst the most influential theoretical works on laughter in both French and English, Henri Bergson's *Le rire* (1900) serves to highlight the cultural and linguistic gap between French and English humour scholarship. The title literally translates as 'laughter'; and the book begins by arguing for a shift away from abstract definitions of *le comique* (along the lines of 'intellectual contrast' or 'absurdity in feeling') towards a more concrete examination of 'why the comic makes us laugh'.[42] Among the most influential aspects of Bergson's work is his focus on the 'social function' of laughter, although William Howarth, one of Bergson's more sympathetic recent Anglophone critics, has slightly narrowed this view, suggesting that *Le rire* is at its most valuable as an analysis of 'that form of comic drama which requires a response of laughter from its spectator or reader'.[43] Bergson's often-quoted formulation of laughter as caused by 'the mechanical encrusted on the living' can be thought of in terms of an incongruity between mechanical or unadaptable actions – such as a man slipping on a banana skin – and the '*élan vital*' which characterises Bergson's vitalist understanding of conscious, living beings.[44] Bergson's theory also implies a type of social corrective directed against mechanical or otherwise eccentric behaviour; and his argument that 'inflexibility is [the source of] the comic, and laughter its punishment' points to a view of laughter as an expression of superiority in the tradition of Thomas

[41] See Jonathon Pollock, *Qu'est-ce que l'humour*, pp.91–93

[42] Henri Bergson, *Le rire* (1900; Paris: PUF, 1962), p.6: 'De là ces définitions qui tendent à faire du comique une relation abstraite aperçue par l'esprit entre des idées, 'contraste intellectuel', 'absurdité sensible', etc., définitions qui, même si elles convenaient réellement à toutes les formes du comique, n'expliqueraient pas le moins du monde pourquoi le comique nous fait rire'.

[43] William D. Howarth, 'Bergson Revisited: *Le Rire* a Hundred Years On', in *French Humour*, ed. John Parkin (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999), p.139.

[44] Henri Bergson, *Le rire*, p.29: 'Du mécanique plaqué sur du vivant'. Many scholars have argued that Bergson's formulation is most convincing when applied to 'mechanical' comic performers like Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin: for recent discussions, see Noël Carroll, *Comedy Incarnate: Buster Keaton, Physical Humor, and Bodily Coping* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p.45–48, and Lisa Trahair, *The Comedy of Philosophy: Sense and Nonsense in Early Cinematic Slapstick* (Albany, SUNY Press, 2007), p.125–45.

Hobbes.[45] Echoing Baudelaire's 1855 essay 'On the essence of laughter', Bergson suggests that a 'comical character is generally comical in the exact measure that he lacks self-knowledge'.[46] This effectively reinforces the distinction between the mechanical unconsciousness befitting an object of derision and the more self-consciously whimsical quality usually associated with *humour*, leading Howarth to argue that the view of laughter set out in *Le rire* is mainly concerned with the externally directed tendencies of the French *comique* (as encapsulated in the English phrase 'laughing at') at the expense of the gentler, more sentimental laughter of British *humour*.[47]

The second chapter of *Le rire* offers a brief discussion of *humour*, classified, along with its close conceptual relative irony, as a form of satire. Bergson describes the characteristic movement of *humour* as 'minutely and meticulously describing things as they are, while pretending to believe that that is how they should be'; irony involves describing things as they should be, while pretending to believe that that is how they are.[48] In this typology, the combination of a simulated belief (that Irish overpopulation represents a culinary and economic opportunity, and that the proponent of this scheme is essentially civic-minded) with a representational style rooted in realist detail identifies Swift's *A Modest Proposal* as an example of humour.[49] Bergson's distinction between humour and irony has recently been revisited by Gérard Genette, who offers the contrasting examples of an ironic statement, 'I can see you're not oppressing the natives', and a humorous statement 'you're perfectly right to oppress the natives'.[50] Genette suggests that irony involves a 'discourse which is obviously, and thus insolently, untrue', and thus a degree of contention directed towards the reader or listener, while humour operates on the more subtle level of

[45] Henri Bergson, *Le rire*, p.16: 'Cette raideur est le comique, le rire en est le châtiment'.
[46] Ibid., p.13: 'un personnage est généralement comique dans l'exacte mesure où il s'ignore lui-même'.
[47] William Howarth, 'Un étranger devant le comique français', *Le français dans le monde* 151 (1980): 31.
[48] Henri Bergson, *Le rire*, p.97: 'Tantôt [...] on décrira minutieusement et méticuleusement ce qui est, en affectant de croire que c'est bien là que les choses devraient être : ainsi procède souvent *l'humour*'.
[49] For a useful commentary, see Robert Phiddian, 'Have You Eaten Yet? The Reader in *A Modest Proposal*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 36, no.3 (1996), 603–21.
[50] Gérard Genette, 'Morts de rire', in *Figures V* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), p.196.

false meta-statements about attitudes towards reality.[51] Genette argues that this type of humour tends 'towards forms that are less and less satirical and more and more playful, of which the typical example is what in English is termed *nonsense*'.[52] However, this analysis fits less well with the overriding moralism of *Le rire*: as Bergson himself implies, the concluding argument of his discussion of humour, that 'the humorist is a moralist disguised as a scientist, something like an anatomist who only dissects bodies in order to disgust us', is predicated on the classification of humour as a subset of satire.[53] Howarth argues that Bergson's apparent failure to distinguish between corrective and more generous forms of laughter 'does help to emphasise the precise nature of [his] subject, namely the aesthetics of a certain type of French dramatic comedy represented above all by Molière and his successors'. [54] However, this has the effect of limiting the scope of Bergson's argument to a specific social and literary context in which humour, and especially the purportedly 'English' phenomenon of *humour*, play only a minor part. Parkin argues that the comic tradition of Molière represents 'safer ground' for Bergson's theory than his attempts to read corrective laughter into 'the more often ambiguous humour of Renaissance texts like Rabelais and Cervantes'.[55] This is arguably even more true of later works in the same tradition such as Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–69), in which poker-faced self-mockery and delight in eccentricity seem to highlight the ways in which Bergson's prescriptive account of humour recreates the same automatisms identified elsewhere in *Le rire* as a source of ridicule.[56] As Sterne's narrator suggests, in what can

[51] Ibid., p.196: 'l'ironie […] persifle l'interlocuteur en lui adressant (ou à l'adversaire en lui consacrant) un discours manifestement, et donc insolemment, contraire à la vérité'.

[52] Ibid., p.196: 'Le cas de l'humour est plus subtil [et] peut s'évader progressivement vers des formes de moins en moins 'satiriques' et de plus en plus *ludiques*, dont le cas typique est ce que l'anglais appelle *nonsense*'.

[53] Henri Bergson, *Le rire*, p.99: 'L'humoriste est ici un moraliste qui se déguise en savant, quelque chose comme un anatomiste qui ne ferait de la dissection que pour nous dégoûter'.

[54] William Howarth, 'Bergson revisited', p.154.

[55] John Parkin, *Humour Theorists of the Twentieth Century* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1997), p.18. Parkin goes on to argue that Molière's comedy is itself considerably more complex than Bergson's analysis seems to allow.

[56] This position has been developed by a number of mainly Anglophone scholars including Parkin: 'Bergson's declared aim is to determine with a scientific rigour and precision the production processes of humour, which declaration, redolent of a nineteenth-century positivism which he in fact rejected, begs the question that such

be read both as an homage to the older theory of humours and as an account of the benefits of gentle, non-aggressive humour:

> True *Shandeism*, think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely through its channels, and makes the wheel of life run long and cheerfully round.[57]

Tristram Shandy has been cited by numerous French commentators as evidence of a nexus between *humour* (encapsulating the qualities of whimsy and self-conscious eccentricity, and usually excluding the notion of comic aggression) and Englishness: Cazamian's 1906 essay on the impossibility of defining humour sums up the book as representing 'a temperament, a sensibility, a type of intelligence, a philosophy, that we will characterise, for want of a better word, by the word *humour*'.[58] In a later essay, Cazamian characterises *l'humour anglais* less as a method of discourse than as a national mindset (*esprit*), and goes on to identify the self-conscious, self-deprecating sense of humour with a non-Cartesian, culturally non-French mindset:

> C'est un attribut de l'humoriste, que la faculté de rire de soi. La souplesse, le détachement que suppose la victoire du jugement sur l'amour-propre, est un aspect de cette liberté intellectuelle qui est, nous le verrons, le climat nécessaire de l'humour.
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> (The faculty of laughing at oneself is an attribute of the humorist. The flexibility and detachment implied in the victory of judgement over self-love is an aspect of this intellectual liberty which, we will see, is a necessary condition for humour.[59])

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an aim is achievable in the first place: others have seen Bergson as closer than he realised to the positivists he attacked' (*Humour theorists*, p.8).

[57] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (London: Penguin, 2003): Book IV, Ch. 32, p.303.

[58] Louis Cazamian, 'Pourquoi nous ne pouvons définir l'humour', *Revue Germanique* 2 (1906), 608: 'Analysons *Tristram Shandy* ; c'est un tempérament, une sensibilité, une intelligence, une philosophie, que nous y caractérisons, faute de mieux, par le mot « humour »'.

[59] Louis Cazamian, *L'humour anglais* (Paris: Didier, 1942), p.16.

This statement recalls the comments of earlier writers like de Staël and the Encylopaedists on English social and intellectual freedom: as Mayoux remarks, 'England is populated in the eyes of the French by people proud of their own originality'.[60] In the same vein, Cazamian remarks that the French are often perceived to lack a true sense of humour, since the 'conspicuous' nature of French 'wit, drollery, satire and all the brilliant manners of raising a laugh' do not sit easily with a talent for whimsical, self-deprecating understatement.[61] Escarpit's short monograph, first published in 1960 but still in wide circulation in France, largely concurs with these analyses, and concludes that *humour* can best be understood as a self-conscious existential attitude or '*art d'exister*'.[62] Like Cazamian, Escarpit notes the drift in meaning of the English term from its medical origins, as charted through writers like Jonson, Morris and Shaftesbury, but he also offers a contemporary definition of the '*sense of humour*' (left untranslated in the French text) as being:

> avant tout, la conscience de son propre personnage. C'est donc une expression qui est sémantiquement très voisine de cet autre maître-mot de l'âme anglaise : *self-consciousness*.… En réalité, c'est la conscience de soi, ou plus exactement cette conscience particulièrement aiguë de soi qu'on a sous le regard des autres, et qui pourrait passer pour de la timidité, alors qu'en réalité elle est une pudeur.
>
> (above all, the consciousness of one's own character. It is thus an expression which is semantically very close to that other watchword of the English soul: *self-consciousness*.… In reality, it is the consciousness of one's own self, or more accurately that particularly acute consciousness of oneself that one possesses when in the view of others, and which could pass for shyness, whereas in reality it is a form of modesty.[63])

This account draws on both common senses of the English term 'self-consciousness' (left untranslated in Escarpit's text, though not in common

[60] Jean-Jacques Mayoux, *L'humour et l'absurde : Attitudes anglo-saxonnes, attitudes françaises* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p.5: 'l'Angleterre se peuple sous nos yeux d'originaux fiers de l'être'.
[61] Louis Cazamian, *The Development of English Humor*, pp.21–22; for a more recent discussion along similar lines, see Jean Emelina, *Le comique*, pp.126–27.
[62] Robert Escarpit, *L'humour*, pp.126–27.
[63] Ibid., pp.26–27.

use in France), associating humour both with the reflexive capacity to conceptualise the self, and with the concern about potential embarrassment that is a consequence of the extra-subjective replication of the public gaze. As Albert Laffay suggests, commenting on Escarpit's position, the humourist

> joue volontairement de son personnage; il accentue le saugrenu ... se donne volontairement en ridicule précisément pour ne pas l'être; il se compose et se *représente* pour lui-même et pour autrui.
>
> (voluntarily plays on his character; he accentuates the absurd ... makes himself appear ridiculous precisely in order to avoid being so; he invents and *represents* himself both for his own sake and for others. [64])

Laffay's formulation here offers an interesting parallel with Sigmund Freud's 1927 essay 'On Humour', which represents humour through the image of the superego stepping outside the rest of the ego in order to laugh back at, and therefore put into perspective, its anxieties or misfortunes. In Freud's terms, humour represents a case in which 'The ego [...] insists that it cannot be affected by the traumas of the external world; it shows, in fact, that such traumas are no more than occasions for it to gain pleasure'.[65] The conception of humour in terms of a self-conscious being stepping outside its own subjectivity offers an apt parallel with the implied subjectivity of self-conscious literary texts, which tend to display both an acute awareness of their status as textual objects, and a marked concern for the process of reader reception. Mavrocordato characterises the humorist as a figure who 'takes pleasure in smashing the famous fourth wall, this fictitious and transparent divide that artists erect between the participants in a drama and the audience', citing a sentence from *Tristram Shandy* that incongruously describes the time elapsed within the narrator's story in terms of the time required for an implied external reader to read it: 'It is about an hour and a half's tolerable good reading since my uncle Toby rang the bell'.[66] With its

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[64] Albert Laffay, *L'anatomie de l'humour et du nonsense*, p.46.

[65] Sigmund Freud, 'On Humour', trans. James Strachey, in *Art and Literature*, The Pelican Freud Library Vol. 14 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.429.

[66] Alexandre Mavrocordato, *L'humour en Angleterre: du moyen âge au début de l'ère classique* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967), pp.62–63: 'l'humoriste […] s'amuse à crever le fameux quatrième mur, cette cloison fictive et transparente que

plethora of typographical games and reader-figures incorporated into the narrative, *Tristram Shandy* offers a ready example of self-conscious 'English' humour as perceived by a long tradition of French scholarship.

While the role of self-consciousness is more obvious in the French conception of *humour* than in the much broader Anglophone understanding of humour, theorists of reflexivity in both languages have tended to highlight the importance of humour, play and related concepts to the texts they describe. Genette's formalist account of hypertextuality sets out a complex scheme of relations between pastiche, parody, satire, irony, play, humour and other concepts, while he also describes the figure of metalepsis, defined as the 'deliberate transgression of a narrative frame', as producing results that are either humorous or fantastical.[67] While such transgressions can take the relatively mild form of a narrative intrusion, there is more obvious humour to be found in more extreme cases, as when the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* requests that his reader shut the door or help Mr. Shandy to bed, or when the narrator of Diderot's *Jacques le Fataliste et son maître* – a novel that ends by breaking its narrative sequence entirely in order to flag its close intertextual relationship with Sterne's novel – asks 'What would stop me from *marrying off* the Master and *turning him into a cuckold*?'[68] Robert Alter's classic work on the self-conscious novel describes the genre as one that 'expresses its seriousness through playfulness', while more recent Anglophone theorists of what has come to be termed 'metafiction' have highlighted its connections with parody, irony and other concepts that can be classified broadly within the Anglophone understanding of humour.[69] While scholars like Rose and

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les artistes dressent entre le public et les acteurs du drame'. Cf. *Tristram Shandy*, Book II, Ch.8, p.92.

[67] For Gérard Genette's account of hypertextuality, see *Palimpsestes : la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), especially pp.7–96. Genette has revisited his formulation of metalepsis as a 'transgression délibérée d'un seuil d'enchâssement' in various works, including 'Discours du récit', in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp.239–464, *Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris, Seuil, 1983), pp.58–59, and more recently *Métalepse : de la figure à la fiction* (Paris : Seuil, 2004), pp.14–25.

[68] Quoted in 'Discours du récit', p.244: 'Qu'est-ce qui m'empêcherait de *marier* le Maître et de le *faire cocu* ?' Emphasis in Genette's text.

[69] Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p.ix. This connection can be observed in instructive titles such as Susan Stewart's *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), Margaret Rose's *Parody//Metafiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1979) and *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Stewart have tended to emphasise the transcultural and transhistorical aspects of parody and nonsense, respectively, others, like Hutcheon, have tended to restrict the nexus between parody and metafiction to 'what we seem determined to call postmodernism'.[70] Interestingly, Hutcheon's claims that 'there are probably no transhistorical definitions of parody possible' and that 'it is modern parodic usage that is forcing us to decide what it is that we shall call parody today' suggest a position not far removed from the historicising tendency in French scholarship on humour.[71] In a similar manner, Hutcheon's description of irony, as 'this strange mode of discourse, when you say something you don't actually mean and expect people to understand not only what you do mean, but also your attitude towards it', seems to emphasise the relationship between irony and reflexivity at the same time as distancing irony from humour.[72] This echoes the much earlier position of Vladimir Jankélévitch, who argues that

> while misanthropic irony retains a polemical attitude towards people, humour displays compassion for the object of ridicule: it is secretly complicit with the ridiculous person and shares an attitude of connivance with him.[73]

In terms of Hutcheon's interest in theorising postmodernity, often associated with a death of affect, it is tempting to speculate on whether humour may operate as more of a historicised concept than many Anglophone commentators would be likely to recognise.

As the preceding discussion has shown, trying to impose a coherent terminological hierarchy on humour, *humour* and other related concepts is a hazardous exercise, in which even relatively specific associations, such as

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and Linda Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (London: Meuthen, 1984) and *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (London: Meuthen, 1985) . For a useful recent synthesis from a French perspective, see Daniel Sangsue, *La relation parodique* (Paris: Corti, 2007), pp.75–90.

[70] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p.xi.

[71] Ibid., p.10. For commentary, see Daniel Sangsue, *La relation parodique*, pp.84–85.

[72] Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.2.

[73] Vladimir Jankélévitch, *L'Ironie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1964), p.171: 'Alors que l'ironie misanthrope garde par rapport aux hommes l'attitude polémique, l'humour compatit avec la chose plaisantée; il est secrètement complice du ridicule, se sent de connivence avec lui'.

between *humour*, reflexivity and eccentricity, can prove problematic. Introducing his study of a group of early nineteenth-century French authors writing loosely in the wake of Sterne, Daniel Sangsue explains his choice of '*excentrique*' over '*humoristique*' as an analytical category:

> C'est que cette catégorie a le désavantage de rester incertaine. Hormis que le mot 'humour' est une invention du dix-huitième siècle, comment le 'roman humoristique' se distingue-t-il du 'roman comique', à la tradition duquel on peut rattacher Fielding, Smollett et Sterne?
>
> (It is because the latter category presents the problem of being uncertain. Other than the fact that the word '*humour*' is an eighteenth-century invention, how can the 'humorous novel' be distinguished from the 'comic novel', a tradition to which we can attach Fielding, Smollett and Sterne?[74])

Sangsue acknowledges '*excentricité*' as another borrowing from English, but argues that its slightly later entry into the French language, combined with its relative obscurity as a critical term, allow it to be used in a more specific context than the related term *humour*.[75] While French usage tends to historicise concepts far more than English usage, the slippery nature of humour makes this process difficult. In practice, *humour* overlaps with the more general term *le comique* as well as with the French literary category of the 'parodic novel' that is also often associated with the eighteenth-century tradition of Sterne and Diderot: later in the same work, Sangsue uses these writers as examples in his catalogue of 'parodic narrative figures', which amounts to a typology of self-conscious literary techniques.[76] A similar critical debate centres on the vogue for *humour* amongst late nineteenth-century French writers, which Grojnowski and Sarrazin characterise as a specifically modern and affective form of laughter.[77] Again, however, this argument highlights the confusion between

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[74] Daniel Sangsue, *Le récit excentrique : Gautier, de Maistre, Nerval, Nodier* (Paris : Corti, 1987), p.39.
[75] Ibid., pp.36–39.
[76] Ibid., pp.83–129; for commentary, see Pierre Jourde, *Empailler le toréador: l'incongru dans la littérature française de Charles Noder à Eric Chevillard* (Paris: Corti, 1999), pp.71–72.
[77] Daniel Grojonwski and Bernard Sarrazin, *L'esprit fumiste et les rires fin de siècle*, pp.34–35. See also Daniel Grojnowski, *Aux commencements du rire moderne : l'esprit fumiste* (Paris: Corti, 1997), pp.183–85.

the functional or affective properties of humour and its association with particular literary contexts: as Emelina comments, Grojnowski and Sarrazin's category of '*l'humour 1900*' could as easily be termed '*le comique 1900*', since the most salient common feature across the broad range of texts and authors they discuss is not a single, identifiable form of laughter but a historical moment.[78] In one sense, the concept of incongruity, used by many Anglophone theorists to describe the mechanisms of humour, offers a suitably reflexive basis for the classification of types of humour: in a response to Sangsue's discussion of eccentricity and humour, Pierre Jourde offers a catalogue of humorous and non-humorous forms of incongruity while acknowledging the 'simultaneously essential and absurd nature of such a typology'.[79] With a wryly self-conscious wink at the evolving and unstable French understanding of humour, Jourde also goes on to note that it 'used to denote a very particular form of the comic, but has come to signify something very general'.[80]

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[78] Jean Emelina, *Le comique*, p.128.
[79] Pierre Jourde, *Empailler le toréador*, p.10: 'caractère à la fois indispensable et absurde de cette typologie'.
[80] Ibid., p.18: 'L'humour, qui désignait une forme du comique très particulière, a fini par prendre une valeur très générale'.

Ken Kesey, David Ireland and a Portrait of Australian Freedom

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The Unknown Industrial Prisoner[1] (1971) is a complex novel that has been somewhat forgotten in recent years but was clearly recognised as an important contribution to Australian literature at the time of its publication, winning the Miles Franklin award in 1971. The novel encountered mixed reviews when published because of its perceived unconventional and fragmented narrative technique. Although new to Australian literary circles, such fragmentation had been used by William Burroughs ten years before the publication of Ireland's novel, and stylistically *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* has much in common with Burroughs *The Naked Lunch.* In regard to themes, characters, main metaphors and outline, however, Ireland's novel so closely parallels Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*[2] (1962), it is a wonder the comparison has not been made before. Given Ireland's own concerns, the popularity of Kesey's novel, and the fact that he was writing during the late '60s it is more than likely that Ireland had read the Kesey novel before he commenced writing his own. Both *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* are novels foregrounding issues of freedom and individualism, with Ireland's Puroil refinery offering an example in microcosm of society's ills, like Kesey's mental hospital. Ireland's obvious use of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is significant in that it shows he found in Kesey's work a certain resonance with the Australian experience. In these two novels, which use such similar character studies and metaphors to present issues of individual liberty, the subtle differences that may be found between the two are suggestive of differences in American

[1] David Ireland, *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner*, 4th, 'Arkon'ed. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1979).
[2] Ken Kesey, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (New York: Signet, 1962).

and Australian cultural attitudes towards freedom – a theme I intend to explore here.

Much postwar American fiction echoes the popular sociological theories of the time, imagining the Self in opposition to a society of grand conspiratorial design. A number of literary critics have identified a certain cultural paranoia present in American literature of the period.[3] In particular Timothy Melley's study *Empire of Conspiracy*: *The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*, traces what he refers to as 'agency panic', a set of anxieties regarding organisations, mass communication and technology, through a number of contemporary American novels. 'One of its most important cultural functions', he suggests, 'is to sustain a form of individualism that seems increasingly challenged by postwar economic and social structures'.[4] Indeed this is a defining aspect of the work of well-known American authors such as Thomas Pynchon, William Burroughs and Don DeLillo.[5] *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* uses the mental hospital to allegorically outline the encroachments of the state on individual rights, and this sense of paranoia is particularly captured in the character of Chief Bromden.

This sense of paranoia, however, is not, generally, a recognisable or discussed aspect of Australian literature. And yet it has an obvious presence in the work of David Ireland. Ireland's first novel, *The Chantic Bird*, abounds with images of small confining spaces in which the narrator is frequently trapped. The narrator becomes so obsessed with the idea of freedom that he is convinced that it is constantly under threat. He believes he is being followed and is so worried about maintaining possession of *his* story that he murders his biographer. *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* offers a more explicit example of 'agency panic' in which individuals must struggle to maintain integrity in a society controlled by an all-encompassing corporate structure that determines all aspects of their lives.

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[3] Critics such as Timothy Melley, *Empire of Conspiracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), David Seed, *Brainwashing: The Fictions of Mind Control, a Study of Novels and Films since World War II* (Kent State University Press, 2004), Tony Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950–1970* (London: Cape, 1971), Patrick O'Donnell, *Latent Destinies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), Katherine Hume, *American Dream, American Nightmare: fiction since 1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

[4] Timothy Melley, p.6.

[5] Timothy Melley also discusses Kathy Acker, Joseph Heller, and Margaret Atwood.

Not only is Puroil 'always watching' but there seems to be no escape from its long arms of influence as an international company in collusion with the Australian government. Interestingly, electro shock therapy, which in Kesey and Burroughs offers the most extreme illustration of paranoia regarding the loss of individualism (as it compromises one's freedom of thought), also makes a brief appearance in Ireland's novel. One worker is committed and submitted to electro shock treatment to modify his behaviour:

> I remember coming out of the twenty-four hour sleep they gave me at the hospital after the shocks… They can do what they like, it wouldn't matter if they killed you – snuffed you out in disgust. (The Unknown Industrial Prisoner, 243)

In *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* individual freedom is curtailed in order to further the interests of the Puroil plant. Even books are banned because of their ability to engender liberal thought – 'Puroil preferred zombies'(6).

Although similar to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in regard to themes, characters, main metaphors and outline, stylistically Ireland's novel has more in common with the literary innovativeness of the work of William Burroughs. Referring to its structure, Helen Daniel comments that Ireland's novel, 'appeared without warning or precedent, broken into fragments in a way which even *The Chantic Bird* was not'.[6] As well as being broken into many seemingly incomplete narrative fragments, *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* introduces some hundred odd characters, all workers at the Puroil refinery, and mimics an anthropological study, describing the various 'types' to be found in an industrial workplace. The multiplicity of perspective that is created by the myriad of some one hundred characters is reminiscent of Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch*, which similarly liberates the reader from potential confinement to any one perspective. Furthermore, the importance of maintaining one's integrity of mind seems as prevalent a theme for Ireland as it was for Burroughs: '[T]he only place they can hope for freedom is in their minds', states one of Ireland's characters (193). As it did in *The Naked Lunch*, the theme perhaps also provides a possible motive for the unconventional narrative technique in *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner*. Such fragmentation has the effect of

[6] Helen Daniel, *Double Agent: David Ireland and His Work* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books Australia, 1982), p.47.

freeing the reader from preconceived reading habits and systems of thought, while the postmodern structure of the novel is also intimately tied to its themes, its narrative fragmentation imitating the stop/start staccato of the machinery described.

As I have indicated, like many of Ireland's novels, *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* is concerned with definitions of freedom and the boundaries of this freedom. As Adrian Mitchell comments, 'All Ireland's work is concerned with individual freedom – how to obtain it, how to preserve it, what gestures can be made, including the vulgar ones'.[7] Principally, the novel elaborates the perceived impact of industralisation and capitalism on individual liberty, while also reflecting on the apparent failure of democracy to protect or uphold the freedoms it promises. The greatest injustice is that the industrial prisoners are unaware of their imprisonment, thinking of their ability to work as a freedom.[8] The novel offers an extended commentary on this subject. A lengthy discourse on page three sets the tone for the rest of the novel:

> prisoners were allowed to drift jobless to the few large coastal cities from all over Australia as soon as they left school, to choose their place of detention. Since wherever they looked the land was owned by someone else, the only place they were not trespassers was on the roads and there were laws about loitering and vagrancy. You had to keep moving and you had to have money or else. There was an alternative. Without alternatives there was no democracy. There was an infinite freedom of choice: they could starve sitting, standing, asleep or awake; they could starve on a meat or vegetarian diet. Any way they liked as long as they didn't bother anyone… The word Democracy had been heard for centuries on political platforms but was nowhere to be seen in the daily earning lives of citizens. (3–4)

Daniel notes Ireland's allusions in this opening section to Russian literary and political contexts, and its immediate effect of casting aspersions on our assumptions about liberty and Western society.[9] Indeed one of the characters is named the Volga Boatman, a reference to a Russian folk song

[7] Introduction by Adrian Mitchel. David Ireland, *The Chantic Bird*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973).
[8] Helen Daniel, p.50.
[9] Helen Daniel, pp.49–50.

sung by the suffering barge haulers on the Volga River at the height of Tsarist Russia.

The workers at the Puroil refinery remain there for the term of their working lives, until they are granted or forced retirement from the factory. Each longs for freedom from Puroil but is at the same time terrified of it, being so long conditioned to servitude. Besides the fact that the industrial workers are consistently referred to as 'prisoners', except for the one known as the Samurai they also all bear an

> inch-wide residual scar of chains passed down from father to son, from ankle to ankle for half a dozen generations, their legacy from the bloody and accursed empire which, to the amusement of its old enemies and its powerful pretended friends, had since died a painful, lingering death. Though you would not know this if you had examined the laws of the colony: all were promulgated in the name of the sovereign of another country. (2)

Referencing the country's first decades as a penal colony, the passage also indicates a continued sense of colonial humiliation. Indeed we are told about the

> Head Office in Victoria which was a backward colonial outpost in the eyes of the London office, which was a junior partner in British-European Puroil its mighty self. (5)

Compounding this sense of humiliation is the colonial exploitation of native soil as Puroil was able 'to persuade Australians to pass an Act of Parliament subsidizing their search for more oil'. (12) A further and familiar criticism is also made regarding the inability of the colonists to appropriately manage the Australian environment:

> Then Herman moved out of his line of vision, obscured by large projections on the southern side of the Termitary, designed to shield the offices from the direct rays of the sun. It was designed in the Northern Hemisphere. (116)

Despite its Southern Hemisphere location, the refinery has been thoughtlessly designed for a Northern Hemisphere sky. It has also clearly been designed with no thought to the sustenance of the local environment:

'Eel River … gummed up with – not to be admitted – petro-chemical residues' (117). It is also worth noting the factual existence of an American petroleum company called 'The Pure Oil Company' (renamed in the mid 1960s). If, historically, a shared sense of colonial oppression has been a significant reason for Australians' identification with the American experience,[10] here there is the implication that America has begun to adopt their prior oppressor's imperialistic tendencies:

> Sure enough the men on the vessel made the monotone drawling noises that denoted the use of the American tongue. There was a confidence about them, the manner the English used to have. …Now and then they looked down at the watching natives. (76)

The novel depicts a tug-of-war between the 'system' and its prisoners. Ireland depicts the comical ways in which the prisoners attempt to gain some freedom, yet any small advancement or victory by the workers results in harsher retribution or retrenchment. For those who have read *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, this framework, despite the differences of setting, is familiar. The parallels between the Kesey and the Ireland novels are too numerous and too significant to be merely coincidental. The similarity that first strikes the reader is the humour, the biting satire with which each author portrays 'the system' and the humorous guerrilla tactics of the prisoners. The first sentence, for instance, of the chapter titled 'Crashdown' describes 'the Puroil mental asylum run by its inmates' and is evocative of a similar occurrence in Kesey's novel, in which the inmates run the ward for a night. As Foucault observes in *Discipline and Punish*, 'prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons'.[11] In this regard the difference in setting between Kesey and Ireland is less important, each writing what they knew, the former having worked in a mental hospital, the latter having worked at an oil refinery. Like the work of Burroughs and Kesey, the diversity of human voices portrayed in *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* must contend with the single, uninflected monotone of the corporate or state entity. To emphasise

[10] Marylin Lake holds that '[Alfred] Deakin's identifications with American manhood were fuelled by colonial humiliation'. Marilyn Lake, '"The Brightness of Eyes and Quiet Assurance Which Seem to Say American": Alfred Deakin's Identification with American Manhood', *Australian Historical Studies* 38.129 (1997): 50.

[11] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* , trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

this point both authors make great use of the familiar metaphor of the controlling corporate or state bureaucracy presented as a machine, which is the extreme contrast to spontaneous emergent life highlighted by individual characters. While Chief Bromden in Kesey's novel figuratively sees and describes the workings of the mental hospital in terms of machinery, Ireland's anonymous narrator literally describes the mechanics of the Puroil refinery. In both novels certain characters are described as being replaceable parts of a machine. In the world of Puroil, 'humans were plant accessories', (342) in *Cuckoo's Nest* the ward is described as a 'factory' where broken 'components' are 'adjusted' and the 'completed product goes back out into society'. (40)

The metaphoric association of the machine with the 'unfree' has a long history in Western literature. Ireland's first chapter, 'One Day in a Penal Colony', makes obvious reference to Kafka's famous short story 'In The Penal Colony'. The complex workings of the vast Puroil plant allude to the intricate machinations of Kafka's torture/execution device. Indeed many of the 'industrial prisoners' are mortally wounded or at the least gravely disfigured when caught up in the plant's machinery – both literally in the case of Herman the German who loses an arm, and figuratively in the case of The Glass Canoe who is mentally destroyed and then killed. Contrastingly, in both novels the wilderness posits a space in which the inmates can explore their humanity – in *Cuckoo's Nest* this is demonstrated in the boat trip organised by McMurphy and in *Industrial Prisoner* by the characters' daily escape into their oasis hidden among the mangroves.

In Australian culture, the bush, much like the American west, has become an imaginative reference. Russell Ward in his seminal study of the Australian national character, *The Australian Legend*, explains the 'Australian pastoral workers … disproportionate influence on that of the whole nation' by introducing American historian F.J. Turner's 'frontier theory'. Ward holds that in countries like America and Australia, the frontier offered new experiences and indigenous influences, and promoted national unity and democracy. 'There is every reason to think then', states Ward, 'that the frontier tradition has been, at least, not less influential and persistent in Australia than in America'. Richard White further highlights that words such as 'squatter', 'homestead' and 'the bush' were in fact borrowed from America.

As Thomas H. Fick suggests however, the 'disappearance or degeneration of a literal frontier' has subsequently led to the abstraction of

the frontier geography into the psychic categories of radicalism and conformity.[12] Ireland's novel illustrates such psychic categories in its juxtaposition of the anarchic freedom of the bushland against the conformity that the plant inflicts upon its workers. The frontier is a border zone less governed by the laws of men than by the laws of nature. The freedom of its open spaces offers an escape from the 'cramping, foetid city' and all that it represents (ie the establishment).[13] Indeed there is a long history of the association of anarchy, freedom and the bush in Australia. In his chapter 'Bohemians and the Bush', White details a new generation in the 1890s of writers and artists who were attracted to the idea of bohemia but in 'rejecting the values of the cultural establishment' (particularly British cultural values) they removed this bohemia from its traditional urban setting and took it to the bush: '[T]he sense of freedom, comradeship and youthful spirits associated with the bush overlapped with the values which they infused into their bohemia'.[14] They presented the bush and these values as the 'real' Australia. Yet there is of course an even longer history of the association of anarchy, freedom and the wild in America, which may in fact offer a point of origin for the Australian reference. Most obviously Thoreau's *Walden* comes to mind. Interestingly, Murtho, the 1894 cooperative 'ethical socialist' experimental community on the banks of the Murray river (not unlike an Australian version of Brook Farm), reportedly held regular reading groups where members, thinking themselves to be part of a global movement,[15] recited aloud American writers such as Emerson and Thoreau.

Yet although this historical context may help to explain the parallels between the two novels in regard to their cultural symbolism it does not explain the proximity with which Ireland's main characters resemble Kesey's. There are three main characters in *Cuckoo's Nest*: the outlaw hero, McMurphy who leads his men to freedom, the observant, powerful yet silent Chief Bromden (whom we discover has much to say), and the destructive and malicious character who is so misguided as to believe in the

[12] Thomas H. Fick, 'The Hipster, the Hero, and the Psychic Frontier in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*', in *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, Vol.43, No. 1/2 (1989), 19.
[13] White, and Ward also, cite Patterson's 'Clancy of the Overflow' as the most popular example of this association. Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981) p.102.
[14] White, p.99.
[15] Melissa Bellanta, 'Feminism, Mateship and Brotherhood in 1890s Adelaide', *History Australia*, 5.1(2008): 7.5.

system, the Nurse. Out of the myriad of characters introduced to us in Ireland's novel, three similarly stand out and are attributed the most narrative space: the Great White Father, the Samurai and the Glass Canoe. Like Kesey's Randle McMurphy, the Great White Father offers a contemporary rendering of the outlaw hero or rather its Australian manifestation, the bushranger. Indeed the Great White Father displays all the tell tale signs of the universally resonant outlaw hero (almost to the same comic extent as Kesey's McMurphy). These motifs, suggests Graham Seal, can be 'referred to in shorthand as: friend of the poor, oppressed, brave, generous, courteous, does not indulge in unjustified violence, trickster, betrayed, lives on after death'.[16] In Kesey's novel the frontier legend is inverted, as it is McMurphy who must show the Indian how to 'get back to nature'. Ireland's derivative character leads his flock to the bush in an attempt to help them to discover the nature of themselves, through 'mateship', albeit primarily through sex, and alcohol. Still, this is perhaps an attempted return to earlier ideals, as Ward argues that conditions on the Australian frontier encouraged 'mateship' and a much more collectivist ethos compared to the individualistic nature of the American frontier. White, in his chapter 'The National Type' further affirms that '[t]he emphasis was on masculinity, and on masculine friendships and team-work, or "mateship" in Australia'.[17] The Great White Father's self-professed aim is to re-educate the men in their humanity:

> Where had they all got off the track? Was it when they were children, forced to knuckle under in the schools, made to leave their humanity outside the well-drilled classroom with their lunchbags, hanging on a nail? Why did they have to be taught again later that their humanity could be brought inside the classroom and the factory fence? Sooner or later someone has to teach them freedom. (20–21)

And he later explains to Cinderella (one of the regular prostitutes):

[16] Graham Seal, *The Outlaw Legend: A Cultural Tradition in Britain, American and Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.11.
[17] Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne Oxford University Press, 1965) pp.228, 27. White, p.83. The Australian understanding of 'Democracy' thus revolved around similar lines, and Australia's protectionist economic policy (from federation up until the 1980s) perhaps further reflects this attitude.

> The only way is to teach them to enter the kingdom of oneself. Oppose everything, not outwardly but in their heads. Never oppose themselves. (194)

It is perhaps not surprising that two novels with such similar concerns for freedom and individualism would make use of such an archetypal figure of resistance as the trickster/outlaw hero. Seal's study, *The Outlaw Legend*, which details American, Australian and British manifestations of the legend and their cultural significance, argues that despite the often specific local circumstances in which social banditry may arise, there are deep continuities in the general qualities and characteristics of the outlaw hero which transcend local and even national boundaries.[18] Traditionally the outlaw hero is to be found in the bush, frontier or fringe area where the rule of the oppressor is weak or non-existent. Importantly the Great White Father references the 'specific local circumstances' in which such a figure arose in Australia. The term 'bushranger' began being commonly used in the 1790s as a term for convicts who had escaped into the bush. Indeed Australia's convict heritage has been immensely influential in the popular belief in an inherent rebelliousness in the Australian national character. Adding to the legendary status of the escaped convict turned bushranger was their apparent ability to survive in the harsh environment of the Australian bush.

Constantly described as a 'prisoner', the Great White Father, who escapes to the Home Beautiful built in the bush surrounding the plant, obviously references this historical context. Indeed the narrator is surprised, given the Great White Father's libertine attitude, to 'see how blue the scar was on his right ankle'. (377) Yet, while the figure of the Great White Father seems unique to his Australian locality, Ireland also appears to make particular references to an American context. 'The Great White Father' was supposedly the term used by Native Americans in the 19th century for the American President, and the 'Home Beautiful' (an ironic reference to an interior design magazine) resembles a 1960s West Coast hippy commune, with the Great White Father trying to instill in the men the values of 'beatness':

> Beware the evils of temperance and sobriety and embrace the worship of the bottle. Beware the dangers of isolation from

[18] Graham Seal, p.11.

> your fellow man in haunts of coot and hernia. Every man needs homeopathic exposure to germs and windy ideas. (30)

The Great White Father in attitude and speech is rendered in the guise of real life American trickster heroes like Allen Ginsberg. He is set apart from the other characters in that his speech appears to mimic the rhetoric of American freedom. We also discover the Home Beautiful is a small enclave of writers and artists. Besides the Great White Father's obvious gift of oration, three separate characters appear to be diarising the events at Puroil: the Two Pot Screamer, the Samurai and the anonymous narrator, and The Rustle of Spring sketches all over the plant walls. (370)

Various critics have discussed Kesey's McMurphy as a Christ-like figure leading his 'flock' (305) to salvation. Ireland's character the Great White Father may be seen in a similar light. With the obvious religious connotations of his name, the Great White Father preaches sermons to his disciples in his paradise amongst the mangroves. Like McMurphy, the Great White Father comes to an unfortunate end. No longer able to sustain his fight against the system he dies only to become a martyr in the memories of the other prisoners. As in Kesey's novel where one is struck by the religious imagery of the scene of McMurphy's electrotherapy (he is anointed with a conductant, a 'crown of silver thorns', 237), the scene involving the Great White Father's death also seems a parody of religious ritual:

> Their heads leaned inward like girls examining a ring, aunts inspecting a new baby, wise men and shepherds over a manger or surgeons over a patient cadaver. There was a healed incision in his right side. I was surprised to see how blue the scar was on his right ankle. I didn't look at his hands. (377)

In most images of the crucifixion, Jesus' body is marked by an incision below his right breast (one wonders what the narrator may have found had he looked at the Great White Father's hands). The passage goes on to describe his disciples all singing different hymns and songs so as to create the impression of 'extremely involved contrapuntal church music' (378). Yet the reader is invited to question to what extent the Great White Father's benevolence towards his fellow prisoners has come at his own expense: 'A third time the Great White Feather struggled to rise and a third time the weight of their devotion kept him down' (378). Similarly, McMurphy towards the end of *Cuckoo's Nest* appears exhausted by the

weight of his responsibility to the other patients. Indeed, towards the second half of each novel both characters display a marked loss of the vitality they displayed in the first half of their respective narratives.

In the novel's last chapter we are told that the Great White Father did not get up to the plant on the day of the explosion but stayed at Home Beautiful in the midst of a four day bender. Consequently he is renamed the Great White Feather (371), as a white feather has traditionally been a symbol of cowardice. He has failed the men in their true hour of need. The Great White Feather dies soon after and it is left unclear what will be his legacy. No one is quite selfless enough to take his place. Despite his sacrifice, it is unlikely Home Beautiful and his vision of a communal drunken utopia will survive without him (372). All appear too selfish to devote the necessary attention or money to his bizarre vision. Thus, unlike McMurphy it appears that the Great White Feather has achieved nothing; he has failed to liberate his flock, perhaps because he too bears the scar of servitude, dependent on his salary to indulge himself and his men. He has not taught them to think for themselves but merely to 'set out fresh everyday to lay hands on and hold the greasy pig of pleasure' (372).

At the opposite end of the psychic spectrum of radicalism and conformity is The Glass Canoe, the embodiment of all that is wrong with the system. Like Kesey's Big Nurse, he asserts his authority over the prisoners of lower rank through malicious acts of intimidation or violence. Rather than resisting the system, he enforces it, seeking further advancement. Daniel refers to him as the '" Hollow Man" in the Puroil wasteland', substituting his dedication for Puroil for an authentic self which he is unable to find.[19] He is an empty vessel, which reflects the company line and its requirements. Interestingly, while Kesey depicts the Nurse as pure mechanised evil, Ireland demonstrates that the Glass Canoe is himself a victim of the system, a mere pawn in a much larger game that he is too stupid to comprehend. He absurdly wears a list around his neck of what the narrator ironically refers to as his 'symptoms' (written upside down so he can read them). 'The symptoms of his disease were the aims, ambitions, resolutions, promises and cautions he wanted to bear in mind in his rise to the top' (166). However, while so many of the other characters appear to use language to their benefit, plastering the walls with ironic posters, recording the injustices of Puroil, or offering sermons on the nature of freedom, the Glass Canoe is tormented by language. Unable to

[19] Helen Daniel, p.59.

command his own language, he falls victim (in a very Burroughs-like manner), to 'the word' and to his 'symptoms':

> it is words that cause all the trouble; they dictate what I think, they dictate what happens to me, they dictate what might happen to other people. If I could get rid of words I might get better. I might feel more comfortable. Breathe forehead, think stomach, sing eyes … They were all over me, those words, I couldn't shake them; crawling up my arms, running through the hairy forests of my legs, popping out of my hand when I made a fist. (243–44)

In many places in the novel words and language offer a small hope, yet here we are warned of their danger through their ability to confine via labelling and categorisation, (Indeed the characters are only known by nicknames, which reference their situation or 'group behavioural patterns'[20]). The Glass Canoe comes to a gruesome end, falling from the top of the reactor. He climbs the reactor with the intention of jumping, in order to show the other prisoners that he was made of metal and as strong as the refinery, that he was a 'whole man' and Puroil's threats couldn't take that away from him (280). Significantly though, even the choice to jump is taken away from him as Far Away Places, the main target of the Glass Canoe's sadistic harassment, sneaks up behind him and bites him on the arse, at which point he loses his balance and falls to his death. (In *Cuckoo's Nest* the Nurse also suffers extreme humiliation at the hands of McMurphy). The character of the Glass Canoe is a comment on the extreme alienation perceived to be the result of industrialisation. His death suggests the fallacy of wholeheartedly believing in a system that ultimately fails all individuals. Although McMurphy's exposure of the Big Nurse displays her vulnerability, she nevertheless remains a somewhat two dimensional 'bad guy'. However, with Ireland's character, the Glass Canoe, it is suggested that the bully is merely another victim of the 'system'.

Like Kesey's Chief Bromden, the Samurai is physically a very powerful man, a trained martial artist with quick reflexes. His physical presence and capacity for independent thought make him a natural leader. 'Everyone liked the Samurai, he was like the bigger boy in class, who shouldered the responsibility for other kids' adventures and, if need be,

[20] Helen Daniel, p.49.

stood up and swapped punches with the teacher' (76). Yet, it is a position he has little interest in (9). The Samurai is a character much in the guise of Kesey's silent Indian or Ellison's invisible man. For the most part he is quietly restrained, silently observing and documenting everything around him for the day when he will finally take decisive action. The reference to Ellison's novel is evident in a section titled 'White Negroes' (also a reference to Norman Mailer's essay of a similar title), in which the Samurai recognises an affinity between the repression of the workers and the historical repression of blacks:

> [I]n walked the biggest brass the men had ever seen. Instantly the Samurai yelled: 'Quick! On your knees! They might chuck us a dollar!' Several lowered themselves to this position immediately. (89)[21]

But such ignorant posturing is the reason he dislikes his fellow men and 'was convinced nothing comes about by the efforts of the people, the beasts of burden, but by individuals' (361). And so despite his intensity of feeling for the plight of the downtrodden, he intentionally alienates himself from the others (9, 362). This paradox lends a certain ambiguity to the Samurai's character, compounded by the fact that he places self-conscious doubt on the authority of his own writings:

> Was he writing about the men he'd worked with? Did they exist? … Were those men he knew or thought he knew, were they projections of himself? (362–63)

In Kesey's novel Bromden may be read as a similarly ambiguous character. On the one hand he may be read as a violent mental patient who kills another, thus calling the authority of his narration into question. On the other, and it seems the novel encourages us to read him this way, he is a compassionate narrator concerned with the welfare of his fellow man, who euthanises McMurphy to put him out of his misery.

The differences between Chief Bromden and Ireland's derivative character, the Samurai, betray distinctive differences between the novels themselves and perhaps offer an indication of differing cultural conceptions of freedom. At the conclusion to Kesey's novel we are left with an

[21] There is a parallel here to a scene in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* where a group of black soon-to-be college students are made to scramble for coins on an electrified carpet at the hands of their white beneficiaries.

indication of hope: in a symbolic show of immense individual physical strength Bromden lifts a concrete and steel control panel, throws it through a window, and vaults himself to freedom. Furthermore his transition from silenced Indian to narrator is equally symbolic for he has found his voice. The novel also ends with Bromden making the decision to return to his homeland and native community. This exercise of choice, alongside his creativity as narrator, is a further example of his newfound status as democratic individual. Apart from McMurphy's death and the unfortunate death of another inmate who hangs himself, the rest of McMurphy's flock, in a show of newly found strength and self-confidence, release themselves from the hospital to return to the community. As a Native American, the fact that Bromden finds himself, his voice and his freedom in Kesey's novel is an important comment on American race relations and racial equality. This aspect of Kesey's novel, however, is glaringly absent from Ireland's. There are a few instances within *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* which may have lent themselves to a discussion of race relations but instead they work to reinforce Ireland's overriding concern with the injustices of industrial capitalism. References are made to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and 'white negroes' but only to equate the plight of the workers with slavery. Significantly, Ellison's novel similarly uses the metaphor of a machine to depict the controlling corporate or state bureaucracy.[22] While Ireland's narrator occasionally refers to the factory workers as 'natives', it is in relation to the appearance of a foreign plant manager who unlike them is not a native born Australian. Unlike in the case of Chief Bromden, there is no reference to the Samurai having a racial or ethnic background. His name and the fact that he is trained in judo, may vaguely suggest a Japanese background but even if this is the case it would have little bearing on the issue of Australian race relations. It is more likely that his name is a reference to the popular 1960s television series of the same name. While Kesey's novel ends with a positive gesture towards a future of racial equality in the United States, *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* does no such thing.

Ireland's novel appears to offer little if any hope. Although the Samurai begins to 'believe in himself', we are further told he begins to give in to 'the dark forces rising from within him' (362). He reaches the

[22] The prologue of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* establishes the African American narrator's metaphoric struggle against the forces of Manipulated Light and Power, the systematised and far reaching bureaucratic structure of a national electric company that symbolises in the novel the systemic influence of *white* power (alongside the Liberty Paint Factory).

conclusion that it is pointless 'to work through the wantless ones', rather he himself must 'bring about a chaotic state of affairs in which his unfortunates and the industry that half-heartedly employed them would be pulled into gear and made to work'. 'Yes. He would go about the country, making panics', he decides (361, 362). While Bromden sets off to rejoin and perhaps rebuild his community, the Samurai makes the anarchic decision to create 'chaos' (363). Furthermore, although he underhandedly picks away at the plant's productivity, the Samurai fails to take any real decisive action. Unlike Bromden, the Samurai was still '[w]aiting for his voice' (312). Indeed on the same page we are told it is unlikely he could father children. A sterile Samurai is ineffective. Significantly, and as mentioned previously, he is not even present when the refinery finally explodes. The novel offers a glimmer of hope when we read that the Samurai has been diarising his time at Puroil and that he believed '[a] writer was a dangerous man, substituting words for crimes' (363). That is until we are given a brief paragraph of his work and realise that he too has been seduced by industry (363). We discover that he does not hate Puroil but hates the inefficiency and incompetence of its management.

> 'I wonder what your slant is', said the Great White Father. 'You're not against this' – he waved an arm round at the evidences of progress – 'this rubbish. You're for it. You try to get it to work better. You're a company man'.
>
> 'I'm an industrial man. And yes, I want the filthy place to work. I want the whole army of industry to work'.
>
> 'There you are, then. You're one of them. Production is your god'.
>
> 'You too. You help them'.
>
> 'How?'
>
> 'Taking the mob's attention from grievances – making them forget. Oblivion. Stupor'.
>
> 'A side effect. My way is like religion, which offers Eternal Life and gets its followers to train for it now. I offer Eternal Oblivion and my followers can *have* it now'. (363)

As readers we begin to see the possibility that Ireland has written a critical adaptation of Kesey's novel. The novel appears quite clear in placing blame for the perceived downward societal turn upon foreign interests. At the time the novel was written Australia had become embroiled in the American war in Vietnam and American cultural values were fast displacing the old sense of Australia's essential British identity. As a result

Anti-Americanism burned bright in 1960s Australia with anti-Vietnam demonstrations and cries against American imperialism. [23] Yet at the same time, notes Don Watson,

> Americans provided most of the music for the revolution. And the clothing, hair and lifestyles, heroes, role models, buzz-words, artwork, poetry, novels, journalism and comic books.

The paradox as Watson sees it is that 'they have been a mighty force for freedom. Flawed, contradictory, murderous, outrageous; yet what empire in history was less malevolent?'[24] Ireland's novel perhaps points to a mere switch of masters and modes of subjection – from colonialism to cultural imperialism. Ireland might be seen to have purposefully adopted Kesey's well-known American allegory of the irrepressibility of freedom and democratic individuality, and then subjected it to the forces of American/capitalist cultural imperialism.

Ireland's novel would seem to demonstrate the American model to be unworkable in an Australian context. The American privileging of individualism does not appear to provide an appropriate solution for Australia and the perceived American tendency to cling to cultural myths and figures of resistance in times of difficulty is perhaps naïve (as is suggested by the Great White Feather's failure to achieve any lasting legacy). Indeed by comparison Australia lacks the kind of resonant symbols or 'sacred texts' with which Americans draw the sentiment to continually revive and reinvent their cultural myths.[25] For Americans the West has always symbolised promise and possibility and Kesey plays on such symbolism when the inmates in *Cuckoo's Nest* make a westward boat trip giving them a taste of this freedom. Close to the end of *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner*, the Samurai looks West towards the Blue Mountains only to ironically conclude: 'but they were no help. Just rocks and trees. The refinery, for all its frustrations, was a product of strength and vitality' (361). We are told that the Samurai is the only worker who does not bear the scar upon his ankle. We at first assume this is because of his ability for individual thought but the real reason is perhaps because he desires to remain at Puroil. He is not a prisoner at all but is secretly 'in love with

[23] Frank Moorehouse's devastatingly humorous account of this, *The Americans, Baby*, springs to mind.
[24] Don Watson. 'Rabbit Syndrome: Australia and America', *Quarterly Essay.* No. 4 (2001); 14, 22.
[25] Don Watson, pp.47–51

industry' (361). The lack of an ankle scar symbolises his freedom. He is free because he exercises his right to choose and is not, unlike all of the other workers, compelled by the necessity to earn a living (361). Thus the only character to display any sign of freedom is the one who embraces the capitalist ethos at the heart of liberal democracy, and so has no real choice at all.

Ireland illustrates the idea of democracy to be a fallacy because the liberal capitalism at its heart does not create community but destroys it, alienating, isolating, pitting worker against worker. There can be no hope in the idea of a people's champion, a true 'democratic individual' who will lead members of his community down the right path as seen in Kesey's novel. Nor does developing a skill for ironic comment and anarchic debauchery achieve anything long lasting. Both the Great White Father and the Samurai, have their own failings and their own selfish agendas. Indeed the last line of Ireland's novel reinforces this sense of selfish individualism as the narrator and Volga the Boatman meet each other on a narrow path 'each, for the sake of a tiny inconvenience, wishing the other had never existed' (379). There is a lesson to be learnt in the way in which the plant explodes – the result of a combination of unrelated acts of sabotage and incompetence by various individuals. It is the *combination* of these acts of individual resistance that destroys the plant, not the acts themselves. The destruction of the plant has been the desire of many, yet one wonders if, had there been some communication amongst the workers, the explosion would have not resulted in so many deaths.

What is missing in *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* is the sense of community that we find built upon the democratic individual in Kesey's novel. What is perhaps also missing, however, is any hope that community is possible in an age of industrial capitalism, which promotes possessive individualism. Is it at all possible to return to the sense of collectivism that supposedly once demarcated the Australian experience? Some critics such as Brian Kiernan have described Ireland's novel as pessimistic, suggesting that there is no hope to be found in the industrial drudgery described. Adrian Mitchell on the other hand argues that, despite the apparent nihilism, there is the 'intimation of a preferred moral order'.[26] The severe irony and seeming fatalism of Ireland's adaptation, in stark contrast to the apparent hope and optimism of Kesey's novel, is perhaps precisely the

[26] Adrian Mitchell (June 1975), 'Paradigms of Purpose: David Ireland's Fiction, *Meanjin Quarterly*, 34(2); 189.

point. American democratic individuality cannot simply be transplanted from one continent to the next. As Don Watson surmises in his *Quarterly* essay 'Rabbit Syndrome: America and Australia': 'we could aim to be as full of hope and confidence as they are, but only at the risk of losing that weary fatalism by means of which we understand each other and charm the world', or 'we could do the sensible thing – we could make the guiding principles of Australia its diversity and pluralism, its inorganicness, the absence of oppressive and constraining symbols'.[27] Indeed Ireland's novel illustrates the very differences in cultural make-up and historical contingency, which suggest the impossibility of the American model for Australia. We are reminded that the link Americans have cemented between economics and the pursuit of liberty and happiness is perhaps an artificial one at best. What comes to the foreground in Ireland's novel is precisely its irony, its 'pluralism', its 'inorganicness' and an underlying nostalgia for Australia's lost socialist spirit.

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[27] Don Watson, p.51.