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Introduction: Culture and class

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Guest Editor

In their recent, ground-breaking comparison of the levels of inequality among all of the developed countries of the world, *The Spirit Level*, Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson show that there is a growing disparity between rich and poor which continues to entrench the divisions of class in modern society—in terms of income, employment, education, housing and even life expectancy. Moreover, while money and resources remain the most fundamental factors in defining class, culture plays a more and more significant role in the everyday reproduction of class consciousness, privilege and power:

> We all use matters of taste as marks of distinction and social class—we judge people by their accent, clothing, language, choice of reading matter, the television programmes they watch, the food they eat, the sports they play, the music they prefer, and their appreciation—or lack of it—of art.
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> Middle-class and upper-class people have the right accents, know how to behave in 'polite society', know that education can enhance their advantages. They pass all of this on to their children, so that they in turn will succeed in school and work, make good marriages, find high-paying jobs, etc. This is how elites become established and maintain their elite status.
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> People can use markers of distinction and class, their 'good taste', to maintain their position, but throughout the social hierarchy people also use discrimination and downward prejudice to prevent those below them from improving their status. Despite the modern ideology of equality of opportunity, these matters of taste and class still keep people in their place—stopping them from believing they can better their position and sapping their confidence if they try [...] Bourdieu calls the actions by which the elite maintain their distinction *symbolic violence*; we might just as easily call them discrimination and snobbery. Although racial prejudice is widely condemned, class prejudice is, despite the similarities, rarely mentioned.
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> (2009: 163-4)

It is this encounter between culture and class that the special issue of the *Nordic Journal of English Studies* seeks to explore, both theoretically and through the lens of literature. The ambition is not only to contribute to the renewed debate about class that has begun to emerge in recent

years, but also to discuss how literature can in different ways dramatize the experience of class on a more personal level in fiction, poetry, drama and autobiographical writing. The conclusion that underpins all of the essays in this collection is that not only is the personal political, but that literature has a unique capacity to illuminate this everyday relationship of class, and the way it interacts with gender and race. As Fiona Devine and Mike Savage note in the conclusion to their book *Renewing Class Analysis*: "The practice of everyday life […] is all important. It is in this respect that we recommend that the economic should be brought back into class analysis, although not the economic in a narrow sense but as a set of practices that are imbued with cultural meanings and experiences. Indeed, the concept of class is crucial for understanding the mutual constitution of the economic and the social" (2000: 196).

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that one of the reasons why the analysis of class needs to be renewed is that until recently, the experience of class has tended to be neglected, not least within academia. While the concepts of gender and ethnicity have fared better, class is often paid lip service to as part of the paradigm of oppression, but seldom seriously explored, even though the condition of class remains a fundamental part of life in modern society. Stefan Collini also remarks on this lapse in previous research preoccupations: "In the frequently incanted quartet of race, class, gender and sexual orientation, there is no doubt that class has been the least fashionable […] despite the fact that all the evidence suggests that class remains the single, most determinant of life chances" (Quoted in Day 2001: 17). The collection of in-depth studies of class included here is therefore offered as a contribution to the redressing of this critical imbalance.

The articles in the issue can be grouped around two main points of departure: theoretical and literary, although in most cases the two aspects are combined in order to flesh out the critical discussion of class by comparing with different literary representations of it. Julian Markels for example begins by making a strong case for the return of class as a key component in the literary critical discourse before applying the concept to a discussion of Barbara Kingsolver's postcolonial novel *The Poisonwood Bible*. Similarly, Hans Löfgren explores some of the sociological and literary implications of the Marxist concept of class, using Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night* and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* as contrastive

frames of reference. In an essay that traces the link between culture, alienation and social class, George Snedeker revisits the work of Jean-Paul Sartre in order to show the continuing cultural and political relevance of Sartre's critique of class society.

In relation to the more pronounced literary studies in this issue, the ambition has been once again to show not only the continuing importance of class as a social and cultural marker, but also how a class analysis of literary texts alerts us to the fundamental ideological nature of literature. As Gary Day reminds us, there is an intrinsic "link between the economic form of capitalism and 'literary' representation", a connection that seems to have disappeared in the postmodern discourse (2001: 1-2). Thus, in this context, Barry Ryan traces some of the ethical and aesthetic aspects of class in James Joyce's story "The Dead", while Åke Persson looks at the relationship between marginalisation and recovery in Roddy Doyle's novel, *Paula Spencer*, a text that is set against the background of the economic collapse of the so-called 'Celtic Tiger'. In an historically informed survey of the political and personal function of poetry in the lives of ordinary people, Andy Croft celebrates poetry's contribution to the cause of radical social change. William Frederick examines the complex psychology of class in Peter Currell Brown's modern industrial novel, *Smallcreep's Day*. As part of the more recent intersectional re-encounter between class, gender and race, Chloé Avril interrogates the representation of Black masculinity in Huey Newton's autobiographical *Revolutionary Suicide*. Turning to 19th century British colonialism, Stephen Donovan also connects class, masculinity and history through a critical recovery of a previously neglected, pioneering Rhodesian novel: Richard Nicklin Hall's *Bulawayo Jack; or, Life Among the Matabele Kopjés*. My own essay situates itself in a similar intersectional context through its discussion of the clash between class and gender in John Sommerfield's 1930's novel, *May Day*.

Referring to the recent emergence of a much recycled image of the feckless working-class 'chav' figure in British popular culture recently, Imogen Tyler concludes that "the level of disgust directed at the chav is suggestive of a heightened class antagonism that marks a new episode in the dirty ontology of class struggle in Britain" (2008: 18). Similarly, Owen Jones's comprehensive survey of this demonizing class stereotype claims that such collective ridiculing is also aimed at disarming any attempt to alter the status quo of class privilege:

> It is both tragic and absurd that, as our society has become less equal and as in recent years the poor have actually got poorer, resentment against those at the bottom has positively increased. Chav-hate is a way of justifying an unequal society. What if you have wealth and success because it has been handed to you on a plate? What if people are poorer than you because the odds are stacked against them? To accept this would trigger a crisis of self-confidence among the well-off few. And if you were to accept it, then surely you would have to accept that the government's duty is to do something about it—namely, by curtailing your own privileges. But, if you convince yourself that the less fortunate are smelly, thick, racist and rude by nature, then it is only right that they should remain at the bottom. Chav-hate justifies the preservation of the pecking order, based on the fiction that it is actually a fair reflection of people's worth. (2011: 137)

It is these fictions of class representation that this collection also seeks to challenge by countering the stereotypes with a more nuanced response to the cultural connotations of class, both in society and in literature. Gary Day notes that it is the plight of the poor that "reminds us that class, and what we mean by it, is once more an issue in British society" (2001: 204). It is the hope that this new collection of research articles will help to promote a greater critical awareness of the continuing connection between culture and class within the field of English studies, both in Scandinavia and elsewhere.

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Race, gender and class in the autobiography of Huey P. Newton[1]

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"We'll just have to get guns and be men", such was the powerful rallying cry uttered by Black Panther member (and later leader) Elaine Brown in her 1969 song "The End of Silence". I take Brown's words as the point of departure for my article, since they seem to encapsulate much of what is at stake in relation to gender and the Black Power movement. Brown's call to arms in "The End of Silence" immediately poses the question of the significance as well as the function of masculinity in the movement. It also highlights the link between masculinity and armed resistance. However, the use of the verb "to be" signals that "men" are the product of an action—getting guns—rather than a pre-existing subject performing the action, thus putting into question the automatic correlation between masculinity and the male body, a feeling reinforced by the words being uttered by the female voice of Elaine Brown. The contradictions and problematic aspects of the Black Power movement's invocation of black masculinity, as well as the intersections of race, gender and class, will be at the core of this discussion. In order to explore these issues, I will focus on the autobiography of Black Panther leader Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, where I will examine the tensions in this activist narrative's construction of a racialized, classed and gendered self.

Historical background

As far as mainstream U.S. history goes, the Black Power movement has characteristically been understood as a distinct historical phenomenon following on, and breaking from the more widely accepted Civil Rights movement. According to the traditional periodization of the era, Black

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Power spans the years between 1966[2] and 1975. 1966 corresponds to the year in which Stokely Carmichael, leader of SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordination Committee), brought the slogan of Black Power to national attention during the March Against Fear,[3] by uttering the now famous words: "This is the twenty-seventh time that I've been arrested. I ain't going to jail no more. The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over. What we gonna start saying now is Black Power!" (quoted in Joseph 2006: 2). 1975, the year marking the decline of the movement, more diffusely stands for a time when its ideological fractures became overwhelming, as well as when the popular media lost interest in Black Power and its leaders. In other words, the movement was eventually silenced (Van Deburg 1992: 15).

In dividing the Civil Rights era into two distinct periods, historians of course have done more than simply impose a tidy order onto politically tumultuous times and help clarify the divergent strategies characteristic of both movements. They have also implicitly or explicitly constructed a value-laden narrative in which Black Power often functions as the constitutive Other of the Civil Rights movement, or even its "evil twin", to use the words of historian Peniel E. Joseph (2001: 2). The Black Power leaders' advocacy of self-defense is thus made to contrast neatly with the Civil Rights movement's nonviolent stance, while the call for black nationalism offers a counterpoint to the Civil Rights movement's path toward liberal integration.

Another aspect that has come to be more specifically associated with the Black Power movement, and which I hinted at in the opening paragraph of this article, is its often narrow definition of black liberation as the liberation of black men and its adoption of a traditional understanding of gender roles (Estes 2005: 2-8). The reclaiming of black men's manhood occupied a central place in the Black Power movement's rhetoric and activism, one that also necessitated the subsuming of the

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[2] 1965, the year of the Watts riots in Los Angeles, is often also given as the starting point for the Black Power movement (Joseph 2006: xi).

[3] The March Against Fear was originally begun by Mississippi University's first black student, James Meredith, who singly decided to walk across what remained the most dangerous state for black people to live in. After he was shot on the second day of the March, however, Civil Rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Stokely Carmichael, joined together to support Meredith and to finish what he had started (Joseph 2006: 1).

interests of black women to those of black men in the political struggle. Still today, the image of the (male) Black Panther, complete with leather jacket, black beret and shotgun, remains powerfully evocative of this period in history (Williams 2006: 90).[4]

Moreover, in the black nationalist struggle to forge a society free of racism, blackness as an identity category took central stage and aimed to transcend the differences within the group (be they of class or gender for example). The subscription to the idea of black authenticity, as well as the tendency to offer black masculinity as the one-size-fits-all model for African American activist subjectivity has, however, been a problematic aspect of the movement that continues to require critical attention—as part of the aim both to understand the past and to theorize about the future.

More recently, the last decade has seen a significant revival of interest in the Black Power era, in particular by historians interested in offering new and more nuanced interpretations of the period and of the movement.[5] This article thus inscribes itself within the growing field of research now known as Black Power Studies. Since I have chosen to examine this movement through the lens of an autobiographical text, I also need to account for autobiographical studies as a field of research, as well as for its relevance for exploring issues of race, gender and class.

Autobiographical studies
The advent of autobiographical studies as a recognized field of research has gone hand in hand with the transformation of the academic landscape to include issues relevant to more than simply white middle-class men. As Kenneth Mostern has argued in *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics*, "the very development of autobiography as a field of study has depended on the entrance of African American as well as other minority

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[4] Although black masculinity is central to how Black Power is represented and understood, many women were in fact involved in the movement and were crucial to its organization. Women represented, for example, more than half of the membership of the Black Panthers (Ogbar 2004: 104).
[5] See for example Nikhil Pal Singh *Black Is a Country* (2004); Peniel E. Joseph *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* (2006), *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights – Black Power Era* (2006); Cedric Johnson *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders* (2007) and Amy Abugo Ongiri *Spectacular Blackness* (2010).

and feminist literatures into academic study" (1999: 11). Similarly, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have claimed, in their introduction to *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, that "interest in women's autobiographical practices […] was acknowledged as a field around 1980" and was informed by a perception of this "as both an articulation of women's life experience and a source for articulating feminist theory" (1998: 5). The correlation of these two phenomena—the emergence of autobiographical studies as a field of research and the process of diversification of academia—suggests that, from the outset, this new focus on the genre of autobiography has been fundamentally interlinked with different emancipatory political projects.

The genre has indeed been of particular significance to marginalized groups, not least African Americans, in their struggle for social liberation. In fact, autobiography, in the form of slave narratives, constitutes the beginning of the whole African American literary tradition. It is therefore not accidental that so many African American writers have used the genre to articulate both their own personal experience as well as a collective history of exploitation and resistance, making African American autobiography, according to Paul Gilroy, the most powerful expression of a "process of simultaneous self-creation and self-emancipation" (quoted in Mostern 1999: 11).

The significance of personal narratives to such marginalized subjects rests in part on the fact that it provides them with a decisive first step in constituting oneself as a subject worthy of interest, or even in constituting oneself as a subject at all. These writers, having previously been socially marginalized and silenced, could at least claim authority over their own experience and, in this way, enter the public debate. The link that exists between personal experience and political consciousness is therefore particularly relevant to scholars within the field. To once again cite Mostern: "the origins of revolt are always necessarily in people's self-understanding of their lived conditions, their autobiographies" (Mostern 1999: 27). The nature of the articulation of personal experience and politics is, however, a controversial subject within autobiographical studies, something that I will return to later.

The link between the personal and the political is one that also points to the fundamental nexus between the individual and the collective. The ways in which the individual "I" of the writer meets the collective "I" of the group they are perceived to belong to, is something that scholars of

the genre have been particularly concerned with. These narratives hold therefore a potential of representativity. As Smith and Watson for example point out: "[W]omen reading other women's autobiographical writings have experienced them as 'mirrors' of their own unvoiced aspirations" (1998: 5). In providing, in some sense, "models of heroic identity" (1998: 5), autobiographies can thus perform political work in themselves through helping other marginalized people to come to consciousness and find a voice. bell hooks also stresses the central role that autobiographical writing, in particular by black women activists, can play in helping other black women develop a "radical subjectivity" (1992: 56). Thus, paradoxically perhaps, while autobiographies by marginalized groups put into question the universal character of privileged white men's experience and subjectivity, they also subvert the individualist ideology often underpinning the genre through their reliance on the idea of a collective. The articulation of collective experience by the autobiographical "I" also implies to a certain extent the notion of authenticity: the subject needs to show that her/his experiences are representative of the community allowing her/him to speak on its behalf.

As can be seen from the above, the autobiographical narrative occupies a privileged position in relation to the exploration of issues of gender and race. The first problem that confronts us in our discussion, however, is the question of definition. What is meant by these two concepts? Even before asking ourselves what they mean or represent, one first needs to grapple with the ontological status of such categories. Is there for example such a thing as race or gender? Is there in other words any biological basis for these concepts, as we often seem to infer in our everyday use of them.

These questions have long exercised critics investigating these issues in the wider context of emancipatory strategies. The refusal to accept the classification of black and female subjects as lesser human beings has led inevitably in contradictory directions, where the need on the one hand for positive re-evaluation and, on the other, for recognition of a universally accepted equal status has proven difficult to reconcile.[6] Activists and scholars have thus in turn emphasized social constructivist and difference

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[6] Nancy Fraser has for example shown the political consequences of this dilemma for feminist and anti-racist movements as they struggle toward the twin goals of *recognition* and *redistribution* that often seem to take them in opposite directions (1995: 68-93).

models of both race and gender. The former would understand the experience of being a woman and being black as shaped by a specific historical and social context rather than as the expression of a potential inherent in the subjects themselves, while the latter would engage in a project of valorization of black and female subjects in their specificity while interrogating the white male norm.

At the risk of being reductionist, one could exemplify this dilemma as it pertains to the concept of sex/gender by contrasting Simone de Beauvoir's most famous formulation about the condition of womanhood: "On ne naît pas femme : on le devient" (One is not born a woman but rather becomes one) ([1949] 2002: 13), to Luce Irigaray's dual project of rejection of phallogocentrism and re-evaluation of the experiences of women and of their bodies. Beauvoir, through her provocative claim, seeks to challenge the biologically deterministic notion that being a woman is reducible to the fact of being female (2002: 14-15). In *The Second Sex*, she thus emphasizes the significance of women's experiences in a patriarchal society as shaping their existence. Irigaray, for her part, takes the starting point in women's morphology in order to define the female imaginary. Her claim in *This Sex Which Is not One* that "Without any intervention or manipulation, *you are a woman already*" (85: 211, my emphasis) seems to be in complete opposition to Beauvoir and has led many to criticize Irigaray for her essentialism.[7] A third way of looking at gender is through Judith Butler's concept of performativity. To Butler, there is no essence to gender identity, instead "the anticipation of a gendered essence" is what in fact "produces that which it posits as outside itself" (2004: 94). Thus gender is not the expression of biological truth, but is instead "manufactured through a sustained set of acts" that take on a ritualistic character (2004: 94).

The discussion of the concept of race has similarly been divided along the lines of social construction, essence and performance. One way the social constructionist stance can be expressed is by the idea that race or racialization is the product rather than the cause of racism. In this respect it is significant to note that French philosopher Jean-Louis Sagot-Duvauroux has adapted Beauvoir's statement as the title of one of his

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[7] See Diana J. Fuss for a reading of Irigaray that addresses and criticizes the charges of essentialism directed at her (1989: 62-80). The contrast between Beauvoir and Irigaray is not unequivocal on this point since Beauvoir never denied the role of anatomy to the experience of women (2002: 22).

works: *On ne nait pas Noir, on le devient* (One is not born, but rather becomes Black) (2004). The slogan of the Black Power era "Black is Beautiful" and James Brown's invocation of black pride in "Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud" corresponded to a will to define the content of blackness in more positive terms, not least as a form of resistance to the institutional racism of U.S. society. More recently, Butler's concept of performativity has also found currency in the discourse on blackness (Johnson 2003), something I will explore in more detail later.

While theories of gender have often taken women as their subject, masculinity studies have developed in the last two decades to focus both on the experience of men as gendered beings and on the meaning of masculinity. One aim of masculinity scholars has been to emphasize the multiplicity of experience that the category of "men" encompasses, where men from lower social backgrounds and who are not white are very differently situated in relation to male status and privilege (Connell [1995] 2005: 36). Of particular interest to a U.S. context and to the Black Power era in particular is the experience of black men, which needs to be discussed both in relation to their often privileged position vis à vis black women, as well as to the specifically gendered ways in which they have been discriminated against in racist society (Mostern 1999: 13; hooks 2004). In the context of Newton's autobiography, I will also seek to show how the images of blackness and masculinity cannot be discussed without taking into account the issue of class. More than just a category that needs to be added to an analysis of gender and race, class in fact modifies the content of these other categories and plays a central role in how gender and race are both experienced and represented.

I am inclined to agree with Kwame Anthony Appiah who states in *In My Father's House*: "The truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us" (1992: 45). The same, I would argue, could be said about gender. This, however, is not to minimize the significance of race and gender in people's lives. Howsoever we might question the biological basis of these categories, race and gender do matter in the sense that they have serious material consequences. In line with Appiah's claim, I would suggest a more revealing aspect to study is what uses are made of "race", or "gender" even in emancipatory discourses. In the context of this article, I will therefore be interested in looking at the way one Black Power activist makes use of and conceptualizes these categories in order to make sense

of himself and his community and as a way to propagate a specific form of politics. I believe that these questions are particularly interesting and relevant to the study of Black Power texts, since the 1960s and 1970s corresponded to the heyday of both second-wave feminism and the Civil Rights movement, where issues of difference versus equality and the accompanying strategies of liberation increasingly led to confrontation.

In my analysis, I will focus particularly on three concepts: authenticity, performance and experience. These concepts are closely linked to the three approaches I have discussed above: essentialism, performativity, and social constructionism. Authenticity, in relation to race in a U.S. context, points to the belief in there being a genuine and agreed upon content to African American identity (Favor 1999: 2-3). It is linked to the concept of essence in that it presupposes an original model of identity against which each subject can be measured. Performativity, as I have already mentioned, undermines the notion that there is an essence to either gender or racial identity; gender and race are instead conceived as the product or effects of regulatory gender and racial norms rather than their origin. Finally, experience, to use Joan Scott's words, is usually defined as "an expression of an individual's being and consciousness" or, at a more collective level, refers to "influences external to individuals—social conditions, institutions, forms of belief or perception—'real' things outside them that they react to" (1998: 61). In looking at Newton's autobiography I will try to analyze his construction of black masculinity with the help of these three concepts, as well as see how they are interlinked with one another.

As I have already pointed out, the text I have chosen to analyze is the autobiography written by Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*. My reasons for this choice are manifold: the first concerns Huey Newton's status in the Black Power movement. Newton was the co-founder and leader of the Black Panther Party, the organization that remains the icon of black militancy (James 2009: 140). Through the successful "Free Huey" campaign, Newton himself became for a while a powerful symbol of the struggle for black liberation. Moreover the Black Panther Party appears as somewhat at odds with other Black Power groups. Unlike most Black Power organizations, the Black Panther Party for example opposed a strict separatist stance and advocated alliances with white radicals. The party also supported, at least rhetorically, the movements for women's and gay liberation (Newton [1970] 2002: 157-59). This is

why I believe issues relating to the construction of race and gender would be particularly significant to examine in a text produced by the leader of the organization.

The second point has to do with the autobiography as a genre of particular interest to African American and gender studies. Autobiographies also hold a privileged position in African American history and literature, allowing readers access to the weaving of subject, collective identity and politics, aspects I will return to later. In choosing this text, I have also been sensitive to the date of publication. *Revolutionary Suicide* was published in 1973 which makes the text concomitant with the Black Power struggle. Most of the other autobiographies written by members of the Black Panther Party were published some time after the event, between the 1980s and the 00s, and therefore responded to very different contexts, in relation to gender, race and politics in general. Moreover, relatively little critical work has been done on Huey Newton's autobiography, compared to other members of the Panther party, such as Angela Davis and Elaine Brown. This might be related to the less literary nature of Newton's text, but might also have been due to the lack of availability of the text. It is nevertheless relevant to note that *Revolutionary Suicide* has recently been re-edited as a Penguin classic (2009), a sign that Newton's autobiography now enjoys Canonical status and is still considered politically and historically significant. This new edition should also open up for more scholarly work on the text. Finally, and most significantly, my claim is that Newton's text provides a particularly illuminating case study of how gender, race and class are alternately articulated in terms of authenticity, performance and experience. My aim therefore is to investigate the significance of black masculinity to the construction of Newton's autobiographical self, as well as the function masculinity occupies in relation to his overall political project. The main questions I want to try to answer are to what extent are gender and race, and more specifically in this study masculinity and blackness, understood in terms of authenticity, performance or experience in Newton's autobiography? What is the function of class in his construction of black masculinity? And how does Newton relate masculinity to political violence and resistance?

In order to explore these particular critical questions, I intend to implement an interpretative reading of Newton's autobiography which, in keeping with the modern trend in autobiographical studies, I will treat

as a literary text (Smith and Watson 1998: 7). What I am therefore interested in looking at in relation to Newton's autobiography is not whether the narrative provides an accurate portrayal of the subject's life and of the social and political context it describes. What matters more to is to examine Newton's text as a construction that reveals much about the contradictory discourses about black masculinity that were prevalent at the time of its production.

In search of authentic black masculinity
As I have previously pointed out, the Black Power movement has often been characterized as particularly masculinist in defining the goal of the black liberation struggle as giving black men their male pride back, not least through their access to the same patriarchal privileges they saw white men enjoyed. Black men, it was argued, had been castrated by 400 years of slavery and second-class citizenship and it was now time for them to reclaim their manhood. The reference to castration was of course metaphorical, but it also invoked the horrific reality of lynching in the U.S South where black men—often after being accused of having preyed on white women—were savagely beaten, dismembered and their bodies burned. It was not uncommon for these men to be castrated in the process, a sign that reflected the intimate link in white people's minds between black masculinity and sexuality (Apel 2004: 91).

Although revealing the specific ways in which black men were victimized in white supremacist societies such as the United States, the rhetoric of Black Power leaders in asserting black masculinity also played into the conservative discourse of the time which sought to diagnose the breakdown of the black family as an institution. The most prominent example of this was the government report published in 1965 by Daniel Patrick Moynihan under the title: "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action". Here, Moynihan described the black family in pathological terms, not least because of what he claimed was its matriarchal structure. Women had the authority while black men were too weak psychologically as a result of the consequences of slavery: "[T]he establishment of a stable Negro family structure" (n. pag.)—read patriarchal structure—was the goal Moynihan advocated the government should adopt in relation to black families, before blacks could gain full citizenship within U.S. society.

This promoting of traditional gender roles as desirable and ultimately 'normal' is something that is also apparent in Huey Newton's autobiography. By introducing the reader to his childhood background, Newton claims in particular that his own family, although representative in some ways, also distinguishes itself because of its atypical power structure. His father appears as special because of his pronounced patriarchal role and his firm belief in the work ethic, as Newton explains:

> My father was not typical of Southern Black men in the thirties and forties. Because of *his* strong belief in the family, *my mother* never worked at an outside job, despite seven children and considerable economic hardship. Walter Newton is rightly proud of his role as family protector. To this day, my mother has never left *her* home to earn money. (2009: 9-10, my emphasis)

Newton's father appears here as having escaped the disorder seemingly afflicting other black men at the time in retaining his natural masculinity. He asserts his masculine authority in such an effortless manner to the point that Newton's mother even becomes a subject without a will of her own: "Because of *his* strong belief in the family, *my mother* never worked at an outside job."

In the opening paragraphs of his narrative, Newton thus extols the virtues and even naturalness of the nineteenth century bourgeois model of the separate spheres that divided the public world of work, reserved for men, from the private domestic sphere, which was the special domain of women ("*her* home"). Ironically, in doing so, Newton reproduces the rhetoric and ideology of the Moynihan report. He accepts both the nuclear family and its traditional division of labor as being necessary, while also characterizing his own family as being less dysfunctional insofar as it copied that traditional model.

One could say that Newton initially adheres to an idea of masculine essence, one he sees his father possessing. The reason why black men in general lacked this quality is seen as the result of hundreds of years of oppression that have conditioned them into unnatural submissiveness. In fact, other black men are not viewed as being completely devoid of masculinity as much as purposefully restraining themselves, hiding their true nature, not least in their interaction with whites: "Although many other Black men in the South had a similar strength, they never let it show around whites" (2009*: 29).

In terms once again reminiscent of the Moynihan report, black mothers in Newton's narrative also seem complicit in this state of affairs since they encourage their boys not to assert themselves:

> Traditionally, southern Black women have always had to be careful about how they bring up their sons. Through generations, Black mothers have tried to *curb* the *natural masculine aggressiveness* in their young male children, lest this quality bring swift reprisal or even death, from the white community.
>
> (2009: 29, my emphasis)

Although Newton also shows the good intentions behind black women's way of bringing their children up, as a way to protect their sons, it was one that had both negative and lasting consequences for the low self-esteem of black men.[8]

Significantly, through his characterization of his father as an unapologetically masculine man and his emphasis on the lessons his father taught him, Newton posits himself from the outset as a natural inheritor of black masculinity. At this early stage in the narrative, Newton defines masculinity in line with bourgeois concepts of the family provider and protector, as well as with more general ideals of male dignity and pride (2009: 29). Aggressiveness also forms another key constitutive element of Newton's understanding of masculinity. Aggressiveness could also refer to entrepreneurship and the image of the self-made man so central to mainstream American masculinity (Kimmel 2002: 137), thus remaining consistent with white bourgeois norms. In Newton's case, however, it is more in line with another type of violence, one that is more literal and physical.

In *Revolutionary Suicide*, the role of violence is significant in forming the core of both a masculine and (male) working-class sense of identity. In the same way that "aggressiveness" is described as a natural possession of boys and men (2009: 29), Newton considers fighting as occupying a "big part in […] the lives of most poor people" (2009: 22). As such, a man's readiness to use violence and defend himself becomes the measure of his masculinity. It is also a necessity of working-class

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[8] A similar diagnosis, couched in much more critical terms, forms part of the argument of another leading Panther figure, George Jackson, in *Soledad Brother* (1970).

life, both as a way to assert oneself against aggressors and as a form of bonding between male friends (2009: 23).

Fighting therefore takes on a very positive value in Newton's narrative as a signifier of authenticity—both real masculinity and as the mark of a genuine experience of oppression. In his autobiography, in which he frames his own experience as being representative of blacks in America—often moving from the "I" of the narrator to the collective "We" of the "race", as exemplified by the title of the epilogue, "I am We" (2009: 359)—Newton privileges the experience of black working-class males as being a more valid starting-point for political organization. This is achieved not least through the binary opposition between the campus and "the block", which also resonates with other sets of binaries—between talk and action, words and guns, mind and body. In an episode that dramatizes a turning point in his political evolution, Newton clearly emphasizes this class dichotomy:

> Most of the people in the [Afro-American] Association were *college* students and very *bourgeois*, but *my people* were *off the block*; some of them could not even read, but they were angry and looking for a way to channel their feelings. […] Sometimes our street meetings ended in fights […]. That was when I began to see through Warden [the founder of the Afro-American Association]. […]
>
>   My disillusionment began when I realized he would not stand his ground in a fight. (2009: 63, my emphasis)

It is significant to note that the illiterate "street brothers", whom Newton also repeatedly characterizes as "righteous" (2009: 61, 67), are shown to deserve more respect than intellectual leaders, because of their ability to fight. Paradoxically, in a reversal of the traditional nature-culture binary, it is the bodies of men that form the constitutive element that defines their status. More specifically, the masculinity of black working-class men, from being a stereotypical trait, is here promoted more positively as part of their potential political identity.

Thus, working-class origins not only serve to lend masculine credibility but also political authenticity. This is exemplified in a humorous passage in which Newton derides another campus organization—the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM)—for their lack of masculine political resolve:

> They claimed to function as an underground movement but instead of revolutionary *action*, they indulged in a lot of revolutionary *talk*, none of it underground. They

> were all *college* students, with *bourgeois* skills, who *wrote* a lot. Eventually, they became so infiltrated with agents that when an arrest was made, the police spent all their time showing each other their badges. (2009: 72, my emphasis)

In contrasting the image of the active, righteous and virile "brothers on the block" to that of intellectualizing but ineffectual college students, Newton suggests that their middle-class status is a form of emasculation. Their capacity as revolutionary agents of change has been compromised and lost. To use a masculinist metaphor, one could state that Newton portrays these self-appointed, middle-class leaders of the black community as 'firing blanks'.

Significant to the way in which class, gender and racial identities are intimately intertwined, working-class status in Newtown's autobiography not only gives men privileged access to masculinity and political credibility, it also has the power to confer blackness. This is apparent in the comparison Newton makes between his own party and yet another political group engaged in the struggle for black liberation. This time the group also shared the same name as Newton's party. To mark the fundamental difference between his own party and theirs, Newton once again has recourse to the word/action binary: the other group is nicknamed the "Paper Panthers" in reference to the fact that "their activity was confined to a steady production of printed matter" (138). Here again, the more privileged class background of the "Paper Panthers" makes them ideologically suspect: thus, the group, according to him, is all talk and no action (138). More revealingly, however, their lack of revolutionary activism and street credibility puts into question their very blackness. As Newton informs the reader: "No one was doing very much, just lying around 'becoming Black'" (138). This notion of "becoming Black" is relevant in several ways. By applying it to the black intelligentsia, Newton opposes the authenticity of the working class to the factitious existence of the middle class. Blackness is therefore not an identity conferred automatically through skin color. It is a gauge of social and political trustworthiness which Newton locates in the 'natural' condition of underprivileged black men. As a result, class becomes not only a gender but also a racial marker, which, as such, denotes the "brother on the block" as the personification of authentic black masculinity.

By linking black authenticity to working-class status, Newton in fact follows the norm since, as E. Patrick Johnson for example points out, the

cultural forms "associated with the black working class" have also often been "viewed as more genuinely black" (Johnson 2003: 22). The discourse of authenticity that Newton relies upon in his narrative certainly offers a positive subject position to the "brothers on the block," one often denied them in their everyday life. This is what Johnson also views as the positive potential of the recourse to authenticity, in that it "enables marginalized people to counter oppressive representations of themselves" (Johnson 2003: 3).

However, inherently in this argument, there is another, more negative aspect as well. Because of the binary opposition between civilization and nature, Black working-class males are not free from other stereotyped racial images. In fact, one could argue that they owe their privileged access to authentic blackness to their greater exclusion from mainstream society. In other words, the positive re-evaluation of marginalized black men in Newton's autobiography is unable to fully eliminate the link of "racial authenticity with a certain kind of primitivism and anti-intellectualism" (Johnson 2003: 23).

The discourse of authenticity is also problematic in other ways. As Johnson has pointed out, "When black Americans have employed the rhetoric of black authenticity, the outcome has often been a political agenda that has excluded more voices than it has included" (2003: 3). However, and paradoxically perhaps, it also denaturalizes and destabilizes the link between body and identity and as a result calls attention to the performative nature of categories such as masculinity and blackness. This ontological contradiction is what I will turn to next.

Performing race and gender

As I have pointed out above, the quest for authentic blackness and masculinity presupposes the idea of performance. If some black men's experiences are viewed as being more authentic, then it means others' are not. Some are hopelessly trying to fake it, hoping to "becom[e] Black". So if neither the color of a black man's skin nor his anatomy is able to guarantee him unequivocal access to an authentic black masculine identity, what will? It would seem that what makes some subjects the privileged repository of this identity is not their biology but their performance: how well they are able to embody the definition of black masculinity that has gained currency at one particular historical moment.

As Martin Favor argues in relation to blackness, the meaning and content of the concept fluctuates over time:

> A cursory and anecdotal glance at the subject reveals that—even outside the rules and strictures of the law—the definition of blackness is constantly being invented, policed, transgressed and contested. When hip-hop artists remind themselves and their audiences to "stay black" or "keep it real", they are implicitly suggesting that there is a recognizable, repeatable, and agreed upon thing that we might call black authenticity. (1999: 2)

Favor's use of the adjectives "recognizable" and "repeatable" here echoes Butler's definition of performativity which she describes in *Bodies that Matter* as "a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms" (1993: 95). If repetition characterizes performativity, the other adjective "recognizable" articulates the relationship between performance and authenticity in that what is repeated, in order to be sanctioned by society or a specific group, must correspond to the norms of acceptable behavior that are available to different categories of people. The idea of performance or performativity relies on some agreed upon, or at least more hegemonic forms, of behavior according to which the success of a performance can be recognized and measured. If there was no notion of authenticity, performance would be unintelligible, so performance and authenticity paradoxically presuppose one another.

In a way, the Black Panther Party relied on their capacity to perform an already established privileged black masculine identity—that of the poor urban black male, which I discussed in the previous section. But it also provided underprivileged young African Americans with a new script in order to politicize their social position, through popularizing and embodying the notion of armed self-defense.

The spectacular and theatrical elements of the Black Panther Party's political strategy have recently been emphasized by Black Power scholars such as Nikhil Pal Singh (2004), Jane Rhodes (2007) and Amy Abugo Ongiri (2010). Ongiri's study for example aims in part to question the commonplace idea that the Panthers "were created by the mainstream media" (2010: 19), thus showing that they were themselves acutely aware of the powerful impact of the media and were trying consciously to use it in a process of self-promotion and self-creation. Ongiri argues that the Panthers' recourse to extremely visible and spectacular political

strategies is also characteristic of the changing trends within African American culture in the postwar era (2010: 4-7).

This tendency towards the spectacular is also visible in Newton's autobiography and calls attention, I would argue, to the performative character of (black) masculinity that often occurs throughout the narrative. After drafting their new party's 10-point platform and program, Huey Newton and co-founder Bobby Seale for example consciously chose to emphasize point 7, which demanded an end to police brutality. Not only because of the urgent need to stop the state terrorization of the black community, but also because of the potential it offered for visibility: "Interested primarily in educating and revolutionizing the community, *we needed to get their attention* and give them something to identify with" (2009: 127, my emphasis). What better way to attract attention than by "patrolling the police with arms." As Newton points out, this sent a powerful visual message to the police and to the community: "With weapons in our hands, we were no longer their subjects but their equal" (2009: 127). Significantly, this points to the productive aspect of performativity in the sense that the subject does not precede the performance, but is in fact produced through it, or, to use Judith Butler's own words, performativity, that is, the repetition of norms "is not performed *by* a subject" but is instead "what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject" (Butler 1993: 234). Black men thus became the equals of white men through their delivering a new kind of performance.

Contrary to the idea of emulating an already existing authentic black manhood, something I discussed earlier, this points to the Panthers' well-scripted performance as the moment of production of something new, contingent on the specific social and political context of the mid 1960s. At that juncture in history, a new model for black masculinity could be enacted.

The change of trends in African American culture from the textual to the visual discussed by Ongiri and typical of the Panthers also had some very significant ramifications for the issue of class. Because of the theatrical nature of the party's political strategy, the Panthers became themselves powerful embodiments of their ideas and had thus the capacity to reach the illiterate brothers on the block who were their target audience. In relation to their very dramatic protest action against a new bill that would make carrying loaded weapons illegal—thus

incapacitating the Panthers' armed patrols—Newton explains for instance: "Sacramento was certainly a success […] in attracting national attention; even those who did not hear the complete message saw the arms, and this conveyed enough to Black people" (159). In other words, the bodies of Panther members were effectively turned into public signs which the community could easily read and interpret. Their bodies became in effect their prime resource for political education:

> We were an unusual sight in Richmond, or any other place, dressed in our black leather jackets, wearing black berets and gloves, and carrying shotguns over our shoulders. […] Walking armed through Richmond was our propaganda. (2009: 151)

The use of uniforms in particular contributed to the forceful visual impact of the Panthers, both then and now. Uniforms called to mind images of an army, a comparison Newton himself makes (2009: 148), but one of a different kind. While black regiments earned a certain amount of respect fighting to end slavery and preserve the Union during the Civil War, and then again fighting for the U.S. government in WW2, the Panther army was one that definitely did not exist in the service of the nation.

In planning such spectacular shows of militant blackness, the Panthers were consciously projecting an empowering identity for the black community. They used violence, or rather self-defense as a conscious tool to this end. The specific form that this performance often took can be described in terms of what Douglas Taylor—using Malcolm X—calls a "showdown", that is, "a ritual performance in which two men square off against one another before the gaze of a third party to assert their manhood" (2007: 2). The fighting scenes in Newton's autobiography, which I discussed earlier, certainly qualify as such, but more politically significant in this respect are the confrontations between the Panthers and the repressive white state apparatus. As Taylor argues, an important element of the "showdown" performance in relation to masculinity is that it points to "the intersubjective manner" in which this gender identity is produced (2007: 2). The effect of masculinity is produced through a transaction: the transfer of that quality from one individual or group to another. The transactional nature of masculinity through performance is also evident in Newton's nostalgic descriptions of the early confrontations between Panthers and the police:

> It was not all observation and penal code reading on those patrols. The police, invariably shocked to meet a cadre of disciplined and armed Black men coming to the support of the community, reacted in strange and unpredictable ways. In their fright, some of them became children, cursing and insulting us. […] It was sometimes hilarious to see their reaction; they had always been so cocky and sure of themselves as long as they had weapons to intimidate the unarmed community. When we equalized the situation, their real cowardice was exposed. (2009: 129)

In this passage, the confrontation leads to the police losing the stable masculine authority they formerly possessed. They become infantilized and their masculinity is thus transferred to "the cadre of disciplined and armed Black men". This can, however, only happen through the spectatorship of a third party who needs to witness the transaction. The spectator in this case is the black community and their witnessing of the performance also transforms them. They begin "to lose their doubts and fears", something that will allow them "to move against the oppressor" (2009: 129). As Newton sums it up at the end of the section entitled "Patrolling": "We had provided a needed example of strength and dignity by showing people how to defend themselves" (2009: 135).

The atmosphere that sustains the Panthers' performance could also be described at times as carnivalesque in that the roles are reversed, for a time at least, and ordinary people are given a taste of riotous power. The people, often pictured as looking in on police/Panther altercations, are for example laughing at the cops (2009: 131). Newton certainly emphasizes the humorous character of such moments: "I ignored the gun, got out of the car, and asked the people to go into the Party office. They had a right to observe the police. Then I called the policeman an ignorant Georgia cracker who had come West to get away from sharecropping" (2009: 130). While he tells the people they have the "right to observe the police", Newton becomes in fact the real center of attention, something he evidently relishes as he is putting on a show of his own. Newton also invites the reader of the autobiography to share in the laughter, in particular in prison scenes, where his usual audience is missing. Describing for example his ride outside of the prison with two policemen, he tells the reader, in a one-man show style:

> The two deputies got in front. While one of them was starting the engine, the other one said, "Wait a minute, I have to get my equalizer out of the trunk." I glanced back as he was coming around the car and saw him putting what looked like a snub-nosed .38 revolver in his belt. With his gun and me in chains I guess we were equal.
>
> (2009: 296)

Through this joke, Newton again aims to reveal the tenuous nature of the policemen's masculinity: how much of a man is a cop who is afraid of a prisoner, when the latter cannot defend himself.

The kind of showdown which Newton dramatizes in such passages differs somewhat from that which Douglas Taylor describes in the autobiography of Malcolm X. As Taylor notes, showdowns in this context are usually played out between two black men. Taylor's argument is that the performance is intended for an absent third party: the white man, as the ultimate authority in having the power to confer on black men their manhood (2007: 2). In Newton's case, the "squar[ing] off" is between black men and the white establishment. This, however, seems to strengthen rather than undermine the idea that masculinity remains measured in relation to white men. This is also what gave Newton's father, Walter, his masculine pride, since he "never hesitated to speak up to a white man" (2009: 29). Masculinity is thus shown here not to be an essence one possesses in virtue of one's body, but a highly conditional identity and one which, for black men, depends on a relation to the white other. As an assertion of what is denied, the Panthers' show of masculinity thus still remains the expression of a lack.

Masculinity also appears to be a tenuous and conditional identity at a more personal level in Newton's autobiography. In the beginning, he recalls for example that when he was little, family members used to tease him, telling him that "[he] was too pretty to be a boy, [and] that [he] should have been a girl" (2009: 11). On his own admission, this pretty boy look was what started him fighting at school, as a means to prove himself. Thus, violence and masculinity, instead of appearing as two essential aspects of the experience of being male, are instead shown to be a question of performance. Violence is not an expression of a true male nature, but becomes the way to dispel doubts about his own masculinity. It is relevant to note here that this is one of the few passages where masculinity is clearly described in a relational manner to femininity. Elsewhere, as I have pointed out, masculinity is more clearly portrayed as a transfer from white to black bodies.

One last aspect of the performative nature of masculine identity in Newton's narrative can be located in the autobiographical genre itself. Indeed, as Kenneth Mostern has pointed out, the *subject* of autobiography is after all a construction, in that the writer tries to reconstruct the past in order "to fit a notion of identity consistent with a particular narrative moment" (Mostern 1999: 140). In the case of Newton, one can claim that he is writing back at a specific image of himself and of the Panthers, hoping to complicate the simplistic picture of them in the media. It is thus remarkable that, although the spectacular performance of black masculinity plays a central role in his narrative, Newton in fact chooses to present the reader with a very different side of himself, thereby providing an alternative image of black masculinity. In contrast to the armed black working-class male hero who stands as the epitome of black authenticity, Newton the narrator appears at times instead as the isolated intellectual. Especially at the beginning of the autobiography, we can see clearly the effort of Newton to disprove the myth about the ignorant black man as he drops names of great thinkers, such as Plato, Durkheim, Nietzche, or Fanon, in order to show the reader the range of his extensive knowledge. The opening manifesto and especially the acknowledgements section also serve to dissociate Newton, as the aloof intellectual leader, from the immediate, everyday struggle. Indeed, not one Panther member or brother on the block is mentioned or thanked, only the people who have helped him with the writing and publication of the book (2009: xix).

The contrastive personas of Newton as "street brother" and aloof intellectual serve to complicate a one-dimensional understanding of black masculinity, opening up instead for the possibility of alternative performances and for the multiplicity of identity. A critical look at the book covers of the three different editions of *Revolutionary Suicide* can be instructive in this respect. The two images adorning the first edition present the reader with exactly such a contrast. The front cover shows the famous poster in which Newton, in his Panther uniform, is sitting down in a high-backed, African wicker chair holding a rifle in one hand and a spear in the other. The defiant pose of the militant activist emphasizes the Panther's program of self-defense, as well as connotes the politics of cultural nationalism through its reference to tribal Africa. The militant stance is however complicated by the fact that the photograph of Newton is on a window that has been shot through by a bullet, thus underlining

the immediate personal danger facing the activist in the movement. The back cover, however, presents Newton in a very different light, one that reminds one more of "The Thinker" of Rodin. I would argue that these two illustrations emphasize the performative aspect of black masculinity and Newton's own awareness of the role-playing aspect of political involvement. In other words, the image is in part also the message.

In contrast, later editions exploit the stereotyped image of the revolutionary guerilla activist. The second edition for example makes use of the same iconic figure of Newton in the wicker chair, but this time omitting the bullet hole. More significantly still are the illustrations chosen by Ho Che Anderson for the latest—Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition. The front cover shows an image of Newton in his leather jacket and black beret with a rifle pointed at his neck. The back cover shows Newton aiming a gun—the same rifle that is in fact pointed at him on the front cover, presumably to suggest the suicidal nature of revolutionary struggle, also foregrounded by Newton in the title and introductory manifesto of his autobiography. This re-cycling of the popular media image of Newton as tragic hero reveals how enduring the link remains between the Panthers and violence and how difficult it is in fact to change the stereotype, as Newton tries to do in his autobiography. This can be seen as the double-bind of the theatrical nature of the Panthers' political strategy and how much a specific performance of black masculinity can come to dominate the discourse.

Authentic experience
As I have tried to show, Newton's invocation of black masculinity rests at times on the notion of authenticity, on the idea that liberation for black men in the U.S. relies in some way on them reclaiming or affirming an identity they in fact inherently possess, but have been unable to display. At other times, however, Newton also shows an awareness of the performative aspect of both race and masculinity, making use of black masculine performance in different ways to promote the party's political agenda. However, I would nevertheless argue that the dominant way in which Newton conceives of black masculinity in his narrative and uses it in a project of liberation can best be discussed through the concept of experience.

After the initial manifesto, "Revolutionary Suicide: The Way of Liberation" (2009: 1-6), Newton opens the narrative proper by situating his own life within a much wider social and historical context: "Life does not always begin at birth. My life was forged in the lives of my parents before I was born, and even earlier in the history of all Black people. It is all of a piece" (2009: 9). Through this opening paragraph, Newton situates from the outset his own narrative as the continuation of a much older one, an inherited past. Consequently, Newton de-centers himself through the acknowledgement that his life story is not unique: "It is all of a piece". He also posits blackness as a specific collective identity, one that has been shaped ("forged") in significant ways by the experience of structural racism in the U.S. and beyond that by the colonial past of Africa.

The beginning of Newton's autobiography relies on an understanding of experience that makes manifest the articulation between the individual and the collective. The narrative that will follow will thus be what Joan Scott has discussed elsewhere as both "an expression of an individual's being and consciousness" and, on a more collective and macro level, an exposure of the "influences external to individuals—social conditions, institutions, forms of belief or perception—'real' things outside them that they react to" (Scott 1998: 61).

Newton's reliance on collective identification and the designation "all Black people" can certainly appear problematic and in fact seem to be on a par with the concept of authenticity that I discussed earlier. The notion that the history of "all Black people" can be "of a piece" underplays the differences even among African Americans (not least of class and gender) and risks essentializing experience through the promotion of one particular type of experience—that deemed most authentic—as a way to define the collective consciousness, thus marginalizing other possibly divergent narratives. Newton does not, however, summon the specter of a collective past as a way of accessing a fixed black essence. The experience of blackness is not a product of skin color per se, but acquires instead meaning through the experience of racism. Newton's choice to focus both his personal narration of black experience and the political efforts of the Black Panther Party on the "brothers on the block" similarly arises from a belief that their material conditions and social position have the power to provide greater critical insight into the inner workings of racist U.S. society. What makes them

central to the dual project of naming oppression and working towards liberation is their exacerbated marginalization, even from the field of politics:

> None of the groups were able to recruit and involve the very people they professed to represent—the poor people in the community who never went to college, probably were not even able to finish high school. Yet these were our people; they were the vast majority of the Black population in the area. Any group talking about Blacks was in fact talking about those low on the ladder in terms of well-being, self-respect, and the amount of concern the government had for them. All of us were talking, and nobody was reaching them. (2009: 111)

The social position of the black working-class does not simply make them the primary target for political organizing and theorizing according to Newton, but it also gives them a more direct and tangible understanding of oppression:

> The painful realities of their lives from childhood on reveals that the inequities they encounter are not confined to a few institutions. The effects of injustice and discrimination can be seen in the lives of nearly everyone around them. A brutal system permeates every aspect of life; *it is in the air they breathe*.
> (2009: 42, my emphasis)

As a result of their lived and felt experience, Newton adds that deprived young blacks in particular adopt an attitude that "usually takes the form of resistance to all authority"—their material suffering thus potentially leading them towards revolutionary consciousness. To a certain extent, Newton here relies on a form of standpoint epistemology as the basis for his understanding of the link between experience, consciousness and politics, or, to use the Marxist formulation, on the idea that existence determines consciousness. As Mostern explains, determination does not suggest that there is "some pure oppositional consciousness embedded in an already defined aggregate called 'the working class,' but rather that there is a relevant structural *tendency* for certain objectively positioned groups to articulate certain positions" (Mostern 1999: 9).

Newton's grounding of his own personal narrative in the "history of all Black people," and more particularly in that of the black working class, rests therefore on an identification of blackness as not only the product of oppression, but also as the source of political resistance. This points to the link that Mostern has also made between politics and the

autobiographical genre: "the origins of revolt are always necessarily in people's self-understanding of their lived conditions, their autobiographies" (Mostern 1999: 27).

A similar point can also be raised in relation to the connection Newton makes between violence and masculinity as being a product of experience rather than an inherent essence. Significantly, the section of the autobiography in which Newton makes this link, "Growing", begins with a quote by Frederick Douglass that also emphasizes violence and resistance: "He who would be free must strike the first blow" (2009: 21). In this light, violence appears more as a social and political necessity in a specific context where freedom is denied and not as a biological exigency. Since this form of oppression is also shared by African American women, violence as a form of reaction to racist experience can also unite beyond gender boundaries. Newton gives such an example in relation to the first efforts of the Panther Party to organize the black community:

> The community was a little timid but proud to see Black men take a stance in their interests, and when we arrived, everybody was very receptive. […] Then a remarkable thing happened. One by one, many of the community members went home and got their guns and came to join us. *Even one old sister of seventy years or so was out there with her shotgun.* (2009: 148, my emphasis)

It is undeniable, however, that Newton's narrative foregrounds almost exclusively black male experience. Passages like the above are rare and become a tenuous alibi, first because of the somewhat humorous tone used to describe this "sister", but also because of the scarcity of other examples of female activism in the autobiography.

The articulation of experience, both historical and contemporary, on which Newton bases his narrative has in fact more potential to bridge other gaps—those of race and class. Poverty and oppression are indeed something that links poor whites and blacks together and the sharing of experience can undermine the divide-and-conquer rule of racist society. Solidarity and political alliance can also extend beyond class categories. As Newton points out, the 1960s and 70s were a time when an increasing number of middle-class whites came to identify with the black Civil Rights and Black Power movements and to understand, through a rational effort, "what Blacks knew in their bones" (2009: 183). While experience understood in relation to authenticity can appear

exclusionary, as something to which only a specific group can have privileged access, here Newton also emphasizes its inclusionary potential.

This potential of experience to bridge gaps forms also, I would claim, the whole rationale for the autobiographical text itself. As I pointed out earlier, in his capacity as narrator, Newton in fact performs an alternative form of masculinity that deviates from the one he is using as a model of black experience. Through emphasizing his intellectual and theoretical self, rather than the gun-toting one, Newton also acts as a liminal figure who is positioned in between two worlds and can therefore reach beyond the black ghetto in order to mediate and generalize experience. This becomes evident in passages where the distance of the assumed reader to black working-class experience is made manifest:

> The Chamber of Commerce boasts about Oakland's busy seaport, its museum, professional baseball and football teams, and the beautiful sports coliseum. The politicians speak of an efficient city government and the well-administered poverty program. The poor know better, and *they* will tell *you* a different story.
>
> (2009: 12, my emphasis)

Because "they" are unlikely to have their stories heard by middle-class Americans, Newton's autobiographical narrative gives a voice to working-class black male experience for the benefit of the uninitiated. Also evidenced in the above passage, however, is the idea that competing truths are vying for ascendancy, something that calls attention to the rhetorical nature of the autobiographical genre. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have noted in this respect: "In autobiographical narratives, imaginative acts of remembering always intersect with such rhetorical acts as assertion, justification, judgment, conviction, and interrogation. That is, life narrators address readers whom they want to persuade of their version of experience" (2010: 7). This is also relevant to the immediate context of Newton's autobiography: his recent release from prison and acquittal for charges of murdering a police officer. The use of his autobiography and the invocation of experience as a shaping force in the lives of individuals and communities should therefore be read in relation to the need to convince a double audience of jury members and readers as to the veracity of his version of reality. In other words, beyond its roots in material conditions, experience is also discursive, it cannot be accessed by others outside of discourse. This is especially the case with

autobiographical narratives that try to reconstruct the past in light of what is known in the present. Collective experience, perhaps even more so than individual experience, takes on the character of a construction.

The concept of experience is, however, problematic, according to Joan Scott, in that it often presupposes a stable subject who exists prior to experience and who 'owns' her/his experience. Instead, Scott posits experience as that which in fact produces the subject: "It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (Scott 1998: 59-60). This conceptualization of experience would thus tie in with Butler's notion of performativity in that it destabilizes the subject by resisting the essentialization of being.

Nevertheless, as Patrick E. Johnson rightly argues, the destabilization of the subject and of the materiality of experience is not an innocent enterprise, but something we should be wary of in a project of collective emancipation:

> we nonetheless cultivate collective narratives to strive toward articulating the very real pain and oppression that black bodies absorb in order to strategize political efficacy. Thus, while we must acknowledge the salience of construing 'experience' as discursively mediated, we must also recognize that the radical destabilization of experience simultaneously limits the ways in which people of color may name their oppression. (2003: 41)

Collective experience may well be a fiction, but one that cannot yet be done away with. Despite its problematic dramatization of the experience of black masculinity in the U.S., Newton's autobiographical narrative nevertheless represents a complex and challenging attempt to articulate a sense of collective belonging that can be translated into the praxis of everyday political struggle. It remains a powerful statement of black consciousness that still demands our critical engagement.

Conclusion

As I have tried to show in this article, the construction of black masculinity occupies a central role in Huey Newton's autobiography, *Revolutionary Suicide*. The forms this takes are however varied and defy a clear categorization of Newton's understanding of race and gender. Newton, like other black writers before him, relies in significant ways on the idea that the experiences of some members of the African American

community are more authentic than others. Newton's focus on the "brothers on the block" as the privileged repository of authentic black experience, suggests that class and gender, perhaps more so than skin color, are fundamental elements in defining 'true blackness'. The rehabilitation of the brother on the block as a symbol of masculinity, blackness and political militancy serves an important purpose in that it seeks to undo the harm of systemic racism through giving black men—in particular of the working class—the status, dignity and pride fundamentally denied them.

Newton's reliance on working-class black masculinity is not unequivocally essentialist and exclusionary, however. Since, in some ways, authenticity presupposes inauthenticity—faking it—there is no tangible biological 'truth' (either their skin color or their genitalia) that qualifies the "brothers on the block" as being more black or more men, except through their performance. As I have argued, Newton shows an awareness of the performative nature of black masculine identity and performance in fact played a central role in the Black Panther's Party's political strategy.

More than as an inherent quality or a matter of performance, blackness in general, and black masculinity in particular, appear in Newton's narrative as the products of experience, more specifically that of the brutal racist oppression suffered by African Americans. Through his autobiography, Newton tries to create a sense of collective identity that transcends the individual and points instead to an awareness of the need for political activism. While attempting to bridge the racial and class-based gaps between experience and action, Newton's project remains a predominantly masculinist one. It is these ideological tensions between autobiographical subjectivity and the gendered consciousness of the male political activist that I have tried to tease out in this discussion.

The narrative contradictions in Newton's text invite further critical comparison with other autobiographies by Black Power activists, not least those written by women leaders within the movement, such as Angela Davis and Elaine Brown. Because of their expressed awareness of the gender issues related to Black Power, these female writers would without doubt provide a more complicated and challenging insight not only into the politics of the Black Panther Party, but also into the ways in which gender, race and class interact in the formation of individual activists and their political strategies.

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Anyone can do that: the common music of poetry

Andy Croft

I'm back inside. After four years in HMP Holme House, followed by shorter spells in Durham, Low Newton and Frankland prisons, I have just started a nine-month stretch at HMP Moorland, outside Doncaster. Fortunately this is one writing-residency where I will not be resident. But British prisons are full of writers.

Writing is important in prison. If you can express yourself on paper, you are likely to be in demand helping others write apps, statements, instructions to solicitors and letters home. Poetry has a special role in prison life. Men who would not often go near a library in their ordinary lives, in prison can find solace and encouragement in reading and writing poetry. Prison magazines always carry pages of poetry. The Koestler Awards are an important part of the prison calendar. No-one is embarrassed to say that they like poetry in prison. Among the 'window warriors' who stand at the windows at night shouting to themselves and to others, there are always some who rap for hours in long improvised monologues. There are certain poems—usually about love, heroin and regret—that prisoners take with them from one prison to another, copying them out and learning them by heart until the poems 'belong' to them. The poet Ken Smith once met a man in Wormwood Scrubs who genuinely believed that he had written Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem 'The Wind Hover'. This is what happens when poetry is taken seriously. In such an emotionally-strained environment, poetry can be a form of release, a means of clarification and self-justification and a kind of public confessional. It is even a form of currency (especially around Valentine's Day and Mother's Day). Poems are copied, passed around and sent out in letters to wives and girlfriends:

Induction, first thing Monday morning.
    The library's full of spaced-out lads,
Hung-over, rattling, bruised and yawning,
Exploring life outside their pads.
Their first long Monday back in gaol,
    Most look as if they haven't slept;
There's always one though, without fail,
Will ask me where the *poetry*'s kept.

He knows he has to write a letter
    Explaining what went wrong this time,
And somehow thinks regret sounds better
    Expressed in someone else's rhyme;
Though why should anyone suppose
    That poetry makes the best excuses,
I can't imagine – still, it shows
    That even poets have their uses.

He skips the modern stuff of course –
    Too *personal*, hard work, unclear;
The awkward syntax of remorse
    Needs more if it's to sound sincere –
A common music whose appeal
    Is that it speaks for everyone,
The patterned language of the real
    That's usually written by Anon.

This little poem is part of a sequence about working in prisons which appeared in my last full collection *Sticky*. The title of the poem, 'Form', alludes to the criminal past which shapes every prisoner's future, as well as to the 'old-fashioned' poetic tastes of most prisoners. Not many contemporary poems lend themselves to being copied and sent out in letters from prison. Their provenance is too specific, the 'voice' too highly individuated. Most prisoners don't know what to 'do' with most contemporary poetry. As one young man said to me once, 'I want to read poetry, *not poets*.'

It is fair to say that *Sticky* was not widely reviewed. The few notices that the book received were friendly enough, with the notable exception of an attack in *Tribune*, which compared it to 'third rate Victorian verse', 'pub rock and doggerel':

> The problem with the full-on rhyme schemes he employs is, unless you're writing for children or to be funny it does make the poetry look dreadfully old fashioned. Not many people, post Eliot, write like this anymore.[1]

In a sense, this was an accurate description of the book, which does occasionally try to be funny, and which contains several poems (including the title poem) written for children. The whole collection self-consciously celebrates the possibilities of a number of pre-Modern verse forms—various sonnets, including Pushkin sonnets, clerihews, *ottava rima*, heroic couplets, ballads, a villanelle and the six-line stanza borrowed from *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. The book's title is supposed to be a play on the Russian word *stikhiy* (verses), which is derived from the Greek *stikhoi* (a line of words, or soldiers). It is a book about the limits and the freedoms set by different kinds of 'form'—poetic, linguistic and political.

I want to try to unpick the accusation of being 'dreadfully old-fashioned' and its relationship to 'writing for children', trying to be 'funny' and the use of traditional poetic form. It seems to me that the set of assumptions on which this review was based are wholly representative of a critical narrative, which—for all its talk of Modernity—still regards Eliot's assault on traditional form as something new (hence the use of the term 'Victorian' to signify naivety and sentimentality). According to this narrative, metre, stanza-form and 'full-on rhyme schemes' were abandoned a long time ago to hymnal, birthday-cards, 'humorous' light-verse ('doggerel'), popular song ('pub rock'), advertising and tabloid headlines. Of course, there have been exceptions to this—notably Sassoon, Auden, MacNeice, Barker, Betjeman and Mitchell, and among contemporary poets, Dunn, Harrison, Herbert, Szirtes and Duffy. Although the exceptions may, in fact, be so many and so glaring that it makes no sense to describe them as exceptions, the assumption persists that poetry may be divided between the 'Modern' (a Good Thing) and the 'dreadfully old-fashioned' (a Very Bad Thing). But form is not necessarily conservative, any more than formlessness is automatically progressive. It depends what you do with it. Writers like Eliot, Celine, Marinetti and Pound employed the new techniques and the technologies of Modernism in order to defend the past. Modernity may also be defined

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[1] *Tribune*, 8 May 2009.

by inclusivity, participation and democracy. The 'new' is an uncontested but heavily-loaded category.

Generational anthologies have always defined themselves as the bearers of the 'new', challenging existing tastes by claiming to represent the future. The editors of *New Signatures, New Country, The New Apocalypse, New Lines, The New Poetry* each represented themselves as the next wave of a Modernism line of advance defined by the rejection of the past (usually the most recent version of the 'future'). The latest example of this is James Byrne and Clare Pollard (eds) *Voice Recognition: 21 Poets for the 21st Century*, which bravely declares war on the 'uncool' poetry of 'warm white wine in a pokey bookshop or plodding recitals in a half empty village hall.' The book brings together twenty-one 'of the best young poets who have yet to publish a full collection' from Britain and Ireland, who are apparently 'extending and remaking the tradition of poetry in a fast-changing new millennium', and whose work is 'sexy', 'dark', 'daring' and 'brimming with vitality'. As usual, the editors claim that 'the future of poetry begins here'.

In many ways it is a fascinating selection, a good sample of some of the poets who have emerged out of the performance-publishing nexus of Generational Txt, Spread the Word, Apples and Snakes, the Foyles Young Poetry of the Year Award, the tall-lighthouse pilot project and the world of Creative Writing MAs. But it is a pretty depressing read too, a curiously *familiar* collection of confessional poetry, filmic sensibilities and 'a multiplicity of styles', a kind of poetry for the Face-Book generation. These poets are said to share 'a deep fascination with the world as it is today', but you would not know it from a book which barely mentions the world's social inequalities, the destruction of the environment or the globalised economics of poverty and war—never mind those popular movements trying to make another world possible. There are lots of ampersands, lower-case titles, vocative cases and references to high art and trash-culture. *But there is not a single rhyme in the whole book, not enough anger and not one joke.*

It does look as though there is a consistent set of connections here, suggesting that 'the future of poetry' is defined by humorlessness, political indifference, a serious underestimation of the potential music of patterned language (those 'plodding recitals') and a hostility to all the 'uncool' organisers, readers, book-buyers and would-be writers who do

not know that white wine is supposed to be served chilled. If this is the 'new', it smells uncommonly like old-fashioned snobbery.

The sound of 'professional' poets pulling the ladders up behind them is part of the background noise of contemporary British poetry. According to Jane Holland, there are now 'too many people out there writing poetry.' For Hugo Williams, these days the Forward Prize receives too many entries—'I think it's something to do with the democratisation of everything—that everyone's got a right to get a book out…' The use of the word 'amateur' as a term of abuse is of course a particularly British way of avoiding the word 'class'—consider for example, Carol Ann Duffy's 'Dear Writer-in-Residence', Sean O'Brien's 'In Residence: A Worst Case View' and 'Never Can Say Goodbye' or Peter Reading's *Stet*.

The most consistent advocate of this kind of flaky elitism was of course TS Eliot, a believer in the Divine Right of kings and an opponent of the 1944 Education Act on the grounds that it would encourage cultural 'barbarism'. Giving the 2004 TS Eliot lecture at the Royal Festival Hall, Don Paterson called for poetry to reclaim its status as 'a Dark Art'. Poetic technique, he declared, is 'the poet's arcana', 'something that must be kept secret from the reader'. Only by joining together in a kind of medieval 'guild', can professional poets 'restore our sense of power'. Furthermore, Paterson called for the 'total eradication of amateur poets', whom he accuses of 'infantilising poetry'. Armed only with 'a beermat, a pencil, and a recently mildly traumatic experience' they bombard Don Paterson, who is poetry editor at Picador, with their 'handwritten drivel'.

Does Paterson mean he wants to eradicate all unpublished poets? Or just those who have ambitions to be published by Picador? How many poetry-prizes do you have to win before you become 'professional' poet? Or is there a hereditary principle involved? Professional poets do not spring fully armed from the soil. You have to be unpublished before you can be published. It may be hard to imagine, but even Don Paterson was once an unpublished poet. Not many poets make a living solely by selling books. Don Paterson certainly doesn't. Before he became a 'professional' poet, he used to be a professional musician. He still is. He also teaches at the University of St Andrews. Not much time for writing poetry there.

According to Paterson 'only plumbers can plumb, roofers can roof and drummers drum; only poets can write poetry.' Has Paterson never changed a tap, or tapped a drum? Poets are not genetically different from plumbers. Most roofers are probably better at writing poetry than poets are at replacing missing roof-tiles. It is not as if there are only so many as-yet-unwritten poems to go round. Anyway, 'amateur' poets in schools, colleges, prisons, libraries, reading-groups, book-shops and poetry-readings constitute the bulk of the audience for the 'professionals'. Do professional musicians feel threatened by people who sing in the bath? Do professional footballers burn with resentment at those who play in Sunday leagues? Do professional chefs object to the thought that most people cook their own meals? Presumably Paterson's students at St Andrews are 'amateurs'. Has he told them they require 'eradicating'?

Patterson's comments, in the same lecture, on Harold Pinter were especially instructive. Referring to Pinter's anti-war poetry, he argued that '*anyone* can do that'. Of course a great many poets—'professional' and 'amateur'—have written powerfully against the war in Iraq (although few have employed iambic pentameter to such passionate effect as Pinter did in *War*). The fact that 'anyone' can write poetry about such a necessary subject is precisely its enduring significance. As the US poet Jim Scully argues:

> The poetic field is no less a political construct than an aesthetic one. When we speak of mainstream poetry we're talking basically about academic poetry, poetry in its institutional aspect, which is the basis for jobs, careers, publications and poetic norms. It's where the continuity of money and recognition is maintained. There's a lot of cute, too-clever-by-half poetry without an ounce of gravity, and of course no resonance. It seems we lack even the language with which to speak social or civic reality. The ancient Greeks called "apolitical" citizens, who care only for their own personal interests, *idiotai*. This is the opposite of *politai*, citizens in the true sense. For the Greek tragedians, the primary point of collective reference was society, not the individual. They took everything on, and in front of everyone. Full-bodied, adult stuff. Not crimped by the servility that comes of habitual evasiveness.
>
> (quoted in Croft 2011)

Until very recently in human history, poets were popularly understood to speak for and to the societies to which they belonged. The development of printing and publishing and the emergence of a reading-public have helped to elevate poets into a separate and professional caste. The Romantic idea of the rootless individual alienated from ordinary society

(by education, sensibility and mobility) has become in our time the cult of the international poet as exile, crossing cultural, intellectual and linguistic borders. This cult reached its logical conclusion a few years ago with the Martian poets, who wrote about life on earth as if they really were aliens.

Of course poetry has to contend these days with other voices, more clamorous and more powerful. How can poetry compete with so many sound-bites, slogans, bill-boards, trailers, jingles and headlines? The cult of 'difficulty' is one way in which poets feel they can be heard against the deafening white-noise of contemporary culture. In a complex and difficult world no-one wants to be accused of simplification. As a result, many people find contemporary poetry difficult. This is not usually the fault of the reader, but of the weakening of poetry's function as a shared, social activity. As Adrian Mitchell famously put it, 'most people ignore most poetry because most poetry ignores most people'.

The US poet Tom McGrath once said there were three kinds of poet—Cattlemen, Sheepmen and Outlaws. The first were those like Eliot and Yeats, 'aristos' who articulated a vision of the past with which to criticise the present; the second, like Whitman, Crane and Ginsberg, represented the literary equivalent of the rising bourgeoisie, open to all kinds of language and forms, old and new; the third were those like Neruda, Rimbaud, Brecht, Joe Hill, Emily Dickinson (and McGrath himself), who desired to confront the future 'on all fours' by listening to the music that were already there. 'The language is there,' McGrath argued, 'all you've got to do is to—like the snake, get out of your skin (which is all the cliché and shit language that you've had) and be a born-again snake, or poet, or snake-poet, or whatever… When Sitting Bull needed to write his death song, he just *said* it. Didn't write it, it was *there*' (quoted in Gibbons and Des Pres, 1987: 39).

All poetry inhabits the common language of everyday living. A poem can be unique without being original; it can be 'new' at the same time that it is already known. The greatness of writers like Bunyan, Clare, Hernandez, Grassic Gibbon, Aragon, Gurney, Hikmet, Burns, Lawrence, Brecht, Vaptsarov, Ritsos—'Outlaws' in more than one sense, often working in political or linguistic exile—was to have inhabited this argument and sustained it a long way from the centres of cultural power and authority. The French poet Francis Combes makes a similar argument:

> Poetry belongs to everyone. Poetry does not belong to a small group of specialists. It arises from the everyday use of language. Like language, poetry only exists because we share it. Writing, singing, painting, cooking—these are ways of sharing pleasure. For me poetry is like an electrical transformer which converts our feelings and our ideas into energy. It is a way of keeping your feet on the ground without losing sight of the stars. It is at the same time both the world's conscience and its best dreams; it's an intimate language and a public necessity. The issues at stake French poetry today are profoundly political. It is often said that modern French poetry began with Rimbaud's "Je est un autre." Today we need to reverse this phrase and say, "L'Autre est aussi Je" or even "Je suis tous les autres". (quoted in Croft, 2010)

Over the last five hundred years, poetry has lost many of its historic functions. Character has fled to the novel, dialogue to the stage, persuasion to advertising and public relations, action to cinema, comedy to television. This always seems to me to be an unnecessarily heavy price to pay for the development of the individual 'voice' of the poet. The shared, public music of common language and common experience remains its greatest asset—the power to communicate, universalise and shape a common human identity (what Tom McGrath called the way in which 'language socialises the unknown'). Poetry is essentially a means of communication, not a form of self-expression. Difficulty is only a virtue if the poem justifies the effort to understand it. Why write at all, if no-one is listening? If they think no-one is listening, poets end up talking only to each other, or to themselves. Language belongs to everyone. This is Mitchell again:

> In the days when everyone lived in tribes, poetry was always something which was sung and danced, sometimes by one person, sometimes by the whole tribe. Song always had a purpose—a courting song, a song to make the crops grow, a song top help or instruct the hunter of seals, a song to thank the sun. Later on, when poetry began to be printed, it took on airs. When the universities started studying verse instead of alchemy, poetry began to strut around like a duchess full of snuff. By the middle of the twentieth century very few British poets would dare to sing.
>
> (2011: 140)

Much of the potential power of poetry still lies in its popular, traditional forms. The historical music of poetry can help to naturalise arguments which may seem outside the current narrow expectations of poetry. It can assert the longevity of these arguments, by placing them within older, popular literary traditions. The element of anticipation and memory implicates reader and listener in the making of a line or a phrase and

therefore in the making of the argument. This establishes a potentially inclusive community of interest between the writer/speaker and the reader/audience—through shared laughter, anger or understanding. In other words, poetry is a form of magic, through which we strive to impose our will on the world by mimicking the natural processes we wish to bring about. As speech is metaphorical, poetry is doubly so, the gift of Prometheus *and* Orpheus. When poets stand up to read in public they have to address the readers beyond the page, the listeners across the room and beyond. Inspiration, improvisation, prophecy and possession—these are the elements of what Ernst Fisher called 'the *necessity* of art':

> The magic at the very root of human existence, creating a sense of powerlessness and at the same time a consciousness of power, a fear of nature together with the ability to control nature, is the very essence of all art. The first toolmaker, when he gave new form to a stone so that it might serve man, was the first artist. The first name-giver was also a great artist when he singled out an object from the vastness of nature, tamed it by means of a sign and handed over this creature of language as an instrument of power to other men. The first organiser who synchronised the working process by means of a rhythmic chant and so increased the collective strength of man was a prophet in art. The first hunter who disguised himself as an animal and by means of this identification with his prey increased the yield of the hunt… all these were the fore-fathers of art. (1963: 33)

The Pre-historian Steve Mithen has recently argued that language and music evolved 50,000 years ago out of 'holistic, multi-modal, manipulative, musical and mimetic gestures' (or 'hmmmmm') (2006: 221). Although language and music now have separate functions, their common evolution can still be heard in religious ritual, in dance, song—and in poetry. According to the classicist George Thompson,

> the language of poetry is essentially more primitive than common speech, because it preserves in a higher degree the qualities of rhythm, melody, fantasy, inherent in speech as such... And its function is magical. It is designed to effect some change in the external world by mimesis—to impose illusion on reality. (1945: 9)

Although anatomically modern *homo sapiens* emerged 200,000 years ago, the earliest known written scripts were only developed in the Jiroft and Sumer civilisations during the early Bronze Age (3,000 BCE). *Gilgamesh*, the earliest known written literary text, was not written down until sometime during the Third Dynasty of Ur, that is, approximately 2,000 years BCE. In other words, we have only recently taught ourselves

to 'write'—but is hard to believe that humans were not telling each other important stories in memorable and musical language for a long time before then. For most of human history poetry was anonymous, public and shared, passed on and learned and changed and passed on again. Rhythm, repetition, metre and rhyme were mnemonics which enabled listeners to be simultaneously the creators of poetry's common music.

The Iliad was 'written' around 750 BCE—*a hundred years before the earliest known Greek poetry was written down*. It records events which took place 400 years earlier. The oldest surviving written version of the poem, known as 'Venetus A', was not made until sometime during the tenth century CE. The first printed version did not appear until 1488. Which means that for most of its life, this 16,000 line epic poem only existed in people's heads. And this was only possible because of the poem's music—the rhythmical reiteration of phrases, tropes, motifs and ready-made epithets ('cunning Odysseus', 'swift-footed Achilles', 'Agamemnon lord of men' etc) within the six-beat hexameter line. The poem survived because it was both memorable and memorisable. Try learning *The Wasteland* off by heart.

The power of all art is still located in society—in the audience and not in the artist. Writing—in the sense of the composition of memorable language to record events that need remembering—is essentially a shared, collective, public activity. It is only in mass-literate societies that poetry becomes privatised, a personalised form of individual expression rather a means of public communication. And of course, mass-literacy requires policing by the game-keepers on the wooded slopes of Mount Parnassus, armed with ideas of copyright, grammatical rules, unified spelling, critical standards and a canonical tradition against the possibility of a Mass Trespass.

The UK was the world's first mass-literate society. And yet most of us on this island were not even functionally literate before the 1870 education reforms. That's only 140 years ago—around the time that my great-grandmother was born. Most of our neighbours on this planet are still not able to read or write. The globalised economy does not require the world's poor to read. Meanwhile, dependence on communications-technology in post-industrial societies is rapidly reducing the economic importance of literacy (consider how e-mails texting and other social media are already corrupting punctuation, capitalisation and grammar). The dream of mass literacy was a twentieth-century aspiration, connected

with ideas of social justice, economic progress and scientific control over nature. But if literacy suddenly does not seem so important, the need to express ourselves in the best words we can think of is a constant common human need. You don't need to be able to write in order to 'write'. Not many people are wholly excluded from language. Most of us are fluent speakers in several registers, and functional in more than one language.

The idea that poetry is a publicly-owned, shared and common language persists at a subterranean level within British culture, a long way from the centres of cultural authority and the cult of the 'new'. Not surprisingly, it is still felt most vividly among those who were historically excluded longest from education and literacy by the forces of caste and class, empire and slavery. Poets like Linton Kewsi Johnson, Kokumo, Moqapi Selassie and Jean Binta Breeze do not read their poems in public—they *sing* them.

A sense of poetry as social ritual and magic may still be felt at UK *musha'ara*, marathon poetry-readings in Urdu, Punjabi and English. They are unlike most poetry-readings in that they last several hours and attract several hundred people of all ages. The most distinctive feature of the *musha'ara*, however, is the level of audience participation. Poets do not always read their 'own' work. They often sing. And they are frequently interrupted by applause, by requests for a line to be read again, by the audience guessing the rhyme at the end of a couplet or by joining in the reading of well-known poems. This is a collective, shared poetry, the expression of a literary, linguistic and religious identity among a community whose first language is English, but whose first *literary* language is Urdu. From its beginnings Urdu was a language of exile, the *lingua franca* of the nomadic camp:

> Verse forms and metres, besides diction, have helped to preserve continuity; and, still more strikingly, a common stock of imagery, which can be varied and recomposed inexhaustibly in much the same way that Indian (and Pakistani) classical music is founded on a set of standard note-combinations (*ragas*) on which the performer improvises variations. (Kiernan 1971: 32)

The enviable traditions of Urdu poetry illustrate Christopher Caudwell's argument that poetry can be a means of asserting our original, common humanity:

> poetry is characteristically song, and song is characteristically something which, because of its rhythm, is sung in unison, is capable of being the expression of a collective emotion. This is one of the secrets of "heightened language"… Unlike the life of beasts, the life of the simplest tribe requires a series of efforts which are not instinctive, but which are demanded by the necessities of a non-biological economic aim—for example a harvest. Hence the instincts must be harnessed to the needs of the group festival, the matrix of poetry, which frees the stores of emotion and canalises them in a collective channel… Thus poetry, combined with dance, ritual, and music, becomes the great switchboard of the instinctive energy of the tribe.
>
> (1937: 33)

Writing is ordinary. Poetry is especially ordinary. It arises out of the contradictions and consolations of a whole life and a whole society. It requires the proper humility necessary for any art. Poetry is indivisible. If it doesn't belong to everybody, it is something else—show business, big business, self-promotion, attention-seeking. Poetry is not a Meritocracy of the educated, the privileged or the lucky. It is a Republic. As the poet Randall Swingler once put it, 'The artist is not a special sort of being, inhabiting a rarefied atmosphere beyond the exigencies of common life. Rather it lies in his essence to have more than usual in common with the generality of men'.[2]

Poetry can clarify, focus, channel and release emotional and imaginative energy. It can connect poets to readers, and readers to poetry; it can help us feel a little more connected to each other than usual. Despite the commercial, cultural and political pressures to emphasise our uniqueness and our separateness, the differences between us are not very great. When I sneeze, the sensations of tension and release in my face and chest are exactly the same as when you sneeze. Chocolate tastes the same in my mouth as it does in yours. My feelings for my children are no greater and no more significant than the feelings that all humans bear for their children. When I tell my wife that I love her, I can only say what every man has ever said to the woman he loves. 'I love you' is a quotation. We share the same small planet, we breathe the same air and we share the same fate. In case we forget this, poetry is one of the ways in which we demonstrate our common natures, inside and out. Anyone can do it.

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[2] *Left Review*, October 1934.

Because the need for love's a truth
More desperate in the Slammer,
All those who have been starved so long
Of tenderness and glamour,
Create a common art that speaks
In love's peculiar grammar.

I love you babe, *ich liebe dich,*
Sound weak and lachrymose,
Je t'aime's been said so many times
In poetry and prose.
But *odi et amo*'s still true,
And a rose is still a rose.

In all the clichéd, second-hand
And sentimental tropes,
Each unconvincing chat-up line
Once heard on TV soaps,
You hear the brittle sound of little,
Fragile human hopes.

Though Valentine's the patron saint
Of young hearts everywhere,
This festival contains a truth
In which all mortals share:
That someone loves us still's the hope
That keeps us from despair.

And here, where every letter home
And billet-doux's policed,
The poetry of every man
This Valentine's Day feast,
Asserts that art, like hope and love
Cannot stay unreleased.
                (Croft, 2009)

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Tribune, 8 May 2009.

Tomskaya Pisanitsa Park, Kemerovo

Andy Croft

'we all matter, we are all indelible, miraculous, here'.
(Julia Darling)

for Dasha

1
We take a break from our discussions
About the British poetry scene.
About time too; I've bored these Russians
Quite long enough now. In between
Each post-New Gen New Generation
And last week's latest new sensation,
I have the sense they're not impressed.
Oh dear. Although I tried my best,
When every poet is 'dark' and 'daring',
Each new collection 'vibrant', 'bold'
And last year's new is this year's old,
The sum effect is somewhat wearing.
There's rather more to art, I fear,
Than simply saying, *I was here*.

2

We take the bus across the river.
Beneath the wide Kuznetsky Bridge
They're fishing on the ice. We shiver.
It would be warmer in a fridge.
We're driving North, past roadside diners,
The monument to Kuzbass miners,
The forest blur of greys and browns,
And summer-dacha shantytowns,
Scalectrix roads and lego churches.
The bus slows down. At last we're there.
We stop among the silent glare
And tinsel glitter of the birches
(I borrowed this line from a verse
By Mandelshtam – it could be worse).

3

Ten minutes later, we're stood gazing
In frozen silence at these cliffs –
A frieze of hundreds of amazing
Six thousand year old petroglyphs
That stretch from Dürer-like cross-hatches
To etch-a-sketchish childish scratches.
Abraded, nicked and tricked and picked,
These scrawls upon the walls depict
A pre-Deluvian procession
Of aurochs, foxes, wolves and deer,
A hunter with a pointy spear
(Or bandy-stick). Sod self-expression –
It seems to me all art starts from
These pictograms beside the Tom.

4
The Sympathetic Magic thesis
(See Abbé Breuil, of Lascaux fame)
Proposed that it was through mimesis
That we first taught ourselves to name
And tame the growling world with patterns;
That art expands the things it flattens;
That humankind first found its tongue
When rhythmic gesture, dance and song
Marked out the grunter from the grunting;
That knocking matter into shape's
What separates us from the apes;
And that the hunted started hunting
When we began to imitate
Creation's hunger on a plate.

5
Imagined goals are scored by winners –
Once caught by art upon these rocks
These animals were Sunday dinners,
A winter coat, a pair of socks.
No need to shiver by the river
When art's enchantments can deliver
A woolly vest to keep you warm.
A pelt fits like a well-made form,
A birthday suit (but less informal),
A fur-lined cloak in which to hide
And keep the hungry world outside,
A second skin that feels, well, normal.
In short, when we first borrowed fur,
The human soup began to stir.

6

The world out there is strange and formless,
A wilderness of blood and force –
Art's job's to make it seem less gormless
(From *gaumr*, 'lacking sense' – Old Norse).
These primitive caricaturists
Were never art-for-art's-sake purists;
Their work was useful as an axe,
Each rock-engraving made the facts
Of Neolithic dreams still bigger.
Above the bison, bears and birds
The stick-men chasing reindeer herds,
There seems to be a flying figure
Among the stars and solar rings:
A human with a pair of wings.

7

Cue Kubrik's famous match-cut edit
As trumpets fanfare to the dawn:
A handy tool with which to credit
The narrative of brain and brawn
(An always useful combination)
That saw us conquer all creation
And take our place among the stars.
Leonov's weightless boots were *ours*.
But you can't space-walk like a model
Or take your partner in the waltz
Unless you know which steps are false;
Before a child can learn to toddle,
As someone said, you need the knack
Of sometimes taking one step back.

8

This Kemerovo conurbation
Was built by US Reds with dreams;
They came at Lenin's invitation
To drain the coal-rich Kuzbass seams
Which Kolchak's Whites had lately flooded,
They stayed four years, and worked and studied
Till Comrade One-Crutch learned to fly
And Big Bill Heywood's good left eye
Could see that they had half-created
A Wobbly city in the sticks.
But then in 1926,
The colony was 'liquidated'
And History wiped the record clean,
Almost as if they'd never been.

9

Just like the old Siberian Yeti
Whose hairy footprints in the snow
Get journalists all hot and sweaty
At forty-five degrees below;
Though sightings are reported yearly
The cynics say that they are merely
A troupe of circus bruins who
Escaped from some old Soviet zoo,
Deciding that unspoken freedom
Sounds better than the world's applause.
The Park's bears, meanwhile, show their claws
To Sunday visitors who feed 'em
Their honeyed wages through the bars
That separate their world from ours.

10
In Bear Rock cave a single finger
Is all that's left of some lost race
Who lacked, perhaps, the art to linger
Before they vanished without trace;
Perhaps they never learned to fashion
The world to get their morning ration;
Or else they lacked the wherewithal
To read the writing on the wall
That spelled out their abrupt extinction.
These folk were here. And now they've gone.
Like sabre-tooth and mastodon.
The hungry world makes no distinction
Between the beasts on which we prey
And those to which we ought to pray.

11
But evidence of evolution's
A kind of messy palimpsest –
These rocks include some contributions
By later artists (*Ya bil zdes*) –
To wit, although we think we're brainier
We can't shake off the graphomania
We caught six thousand years ago
(Like writers pissing in the snow).
These bare rocks mark the clumsy stages
By which we make our slow ascent;
All art can do is represent
Our progress on their uncut pages
Before we each must disappear,
By simply saying, *we were here.*

Notes

This sequence was written while teaching briefly at the University of Kemerovo, in Siberia, in 2010. The Tomskaya Pisanitsa Park is a few miles outside the city, famous for a series of Neolithic rock-carvings on the banks of the river Tom. Alexei Leonov, the first human to walk in space, was born in Kemerovo. *Comrade One-Crutch* is the title of the children's novel about Kemerovo by the US writer Ruth Epperson Kennell. Bear Rock Cave is south of Kemerovo in the Altai Krai, the site of the recent discovery of 'Woman X' or the 'Denisova Hominin'. This sequence was first published in *Kuzbass XXI Vek*, March 2011.

Colonial pedigree: Class, masculinity, and history in the early Rhodesian novel

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Among the literary landmarks held by the British Library is an exceedingly rare copy of what has been called "the first story of 'ordinary life' in Rhodesia" (Snyman 1952: 39). A cheap novella of some sixty pages, *Bulawayo Jack; or, Life Among the Matabele Kopjés* was published in 1898 by Cardiff's *Western Mail*, probably after concluding a weekly serialization. Its British-born author, Richard Nicklin Hall (1853–1914), had trained as a solicitor before moving in 1897 to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where he worked in a variety of administrative capacities, organizing the Rhodesia section of the Greater Britain Exhibition of 1899 and editing the *Matabele Times* and *Rhodesia Journal*. In 1900, Hall collaborated with William Neal of the Ancient Ruins Company, essentially a treasure-hunting enterprise, in an excavation of the historic site of Great Zimbabwe. His resulting monograph, *The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia* (1902; co-authored with W.G. Neal), caught the attention of Cecil Rhodes, who appointed him curator of Great Zimbabwe between 1902 and 1904, and was followed by two further archaeological studies, *Great Zimbabwe* (1905) and *Pre-Historic Rhodesia* (1909).

Surprisingly, given his prominence as an archaeologist and colonial ideologue, Hall's authorship of one of the earliest Rhodesian novels has never been examined. Despite its unremarkable appearance and negligible aesthetic qualities, *Bulawayo Jack* is a significant literary document. Most immediately, it attests to the existence of a market in Britain for tales of Rhodesian frontier life, the readiness of a cadre of writers to meet that demand, and the arrival of a new literary genre: the Rhodesian settler novel (see Chennells 1982). *Bulawayo Jack* displays many of the features of this genre in embryo. A mix of tourist guide and commercial prospectus, it wastes no time on descriptions of the colony's indigenous inhabitants and existing social structures but instead presents Rhodesia as a *tabula rasa* of unrealized potential. Eschewing the supernatural and Gothic themes of H. Rider Haggard's pre-Rhodesian

romances, Hall models his tale on the vernacular character studies of Rudyard Kipling, particularly *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888). Above all, *Bulawayo Jack* exemplifies the peculiar reconfiguration of class and masculinity which characterized literary and media discourse on Britain's latest colonial acquisition.

From Cambridge to Bulawayo

The plot of *Bulawayo Jack* is easily summarized. A white settler named James Fletcher has engaged as a transport rider and "squatter farmer" in "the new colony of Rhodesia" (Hall 1898a: 7, 30), the sprawling territories north of the Limpopo River which fell under the jurisdiction of Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company (BSAC). Despite having distinguished himself at the Siege of Bulawayo during the Second Anglo-Ndebele War of 1896–97, he chooses to live in mysterious seclusion on the high veldt. One day, after a police sergeant recognizes "Bulawayo Jack" from a magazine photograph, Fletcher is visited by Philip Devant, brother of his erstwhile fiancée in Britain. The truth is revealed: Fletcher, in fact a Cambridge gentleman named Ivor James, has nobly taken the blame for a cheque forged by Devant, who now wishes to make amends. Both men return to Bulawayo, where James is reconciled with his sweetheart, and all three decide to make a fresh start in Rhodesia.

Questions of social class figure prominently in *Bulawayo Jack*, as they do in Hall's two previous novels, *Owen Tregelles—Bank Clerk* (1896) and *Gilbert Vance—Curate* (1897).[1] Thus we learn that the "stalwart young officer" who identifies Fletcher/James, is "himself the son of a member of Parliament, representing a county division in the West of England (for in the B.S.A. Co.'s Police public schoolmen and graduates, and those of good British parentage are plentiful)" (Hall 1898a: 18). While Rhodesia may well have boasted more than its fair share of aristocratic younger sons—evidence, perhaps, of imperialism's special appeal to the upper classes (see Porter 2004)—the notion that its policemen and farmers were predominantly drawn from the social elite is

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[1] "The noble-minded Cambridge-educated Vince feels his calling to the priesthood confirmed while meditating in Peel Castle [Isle of Man]" (Belchem 2001: 330n).

fanciful in the extreme. At the same time, Britain's landed classes were experiencing a very real decline in their economic and political fortunes, a decline which lent force to the growing chorus of warnings about social "degeneration" and to Social Darwinist calls to preserve the racial-national stock, what Hall calls "good British parentage".

What this means is that the class fantasy offered by *Bulawayo Jack*, which would become a staple of Rhodesian veldt melodramas by writers such as Gertrude Page and Cynthia Stockley as well as a central motif in the colony's earliest representation in cinema (Donovan 2009), presents a mirror-image of the promise implied by the BSAC's promotional literature and countless magazine articles, namely that emigration to Rhodesia offered unique opportunities for *upward* social mobility. As such, Hall makes a complicated appeal to his lower-middle-class intended audience. In relating how Fletcher/James rises from tenant farmer to gentleman only to return voluntarily to his humbler adopted station, *Bulawayo Jack* invites these readers to imagine Rhodesian settler identity not as a class position but as a vocation. On this view, gentility denotes a state of mind, an ethical perspective, and a heroic capacity for self-sacrifice. No longer merely inherited privilege, it has become a token of character.

Gender plays a central role in this ideological adjustment. In the public culture of late-Victorian Britain, particularly its advertisements and periodical press, class was being increasingly redefined in terms of taste and, less explicitly, purchasing power. By contrast, in a young colony such as Rhodesia, which was characterized by the virtual absence of all but the most essential commodities, the attributes of class identity were instead projected onto those of gender (see Burke 1996: 63–90). The result was a kind of neo-chivalric settler code in which personal qualities, including, not least, bodily attributes such as endurance, physical courage, and capacity to execute manual tasks, came to serve as indicators of a new mode of social. Thus it is that Fletcher/James reveals his true—that is, Rhodesian—self in the white heat of battle even as he acquires yet another cognomen, "Bulawayo Jack", whose latter term, not coincidentally, is synonymous with the common man.

By emphasizing that its protagonist's heroic masculinity involves not only martial prowess but an aptitude for work, *Bulawayo Jack* registers the latest phase of a long historical process by which the word "gentleman" was redefined in terms of manners and cultural attitudes

rather than simple distance from manual or even salaried work.[2] Qualities such as moral superiority are notoriously hard to represent, however, and Hall resorts to a visual shorthand of physique, attire, and demeanour—what in the lexicon of Pierre Bourdieu might be called the *habitus* of the new Rhodesian settler class—in order to confirm the special status of Fletcher/James: "He looked every inch the gentleman he was: energetic, stalwart, bronzed, one of the very pick of Anglo-Saxon manhood" (Hall 1898a: 7). In so doing, Hall paradoxically invokes the physical marker of sunburn that, like his crumpled blue shirt, would have identified Fletcher/James, were he in Britain, as a working man:

> Standing on the summit of the "look-out," one could see him clad in the usual free style of a gentleman settler, blue unstarched linen shirt, front unbuttoned and opened wide, showing his sunburnt and brawny chest, sleeves rolled up over the elbows, a Jameson hat, with the broad brim looped up on the left side, white corduroy riding breeches, brown laced leggings and boots, and a belt on which were suspended revolver, knife, pouch and leathern tobacco bag; such was the dress of the Rhodesian Colonists. (Hall, 8)

The indispensable element of Fletcher/James's "dress" is, of course, his hat. During the nineteenth century, as Felix Driver has noted of David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley, the headgear of African explorers and pioneers was "cultural currency to be exploited for all sorts of purposes" (Driver 1996: 234). "For the future legend, have a distinctive cap designed, à la Stanley," noted Theodore Hertzl in his plans for a Jewish pioneer corps (cited in Gelber and Liska 2007: 89), and when designing the iconic uniform for Boy Scouts, Robert Baden-Powell drew on the hat worn by Frederick Russell Burnham during his service as a BSAC scout in the 1890s. The variety of slouch hat here sported by Fletcher/James had been a symbol of the Rhodesian settler ever since the dramatic invasion of Mashonaland by the BSAC's Pioneer Column in 1890 (see fig. 1). Its name derived from Leander Starr

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[2] Thus the patrician Mrs Swancourt in Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873): "'My dear, you mustn't say "gentlemen" nowadays . . . . We have handed over "gentlemen" to the lower middle class, where the word is still to be heard at tradesmen's balls and provincial tea-parties, I believe'" (Hardy 2005: 142).
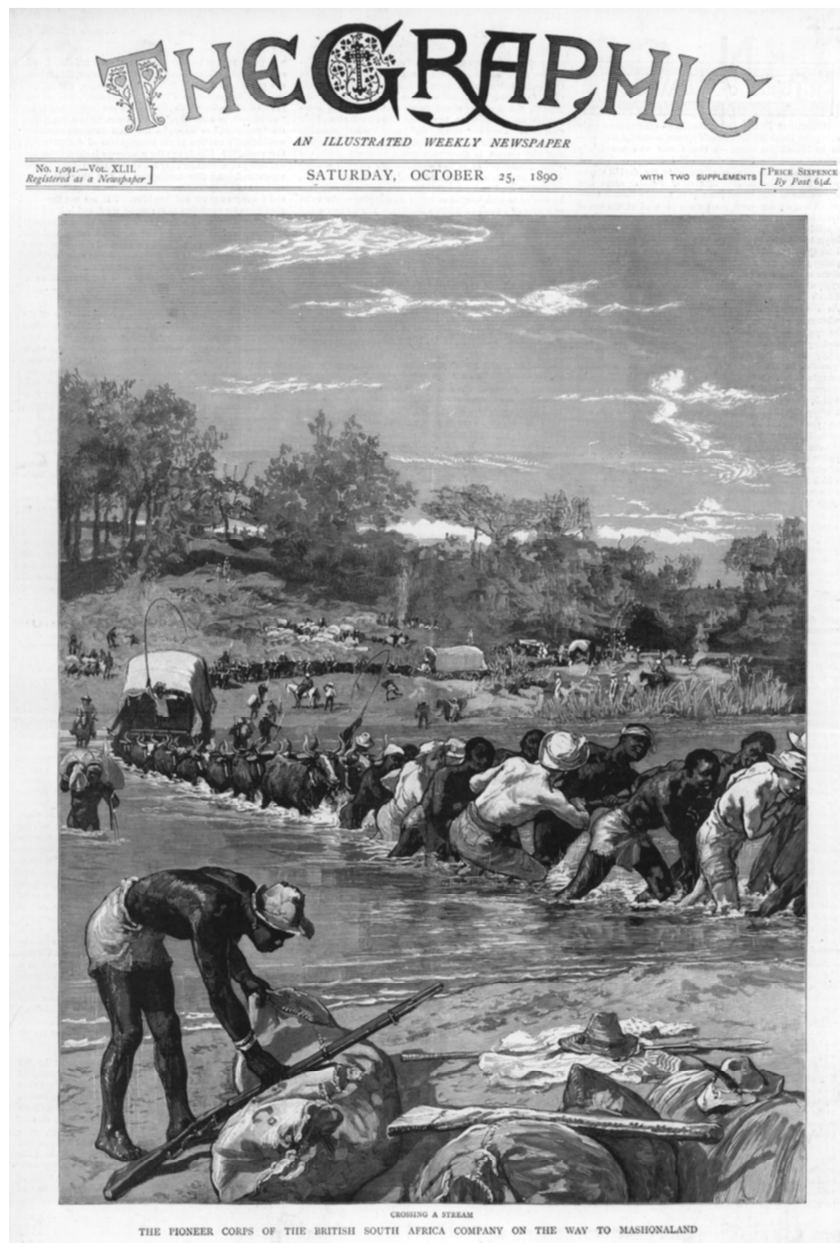
Figure 1. "The Pioneer Corps of the British South Africa Company on the Way to Mashonaland," *Daily Graphic*, 25 October 1890, 457.

Jameson, second Administrator of Mashonaland and leader of the abortive raid on the Transvaal that indirectly triggered the Ndebele insurrection of 1896. Like the visiting police officer, Fletcher/James is thus in uniform, indeed, literally so, since slouch hats were standard issue in the Bulawayo Field Force of which he is a veteran.

Self-fashioning in the "free style of a gentleman settler" also embodies what Hall evidently saw as a deeper process at work within the colony. The utopian ending, in which Cambridge gentlemen throw in their lot with penniless adventurers, is a restatement of the novella's premise that Rhodesia is the crucible of a new social order. Just as what appears to be a description of one man turns out to be a description of a class of men ("the Rhodesian Colonists"), so, too, is the Fletcher/James character sketch really an account of his unnamed compatriots. Metonymic rather than exceptional, his bravery and selflessness serve to confirm the essential gentility (in its newly abstracted sense) of all Rhodesian militiamen. Hall underscores this point when he portrays Fletcher/James reminiscing easily in the uncensored idiom of his old comrades-in-arms:

> Modestly he covered any narration of his own share in the best remembered exploits by retailing Davie Cameron's laager jokes, especially how Sandy Butters lost the horses from the fort at Matabele Wilson's, how he would from Scriptural texts find Divine authority for "potting" niggers, how the Dutch patrol one night fired 500 rounds from a Maxim gun at a supposed besieging impi, which on the morrow proved to be two wandering donkeys, neither injured, of Ted Slater's descriptions of hanging rebel spies on the trees outside the town by the brickfields; and how the Jewish tradesmen with their bundles of valuables scooted with Shylockian expressions of despair into Laager whenever the alarm of the approach of the enemy was given. (Hall 1898a: 19–20)

In this brave new world of yeomen-squires, colonial identity takes on a strictly relational character, defined largely in opposition to those others—Africans, Dutchmen, Jews—who lie beyond the barricade of imagined ethnic community.

A race of Titans
In 1898, Rhodesia was still spectacularly a colony in the making. Its population of barely ten thousand settlers was dispersed across a territory of 175,000 square miles, its official name was barely three years old, and

its African population outnumbered whites by almost thirty to one. The sheer rapidity of the BSAC-led occupation, the ruthless efficiency of its suppression of African resistance, and, above all, the novelty of its being governed by a private chartered company all served to associate Rhodesia with modernity in the eyes of contemporary observers. In the writings of John Buchan, indeed, the colony would become synonymous with advanced technology, inventive military strategy, and administrative innovation (see Donovan 2013). When interviewing Cecil Rhodes in Bulawayo for the *Western Mail* in April 1898, Hall similarly played up the magnate's global media presence, his grand dream of a transcontinental telegraph, the irresistible appeal of "philanthropy plus 5 per cent," and "the favourable impression of Rhodesia now gaining ground at home" (Hall 1898b). As the BSAC's brochure *Rhodesia 1889–1899* trilled, Rhodesia was synonymous with the future:

> For anyone visiting Bulawayo for the first time, it is hard to realise that a town of such size, with massive stone and brick buildings in every street, Churches, Hospitals, Stock Exchanges, Government Offices, Banks, Clubs and Hotels, equal to any in South Africa—the whole town brilliantly illuminated by electric light, has sprung into being within the last five years. (cited in Wisnicki 2007)

For all this, the dead hand of the past lay heavily on Rhodesia. While settler culture was predictably quick to mythologize fetishized incidents from the colony's founding, particularly the loss of a military detachment known as the Shangani Patrol during the First Anglo-Matabele War of 1893–94 and the Siege of Bulawayo during the Second Anglo-Ndebele War of 1896–97, the pre-colonial era also posed pressing and, at least initially, more intractable challenges to colonial ideology. This tension is reflected in *Bulawayo Jack*, whose underlying theme of psychological and ethical rapprochement with the past finds expression in the converging narrative arcs of its two protagonists, both of whom are implicitly held up as types of the sturdy new settler class. On the one hand, Fletcher/James's desire to conceal not only his dishonour in Britain but also his unsought media celebrity in Rhodesia echoes a wider colonial anxiety about social provenance. On the other, Devant's atonement for his crime is rather obviously compromised by the fact that emigrating to Rhodesia—in effect, becoming another anonymous "Bulawayo Jack"—will put him beyond the reach of the law. For each

man, then, Rhodesia promises suppression of the past as well as its transcendence.

As a writer, Hall, too, lived under the burden of the past. Haggard's evocations of pre-colonial Rhodesia in *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887) had created a vogue for African romances which doubtless played a role in Hall's choice of geographical setting for *Bulawayo Jack.* Yet the two men's treatment of social class could hardly have been less alike. Haggard's deep sympathy with Zulu warrior society went hand-in-hand with a strongly nostalgic view of Britain's feudal past and what Anthony Chennells has described as "an anxiety that commercialism might have compromised the idealism of empire" (Chennells 2007: 77). For the white adventurers of *King Solomon's Mines*, the unnamed lands "to the north of the Transvaal" (Haggard 1907: 20) are the object of a secular pilgrimage, a moral and physical testing-ground, and a space in which classes and races can temporarily mingle. Yet Haggard's treasure-seekers must return (albeit vastly enriched) to their respective social spheres in Britain after having installed Ignosi, their erstwhile servant, as anointed chief of "Kukuanaland". What would become Rhodesia is emphatically not a future home for Sir Henry Curtis or Captain Good, nor even for Haggard's grizzled hunter-prospector Allan Quatermain.

By contrast, Hall envisages the uncharted territories of Rhodesia as a dynamic social project. Thus we learn of Fletcher/James: "He came not to South Africa as others came in a reckless race for wealth, for at home he possessed better means than he might secure in the Colony, but if only he could stifle recollection he would make money" (Hall 1898a: 24). Hall is clearly drawing here on a familiar motif of empire as the white man's burden, its purpose, in Kipling phrase, "To seek another's profit, / And work another's gain." Even so, the need to "stifle recollection" is suggestively ambiguous in this context. Concealing his putative guilt requires Fletcher/James to deny (or at least maintain a strict silence about) his social origins, but modern readers nonetheless cannot fail to notice how Hall takes for granted that Rhodesia is the best place to do both. Fletcher/James, it will be recalled, has managed to preserve complete anonymity until Devant arrives from Britain. Interestingly, the *New York Times*'s assertion that Hall had attended a minor public school called "Kinver College in Staffordshire" (29 November 1914, 14)—he had, in fact, attended a grammar school in Kinver, a far less prestigious

free school—raises the possibility that the author, too, may have embellished his personal history upon arrival in Rhodesia.

Rhodesia has, then, provided Fletcher/James with a new identity. Fittingly, given the intense media attention directed towards the colony during its first decade, he owes this new identity as "Bulawayo Jack" to *Black & White*, a popular illustrated periodical published, not locally, but in London. News from Rhodesia was a regular feature in this magazine of current affairs, which devoted numerous articles and cover illustrations to military campaigns and public events such as the magnificent obsequies for Cecil Rhodes (fig. 2). In this light, the invention of Fletcher/James as "Bulawayo Jack" can be seen to instantiate the "Rhodesian Colonist" discursively created by the media in Britain, much the same way as the war-stories circulating among Fletcher/James and his comrades echo the stirring reportage with which British periodicals had diverted their own audiences during the recent wars in Rhodesia. The fact that the BSAC Police officer recognizes him "by your likeness given in 'Black and White'" (Hall 1898a: 16) is also significant in this regard. In addition to foregrounding the detail and verisimilitude of half-tone magazine illustrations, whose engravers often worked from photographs, it alerts us to the way that contemporary readers treated them as documentary glimpses of Rhodesia. Such blurring of the line between fiction and current history is further compounded in *Bulawayo Jack* by the cameo appearance of Cecil Rhodes, subsequently a cliché of Rhodesian novels such as F. Reginald Statham's *Mr Magnus* (1896).

Crucially, Hall's novel includes five photographic illustrations: a cover image of a lion cub; a full-length portrait of two Ndebele men ("Cococo and Jim"); another lion cub ("Miss Gwanda"); a landscape view of a deserted village ("Native Kraal"); and a picture of a white man standing beside a tree ("At the Foot of a Giant Euphorbia"). The ideological function of these photographs is easily recognized in the demeaning names bestowed upon the Ndebele men, the ironic award of the title "Miss Gwanda" (Gwanda being a town in Matabeleland) to an animal, the evocation of the landscape as empty of inhabitants, and the posing of the white man alongside what is effectively a botanical trophy. Yet these paratexts also serve less visible and arguably more important ends. In the first instance, they graphically connect this obscure work of
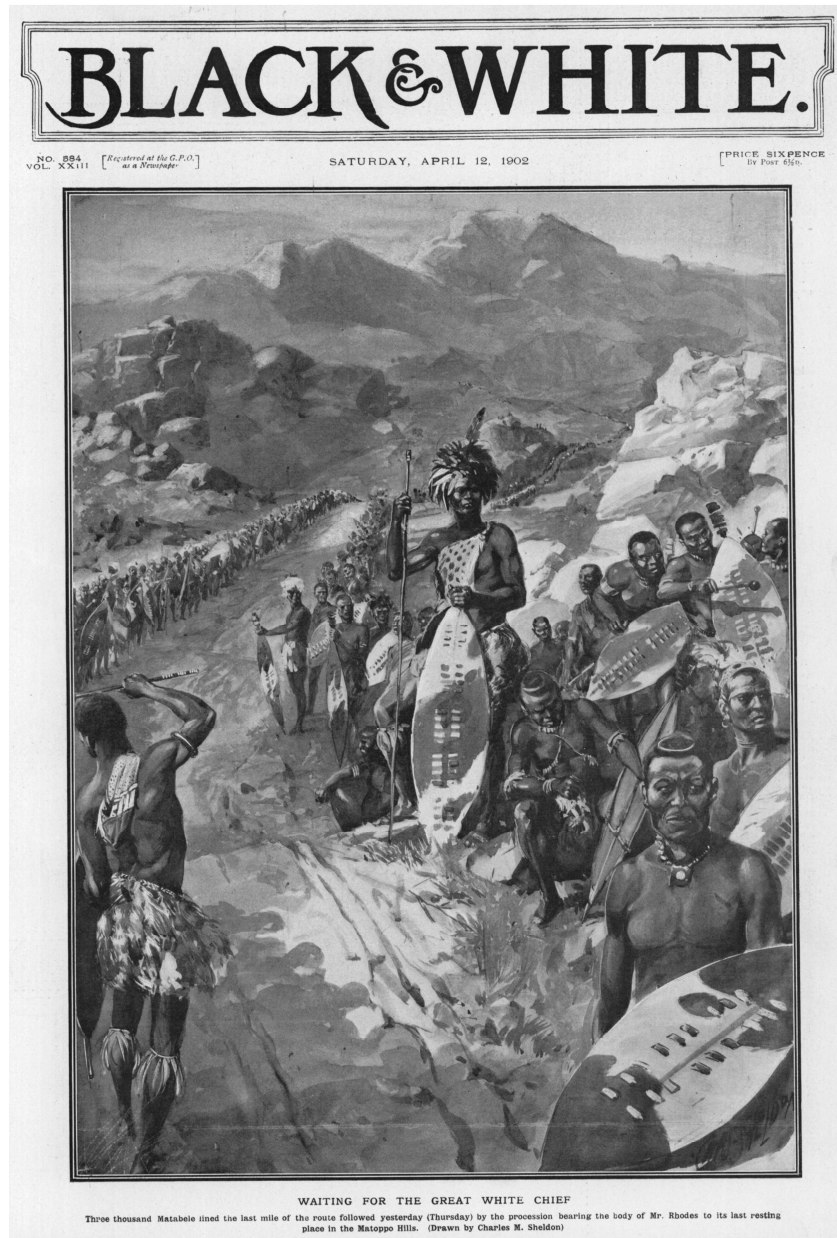
Figure 2. Charles Sheldon, "Waiting for the Great White Chief," *Black & White*, 12 April 1902, cover.

fiction to a burgeoning discourse on Rhodesia in contemporary British culture. Indeed, since the captions bear no relation to Hall's narrative beyond also having as their subject the people and landscape of Rhodesia, these photographs can only be understood as a deliberate allusion to this larger array of periodical and other texts relating to the new colony. They establish, too, a metonymic connection between the colony and the author; these are personal souvenirs, clearly taken by an amateur, rather than journalism or official propaganda. *Bulawayo Jack* may be a sentimental romance but the photographs signal that its author, unlike Haggard's numberless imitators, has seen Rhodesia for himself and is thus an authority of sorts. The anomalous final photograph goes even further by offering the unnamed white man not merely as an image of the author but as a kind of visual proxy for Fletcher/James, in the process all but collapsing the distinction between the real Rhodesia and that of the novel.

The photographs also have a deeper significance by virtue of the fact that *Bulawayo Jack* was published the year after photographs of Rhodesia in a novella had provoked an international scandal. In 1897, Olive Schreiner delivered an impassioned attack on the greed and brutality of the BSAC in *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, an allegorical fable about a meeting on the veldt between a common soldier and Jesus Christ. Schreiner prefaced her indictment of the Company's crimes with a shocking frontispiece titled "From a photograph taken in Matabeleland" (fig. 3), which, despite being removed from subsequent editions, has become an iconic image of colonial brutality. The photograph, which depicts three Ndebele prisoners executed at Bulawayo's "Hanging Tree" during the reprisals that followed the relief of Bulawayo in May 1896, is also described by a character in the novella: "I saw a photograph of the niggers hanging, and our fellows standing round smoking" (Schreiner 1897: 50–1; see also Walters and Fogg 2007). A public relations setback for the BSAC, Schreiner's frontispiece offers a cogent explanation for the inclusion of photographs that have no direct relevance for Hall's tale of "ordinary" life in Rhodesia. With their sentimental and normalizing presentation of the colony as a domesticated space, the photographs constitute an intervention in a struggle over (literally) the image of Rhodesia. They are, in effect, the visual counterpart of Catherine Radziwiłł's bizarre novella *The Resurrection of*
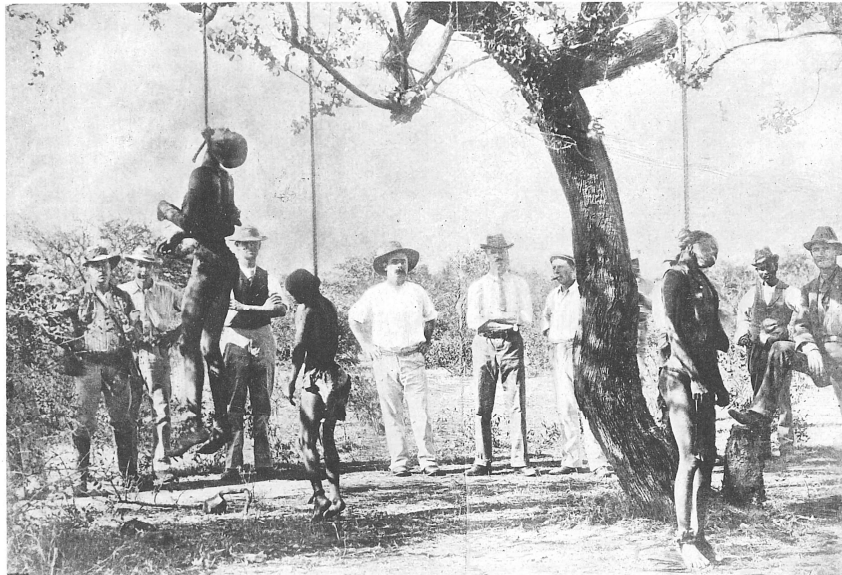
From a photograph taken in Matabeleland.

Figure 3. Olive Schreiner, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland: A Tale* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1897), frontispiece. Image courtesy of Ashleigh Harris.

Peter (1900), which would offer a riposte to Schreiner by having Jesus Christ return to make an impassioned defence of the BSAC. Indeed, the proposition that Hall intended the photographs as a direct challenge to the frontispiece of *Trooper Peter Halket*, a novel which, like *Bulawayo Jack*, places special emphasis on the class identity of its eponymous hero, is seemingly confirmed by Fletcher/James's reference to "Ted Slater's descriptions of hanging rebel spies on the trees outside the town" (Hall 1898a: 20).

All of these factors—the transcendence of history, literary romance, the popular image of Rhodesia—are curiously fused in a climactic scene in which Hall relates how Fletcher/James and Devant make their way back to Bulawayo:

> As they drove through the Mangwe Pass in the Matoppos, the scenery was perfectly grand and marvellous. It was full moonlight, and the white clear light enabled Philip Devant to see distinctly for a considerable distance the hills, which are generally supposed to be the scene of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*. The heights were most romantic. Great, huge boulders of hundreds of tons weight were so poised

in the air that it seemed but a push were required to send them toppling into the deep ravines below. Their shapes and contours were so fantastic—in many instances outlining the forms of elephants and lions *rampant et couchant*, and gigantic human faces—that one at first was compelled to the conclusion that they must have been shaped centuries back by some Titan race. (Hall 1898a: 44–5)

Hall's description, while accurate enough, has as its object a landscape with which many British readers were already persuaded that they were familiar, thanks in part to the extensive coverage of Rhodesia in illustrated magazines of the mid-1890s (see fig. 4).[3] As such, it offers an example of the enduring semiotic power of the Matopos Hills, whose
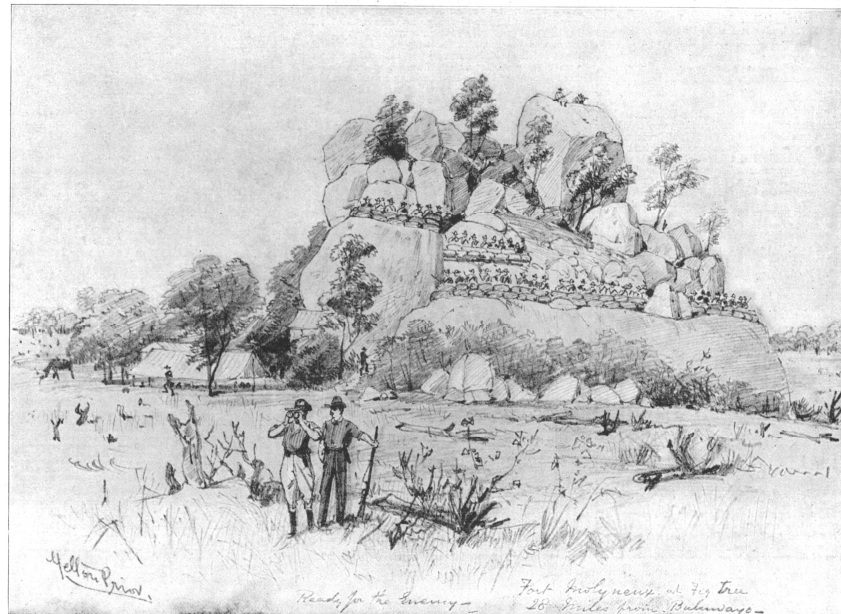
READY FOR THE ENEMY : FORT MOLYNEUX, AT FIG-TREE, TWENTY-EIGHT MILES FROM BULUWAYO.

Figure 4. Melton Prior, "Ready for the Enemy: Fort Molyneux, at Fig-Tree, Twenty-Eight Miles from Buluwayo," *Illustrated London News*, 20 May 1896, 681.

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[3] Twenty years later, a reviewer for the *Kinematograph Weekly* (London) could declare confidently of a film shot entirely in South Africa: "Much of *The Rose of Rhodesia*'s grand scenery (crags, precipices and waterfalls) is of a kind which could only be taken in Rhodesia" (6 November 1919, 115).

multiple significations for Africans as well as white settlers have been eloquently documented by Terence Ranger in *Voices From the Rocks* (1999).

But what are we to make of Hall's whimsical suggestion that the Matopos had been built by Titans? Like his awkward locutions—"grand and marvellous," "full moonlight," "Great, huge"—it appears at first glance to be a self-conscious attempt at "literary" style. Hall's interpretation of the rock formations as heraldic figures and faces likewise seems merely a banality of the anthropomorphizing and orientalizing colonial gaze. And yet the notion that Rhodesia in the distant past had been the playground of a now-vanished race of godlike beings had a more immediate connotation than classical myth or even Haggardesque romances such as George Cossins's *Isban-Israel* (1896), the story of an ancient Jewish tribe in Matabeleland. Coming as it does in a scene in which two white settlers draw a line beneath their own personal histories so as to take possession of "vacant" lands of which they are the undisputed owners, this passage from *Bulawayo Jack* relies upon the implicit assumption that lasting changes can only be made to the African landscape by non-African agents, effectively reframing the question of historical origins as one of racial pedigree. Four years later, its author assumed responsibility for the most politically charged archaeological site in Africa.

The land of romance

Located in Zimbabwe's Masvingo Province, Great Zimbabwe is a deserted settlement of 1,800 acres whose three walled enclosures are comprised of dwelling houses, cattle pens, ramparts, and monumental stone edifices, among them a massive conical tower. The complex, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has yielded numerous historical artefacts, including eight soapstone carvings of a bird whose emblem now adorns the national flag of Zimbabwe. Carbon-dating and other metrics have confirmed that construction work in stone began in the eleventh century and that the site was abandoned some time before the early fifteenth. In Anthony Chennells's words: "The old city was not an outpost of some ancient and exotic empire but an African city, built by the Shona, who are still the dominant people of the southern Zambezian plateau, and depended on African economic networks,

African polities, and African religion for its existence and status"
(Chennells 2007: 1–2).

By the time Hall took up his post—whose responsibilities were in
fact custodial, not archaeological—Great Zimbabwe had been forcefully
appropriated by colonialist historiography. In 1871, Karl Mauch, a
German explorer, identified the ruins as the Queen of Sheba's palace,
and his risible claim that the site was the gold-rich Ophir described in the
Bible was cynically repeated by Rhodes's associates when wooing
financiers and settlers in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Shortly after,
Mauch's views were roundly dismissed by James Theodore Bent, an
antiquarian sponsored by the BSAC, who instead declared that the site
was a military installation built by Phoenicians or Arabs to protect gold
mines.[4] The evidence produced by his excavation of the site, as he
emphasized in the preface to the third edition of his *Ruined Cities of
Mashonaland* (1892), "quite excludes the possibility of any negroid race
having had more to do with their construction than as the slaves of a race
of higher cultivation; for it is a well-accepted fact that the negroid brain
never could be capable of taking the initiative in work of such intricate
nature" (Bent 1902: xiv). A similar line was taken by John Willoughby,
formerly a leading conspirator in the Jameson Raid, in his *Narrative of
Further Excavations at Zimbaye* (1893), and by Alexander Wilmot, a
researcher engaged by the BSAC to scour European archives in support
of Bent's thesis, who speculated in his *Monomatapa (Rhodesia)* (1896)
that the abandoned site told a cautionary tale of imperial decline hastened
by interbreeding. Hall's own contributions, which included the most
comprehensive description of the site hitherto, cleaved faithfully to the
historical narrative established by these precursors.

The controversy over the origins of Great Zimbabwe has already
been examined in some detail by historians and anthropologists, who
have usefully highlighted the ethnocentric prejudices exhibited by its

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[4] Thus an early history of Rhodesia: "Here, then, we have a people well skilled
in constructive art, deeply religious, and of probably a quiet and inoffensive
description, having wandered on to the plains of Rhodesia to dwell among the
fierce tribes that evidently overran the country then as later, to search for the
precious metals that they knew to lie beneath the ground. . . . It has long been
thought that India represented the ancient Ophir, but it seems as though in the
light of recent discoveries it must give place to Rhodesia" (Hensman 1900: 9,
11).

participants (e.g. Kuklick 1991; Derricourt 2011: 21–37). In Hall's case, however, the ideological stakes seem to have owed as much to the representation of pre-colonial Rhodesia in imaginative literature as to the more obvious political agenda of the BSAC at the turn of the century. His reference in *Bulawayo Jack* to the Matopos as being "generally supposed to be the scene of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*" is illustrative of his broader approach to Rhodesian history—as a *literary* subject. "Mr. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* are known to 'walk' the country," he remarks elliptically in *The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia*, an archaeological monograph which opens, somewhat unusually, by describing its topic as "the Land of Romance" (Hall and Neal 1902: 5, 1). And he repeated these sentiments in *Great Zimbabwe*: "In the passages on the hill one might almost expect on such a night to come face to face with Rider Haggard's She at any corner, or to see her draped form issuing from one of the numerous caves which still pierce the cliffs"; "Romance rivalling that of Rider Haggard at his best pervades the massive walls of this ancient ascent as it insinuates its upward way along the precipitous side of Zimbabwe Hill" (Hall 1905: 19, 294).

Nor was Hall alone in conflating fiction and history. Having imagined a lost race in *King Solomon's Mines*, Haggard himself did not hesitate to lend his considerable authority in support of Wilmot's claims that Great Zimbabwe was Phoenician in origin (see Kuklick 1991: 142–3). In a Post Scriptum to the 1905 edition of *King Solomon's Mines*, he announced: "Imagination has been verified by fact; the King Solomon's Mines I dreamed of have been discovered, and are putting out their gold once more, and, according to the latest reports, their diamonds also; the Kukuanas or, rather, the Matabele, have been tamed by the white man's bullets" (Haggard 1907: 8). He also echoed Wilmot's assertion that "there is no greater analogy than that between the Empire of Britain and that of Phoenicia" (Wilmot 1896: 118) by declaring the Phoenicians to be "the English of the ancient world" (Wilmot 1896: xvii). Thanks to the "bold enterprise of the British South Africa Company" (Wilmot 1896: xxiii), Haggard added, Great Zimbabwe might soon be "peopled by men of the Anglo-Saxon race" (Wilmot 1896: xxiv)—a vision which he subsequently fleshed out in his romances *Elissa* (1900) and *Benita* (1906), both of which are set in or near the historic site. Indeed, Haggard seems to have been unable to think about African history without having
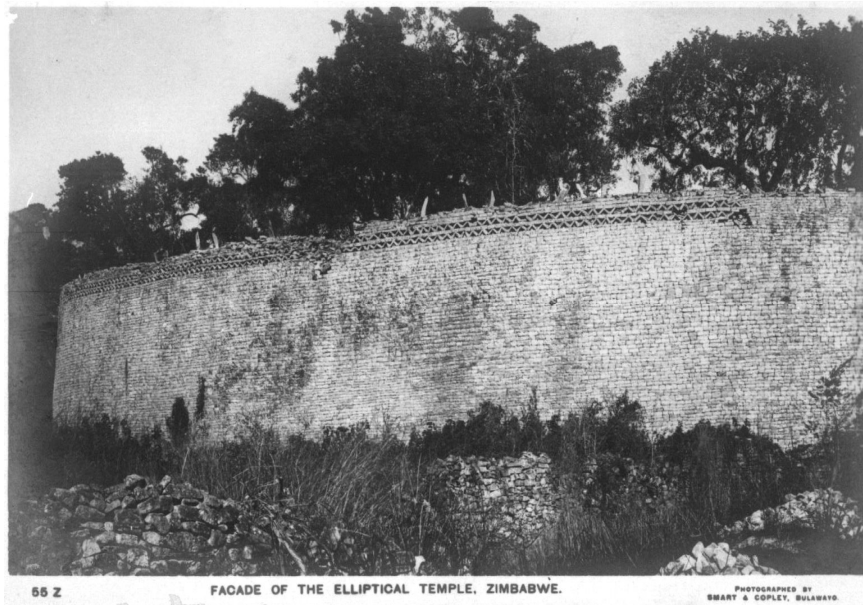
Figure 5. Postcard of Great Zimbabwe. Bulawayo, e.1900s.

recourse to the extravagant tropes that characterize his own fiction. After entering the so-called "Elliptical Temple" (see fig. 5) during a visit to Great Zimbabwe in April 1914, he noted in his diary: "Well can I imagine the priests of some dark and bloody ritual creeping down its gloomy depths, thrusting or bearing between them the human being destined to the sacrifice" (Haggard 2001: 158).

The *mise-en-abyme* created by this self-reinforcing inductive logic is highlighted by Haggard's account of a day spent exploring the ruins with Hall, whom the BSAC had reinstated after lobbying by white settlers.[5] Although professional archaeologists were increasingly in agreement with David Randall-MacIver's conclusion in *Mediæval Rhodesia* (1906) that Great Zimbabwe was "unquestionably African in every detail"

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[5] Scrambling behind the unexpectedly agile curator, Haggard recalled: "Halfway up this impossible place [Hall] turned to beckon to us hesitating weaklings who crawled behind and instantly there flashed into my mind the picture of old Gagool in *K[ing] S[olomon's] Mines*. . . . The resemblance was so ridiculously accurate that I burst out laughing and nearly came to grief" (Haggard 2001: 161).

(Randall-MacIver 1906: 85), Haggard remained unconvinced: "How any antiquarian can have suggested that all these buildings were erected by African natives in the Middle Ages passes my comprehension. Surely he must have but a slight acquaintance with kaffir races" (Haggard 2001: 158). Despite being in agreement on the age of Great Zimbabwe and despite Hall's enthusiasm for Haggard's writings—Haggard noted with surprise that the curator had dubbed a nearby chain of ancient forts "Allan Quatermain's Road" (Haggard 2001: 157)—a curious misunderstanding arose between the two men. As Haggard recorded in his diary:

> Mr. Hall seemed a little aggrieved with me because I, he said, was responsible for various false ideas about Zimbabwe. He said that once he made a practice of sitting on the top of the great cone, reading my stories, noting their every *word*. I tried to explain to him the differences between romance and the history of fact. . . . [W]ith the exception of *Elissa*, which he has not read, I never wrote of Zimbabwe, but rather of a land where the ruins were built by the fairies of imagination.
>
> (Haggard 2001: 159)

Charges of plagiarism earlier in his career had made Haggard wary of acknowledging sources for his fiction—here, Hugh Mulleneux Walmsley's *The Ruined Cities of Zululand* (1869) (Etherington 1977). He may also have been embarrassed by the extraordinary image of Hall trying to derive archaeological details from a popular novel while seated atop Great Zimbabwe's iconic tower. And yet his strictures to the curator on "the differences between romance and the history of fact" are deeply disingenuous insofar as they seek to conceal the extent to which literary romance had enabled the bogus "history of fact" to which both men so readily subscribed.[6]

We are now in a position to draw some conclusions about *Bulawayo Jack*. For all its obscurity, the novella offers a useful insight into the peculiar pressures of class and gender in early Rhodesia. Fletcher/James's determination to protect his sweetheart's good name

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[6] Hall's *Great Zimbabwe*, notes Martin Hall, "made heavy use of the power of the romance genre, employing its devices in conjuring up Bent's pagan rituals and phallic worship" (Hall 1996: 109); and Haggard's writings were included by Hall and Neal among the "opinions . . . which must be weighed by archaeologists in dealing with the question of the original builders of the ruins" (Hall and Neal 1902, xi-xii). See Hall 1995.

even at the cost of his own is an extravagant instance of the fetishizing of white women, and specifically their virtue, in early settler society (McCulloch 2000). As might be expected, this neo-chivalric honour code was to receive less rosy treatment at the hands of female Rhodesian novelists such as Gertrude Page and Cynthia Stockley, whose "advanced" social themes include domestic violence, marital infidelity, and mental illness (see Donovan 2009). The absence of women in *Bulawayo Jack* seems to be merely a convention of the romance genre— the imperial frontier as a space of masculine derring-do and homosocial friendship—yet the necessity of importing a female love interest in order to resolve its plot was both topical and utopian. On arriving in Rhodesia in 1897, Hall had joined a settler population that was overwhelmingly male, thanks to the deterrent conditions of frontier life, the upheavals of two wars, and a ban on BSAC employees marrying which had been imposed the previous year after white women were killed by Ndebele insurgents. Indeed, it was not until the following March that the *Illustrated London News* could report that the Rhodesia was once again welcoming female emigrants. Five years later, men still outnumbered women by almost four to one (McCulloch 2000: 88), and as late as 1913 women could be described as being "as scarce as roses in December" outside of urban settlements (Page 1913: 147).

That Rhodesia's most prominent archaeologist should have authored a tale in which a white settler assumes his rightful identity by coming to terms with the past offers, in turn, a fascinating corollary to Rhodesia's own fraught relationship with its precolonial past. Indeed, Fletcher/James's journey of redemption presents an allegory of the larger travails of the fledging colony, each bound on a quest for self-realization predicated on a perspective more akin to the notion of pedigree than historical truth. Just as the archaeological "evidence" presented by Hall and other BSAC apologists asserted a political and ethical continuity between the empires of antiquity and the present, so, too, does *Bulawayo Jack* imagine Rhodesia as a mythic site not of class displacement but of an ongoing reconstruction of class itself. In their blurring of history and fiction, both fantasies served an immediate political need. Imperial antecedents confer a useful aura of legitimacy and inevitability, not to say romance, on the sordid business of subjugating, expropriating, and taxing a colony's indigenous inhabitants, and while the international archaeological community may have reviled Hall as bungler who

inadvertently destroyed the very site he was excavating, Hall remained, as Henrika Kuklick notes, a "local hero" among Rhodesians for unwaveringly advocating the "ancient-exotic theory of Great Zimbabwe's origins" (Kuklick 1991: 150). At the same time, such fantasies clearly made a powerful imaginative appeal to British readers as well as to those men (and women) on the ground, as indicated by the presence of Mary Thurcytel's "The White Dove of Khami: A Tale of Monomatapa," a lurid Haggardesque feuilleton set in Great Zimbabwe which was serialized alongside prosaic advertisements for mining equipment and stock prices in the *Bulawayo Chronicle* in 1901.

Ultimately, then, *Bulawayo Jack* illustrates the special place of imaginative literature in the self-image of early Rhodesia. It would be easy to say that Hall's historical delusions, which were based on his reading and, not least, writing of fiction, stemmed from a deliberate attempt to deform precolonial history in the interests of the BSAC's racial and political goals. Certainly, there can be no doubt about Hall's commitment to the BSAC's agenda; one of the two other surviving copies of *Bulawayo Jack* contains an autograph inscription to Dr (Johannes) Hans Sauer, member of first Mashonaland Legislative Council, participant in the Jameson Raid, and personal friend of Rhodes, whom he even accompanied at the famous *indaba* in the Matopos in 1896.[7] And yet the evidence of this now forgotten novel is that Hall came to Rhodesia with these romantic and repellent notions already pre-established. Less conscious propaganda, they stand as an instance of colonial ideology wedded to a peculiarly literary variety of bad faith.

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[7] Held by Boston College. See http://openlibrary.org/books/OL16584391M/ Bulawayo_Jack.

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A worker's consciousness: The psychology of class in Peter Currell Brown's *Smallcreep's Day*

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Terry Eagleton in his book *Why Marx Was Right* begins by informing his readers that he is not trying to say Marx was perfect in all his ideas but that those ideas are plausible and worthy of contemporary examination and application (Eagleton 2011: ix-x). I think this is true for the dialectic contained within this paper. I make no assertions of hermetic perfection for my ideas, merely that my proposed dialectic is plausible and offers a perspective related to selected issues and imagery appearing in Peter Currell Brown's only novel, *Smallcreep's Day*. A narrative stream within Brown's novel interrogates, amongst other issues, the socio-cultural milieu of a major economic and metaphorical driver of Western capitalism throughout most of the 20th century: the factory. With this essay I have chosen to focus upon how capitalism and work space affect worker consciousness within the novel. Brown's text offers a trenchant vehicle for exploring class via concepts such as abjection, class consciousness, cognitive dissonance, and false consciousness within an industrialised space governed by capitalist ideology. The factory is itself a more complicated machine created to produce other machines; with human beings as the most complicated machines in the productive chain. These concepts find their intersection in a sort of class symptomology; specifically, that of the working-class or in Marxist terms the 'proletariat'. This class toils physically and psychologically within the miasmatic space of the factory.

Smallcreep's Day tells the tale of Pinquean Smallcreep, an assembler of pulleys in the slotting section of a large factory. Smallcreep lives a seemingly dreary working class life of pale consumerism, factory toil, family, and insufficient wages. One day Smallcreep decides to leave his work station to find out exactly what the final product is at the end of the assembly line. This quest becomes a surreal narrative of almost Carrollian, Orwellian, or even Swiftian proportions, making use of Brown's experience as a factory worker in Gloucestershire. On his journey Smallcreep meets various denizens of the factory, from sewage

worker to managing director. Smallcreep in essence is the everyman condemned socio-economically to factory labour, while being ideologically convinced that the status quo is for the best. Ultimately, Smallcreep comes upon 'the great machine', the product for which the entire factory labours, and is overwhelmed by its alien(-ating) power. Humbled by his vision he returns to his work area, without affect or hope, to continue assembling pulleys. Throughout the novel Smallcreep functions as a point of intersection for issues related to class and the factory. The Smallcreep character fulfils an interrogatory role as well; an exploration of socio-cultural and socio-economic conceptions. As such, Brown's fictive account of alienated workers in the novel illumines some of the pervasive class issues occurring in 20[th-]century industrial capitalism.

The traditional Marxian classes of bourgeoisie, petty bourgeois, and proletariat are represented within the factory space of *Smallcreep's Day*. The proletariat in *Smallcreep's Day* is composed of labourers/piece-workers, line workers/assemblers, and production workers; all are without conventional wealth, except in the biological lottery that is their children. With the exception of management, the workers of the factory are equal in their inequality. The petty bourgeois is represented by the engineers (white lab coats), foremen, sales manager, and managing director. No members of the bourgeoisie appear in the novel directly, but politicians and royalty as mediated constructs are mentioned in passing by various characters. Confrontation between these classes seldom occurs in the novel; intra-class confrontation is much more frequent, especially amongst the workers. Workers often compete or fight with each other over status (Brown 1965: 40, 41, 62-73, 94-95, et al.) or as catharsis (Brown 1965: 41, 62-73, et al.). The petty bourgeois frequently serves as vector for worker control techniques, at the behest of the distant bourgeoisie. Control is exerted in part through consumerism and institutional law, while the psycho-social effects of capitalism itself ensure an atomised and anxious populace. Time is used as a way of controlling the workers both directly (e.g., piece work, artificially dividing the work day, wages, etc.) and indirectly (e.g., dissociative behaviour, obsessive-compulsive disorder, paranoid personification of time as an entity, etc.). Survival is linked directly to accurate timekeeping; if work hours are not 'registered', wages are not paid (Brown 1965: 13). A traditionally Marxist goal of the proletariat, dis-

placement of the capitalist system, has been replaced in the novel with a narcissistic and pervasive consumerism. This consumerism shifts the workers' energies away from collective political (union/class) action towards an ever-shifting mirage of capital accumulation (Brown 1965: 51-52, et al.). Union power is almost non-existent or at best highly ineffective (Brown 1965: 139-150). Newspapers and other media exist only to obfuscate (Brown 1965: 69) or offer fantasies of escape (Brown 1965: 16, 62, 64, et al.). A sort of socio-economic Darwinism seems rampant; competition, as opposed to communality and mutuality, permeates the atomised proletariat. The psycho-social matrix of the workers is one of anger, confusion, fear, frustration, and self-loathing; it is a matrix of abjection.

Abjection may be conventionally defined as "degradation" or as "a low or downcast state" ("Abjection"). It may also be viewed as a condition of body-sickness; a horror of the body and the impact of its 'reality' upon the mind. An abject body is liminal and numinous; it exists uneasily between the objective and subjective. An abject body is a body without clear definition. The factory is a space of abjection.

Smallcreep and the other denizens of the factory inhabit and toil within an abjective space. This space confronts its inhabitants almost constantly with death, both literally and symbolically, on many levels. Abjection, according to Julia Kristeva, may be defined as a response to the disintegration of the boundaries between object and subject. In the *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva offers the view that in terms of the subject "abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (Kristeva 1982: 9). Such a response is one of disgust and horror; meaning collapses causing a visceral reaction. The factory encourages an abjected state in the workers. Factory workers become abjected because they cannot become one with the object (product of their labour). Often they are not confident in their self/role, thereby entering into a state of horror at their predicament. That predicament is an abjected state which possibly encourages narcissism and even infantile behaviour. This parallels the competitiveness central to capitalism as well; to 'succeed' the workers must focus only upon themselves, seeing others as impediments to achieving such success. Success may be seen as the (illusory) ability to keep chaos/decay/death physically or psychologically at bay. Workers are convinced this may be achieved by obtaining surplus value or through consumer items which function as totemic objects. Late in the

novel the managing director, when speaking of the factory's product, reveals a truth about all products consumed: "I am forced to the conclusion that its consumption does not, and indeed will not ever, give the satisfaction attributed to it" (Brown 1965: 169). Yet, no matter how much is acquired, the gulf between subject and object cannot be closed; this is the conundrum of consumerism.

Consumerism embodies a sort of withdrawing from the communal or collective where the individual is totally focused upon (an unstable) self, thereby living in an abject state. Consumerism almost begins functioning as a sort of ersatz religion within the broader context of western capitalism. Abjection under such conditions becomes trans-class; occurring even in the upper classes, though their relative success in capital accumulation lessens the magnitude of abective horror. With sufficient power and wealth individuals could easily delude themselves into believing that the mere accumulation of capital may actually mitigate the inevitable corruption of the body. In Freudian terms, the object is the mother, to whom which the individual (child) wishes to return; undoing that primal separation which led to the creation of 'I'. But such a return also results in dissolution (death) of the self, which the individual seeks to prevent by capital accumulation and commodity fetishism; creating conflict at a basic level. Under such circumstances, the individual remains in an indeterminate or abject state. In the most simplistic terms, the abjective degree of a class in a capitalist, industrial economy is proportional to its wealth and power. The working class therefore may be seen as a class of great dis-ease and abjection in *Smallcreep's Day*.

Smallcreep is an abjected state within the factory because the barriers between his notional self and work have collapsed. Kristeva states the abject draws her to "the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva 1982: 2). If meaning collapses for an individual it may be that such a person is more easily persuaded to accommodate conditions that may be against their best interests. Such a situation implies a blurring of the inner and outer worlds, such as in Smallcreep's narrative of his journey. In this fashion, he has become the quintessential 'unreliable narrator'. Disintegration is reflected in his narrative; it is a surreal, dream-like tale that is neither strict reportage of the factory milieu (objective) nor a total withdrawal into interiority (subjective). Or, as Kristeva simply states it in her essay: "abjection is above all ambiguity"

(Kristeva 1982: 9). The process whereby this all happens is not only due to the imposition of an unnatural external order (capitalism), but also by the colonisation of Smallcreep's consciousness by consumerist ideology. Smallcreep's work is an abstraction inasmuch as he has no idea what function it serves within the greater whole or final product. Or, as Smallcreep puts it "I think that life will have no meaning for me until I have found exactly where my particular effort fits in, what service it performs, who eventually uses it, for what purposes" (Brown 1965: 35). Eventually, this alienation is expanded to the point where he is not only alienated from his labour, but from co-workers and family as well. In Smallcreep's world there is no communality, only separate individuals who are merely parts within a distantly immense capitalist machine which creates more and more surplus value. The demesne of the factory is given order by the model of the machine, with individual humans becoming their machine roles with varying levels of efficacy. In a sense, the worker and their consciousness cannot truly be understood unless the factory itself and the surrounding cultural paradigms are understood as well.

Abjection as it appears in *Smallcreep's Day* aides and abets what a Marxist would term 'false consciousness'. The concept may be simply explained as a state where "people are unable to see things, especially exploitation, oppression, and social relations, as they really are; the hypothesized inability of the human mind to develop a sophisticated awareness of how it is developed and shaped by circumstances" ("False Consciousness"). Furthermore, academic and author Daniel Little states "Members of a subordinate class (workers, peasants, serfs) suffer from false consciousness in that their mental representations of the social relations around them systematically conceal or obscure the realities of subordination, exploitation, and domination those relations embody" (Little n.d.). Capitalism's economic and ideological processes distort working class consciousness and class relationships. Daniel Little also observes that if "consciousness-shaping mechanisms did not exist, then the underclass, always a majority, would quickly overthrow the system of their domination" (Little n.d.). False consciousness is encouraged and maintained in society because, in a sense, it furthers the aims of consumerist/ capitalist institutions while assuring their continued hegemony, as well as that of the bourgeoisie. The desires of the workers in part result from an arrangement which actually does not address their

desires or interests; ultimately, even working in contradiction of them. Human desires are not only defined by societal forces and ideologies, but also by the individual no matter how colonised. These conditions affect and help to define what is 'class consciousness'.

For most workers, 'class consciousness' is something rarely achieved, if at all, within Brown's novel, at least as Georg Lukács would define it. Lukács felt class consciousness was related to a strictly causal historical perspective unfettered by any universalising (transcendental) notions (which according to Lukács result in false consciousness). In essence, class consciousness is an awareness of history as on-going process, not a belief in capitalism as totalising entity. In more common parlance, class consciousness is more generally viewed as an awareness of one's place within the socio-economic matrix. In terms of Lukács' definition of class consciousness, Smallcreep seems to possess little 'class consciousness'; his sense of history does not seem to extend beyond what has been mediated by his father. For Lukács, an abjected worker would be divided from history, therefore a victim of false consciousness. Approached in terms of the more generalised definition Smallcreep seems to possess a greater awareness, although such knowledge is more vertically-oriented (hierarchical) as opposed to a mutual and horizontal equality (heterarchical). This verticality is illustrated most glaringly in his exchanges with the sales manager (Brown 1965: 158-166) and managing director (Brown 1965: 168-180); Smallcreep is polite and deferential. At one point he momentarily self-identifies with the bourgeoisie, stating "In a very short time, however, I learned something of the difficulties which members of the royal family must face when appearing in public. Rejecting the idea of a fixed smile, I resolved to look ahead of me, so that I should offend none by preference." (Brown 1965: 10). Later in the novel, Smallcreep plays at the role of manger and finds he enjoys it (Brown 1965: 73). Those of his own class, the proletariat/workers, he describes as animals (Brown 1965: 11, 17, 18, 40, 87, et al.), dead (Brown 1965: 5, 38), 'irresponsible loiterers'(Brown 1965: 8), machines (Brown 1965: 10, 16, 37, 38, et al.) and animated body parts (Brown 1965: 11, 15). Smallcreep also alludes to "lower orders" of workers (Brown 1965: 16, 34) and wonders why an 'intelligent' man would be a labourer (Brown 1965: 33). Even later in the novel Smallcreep is accused of being a 'traitor' to his class (Brown 1965: 147). Throughout the novel Smallcreep journeys through the factory

interacting with workers and petty bourgeoisie yet seems to have only minimal class connections or empathy.

If *Smallcreep's Day* is in part a meditation upon the factory and the effects of capitalism it is also in part a meditation upon class, specifically the working class. Within Smallcreep's journey can be found a wealth of anecdotal information concerning the life of the working class. A major conflict for such a worker is attempting to reconcile two opposing imperatives: individual survival versus communal action. Because of their limited access to the means of production as individuals, workers must band together to acquire the political and economic power to challenge both the bourgeoisie and institutional repression. Yet, this can immediately affect a worker's ability to accumulate capital and ensure personal happiness or survival. Communal actions and values represent a set of transcendental ideologies which extend beyond the life of any individual; community extends beyond the quotidian, demanding an individual to hold two almost mutually exclusive sets of values. Such a condition results in a perpetual need for escape, on some level, from living and working in such a conflicted state. Escape may be something as simple as obsessing upon media minutiae (i.e., spectacle) or bodily necessities (e.g., food, sex, etc.), to something as profound as a hallucinatory or religious experience (i.e., Smallcreep's adventure, his confrontation with the 'great machine'). This can all lead to a sort of cognitive dissonance that not only results in anxiety but also in socio-cultural confusion.

Cognitive dissonance may be simply defined as "anxiety that results from simultaneously holding contradictory or otherwise incompatible attitudes, beliefs, or the like, as when one likes a person but disapproves strongly of one of his or her habits" ("Cognitive Dissonance"). Often individuals in such a state are motivated to rationalise away any dissonances and ignore internal conflicts, allowing for a less subjectively stressful personal existence. This may be applied to how a worker perceives inter and intra class relations. In terms of the petty bourgeoisie, Smallcreep looks to them for guidance or knowledge of the factory's (world's) workings while at the same time finding them and their communications difficult to understand. Though reluctantly participating in what seems to be a union negotiation, Smallcreep opines that a management representative "spoke with such an incredibly educated accent that I couldn't make out a word" (Brown 1965: 140). A short

while later Smallcreep observes that "his accent was so incredibly correct that it didn't sound like the English language at all" (Brown 1965: 142). Education is theoretically supposed to bring understanding, yet for Smallcreep it seemingly brings alienation. Later in the text Smallcreep has an encounter with the managing director of the factory. The managing director in an attempt to communicate his perceptions concerning his role within the factory finds Smallcreep confused (Brown 1965:178), depressed (Brown 1965: 178), 'puzzled' (Brown 1965: 171), and sad (Brown 1965: 178). At the end of the encounter Smallcreep assures the managing director that he "hadn't really understood much of it anyway, at least, not enough to be able to relate it to anyone else (Brown 1965: 180). It can be inferred that at least some of Smallcreep's anxieties result from an inculcated 'trust' of authority figures conflicting with his actual experience of such figures. It is difficult to trust when there is no understanding, yet the hierarchical structure of the factory and society demand it.

In the factory where Smallcreep toils, the workers' labour power is so thoroughly alienated from the production of the 'commodity' and its value that they have become the definition of exploited. In fact, the workers are not only alienated from the fruits of their labours but they are alienated from each other, their families, and ultimately themselves.

The consequences of the interdependent issues of abjection, class, cognitive dissonance, and false consciousness play out amongst the workers within the context of Brown's fictional factory. Smallcreep is a 'slippery' character and narrator due to his ability to move between, or occupy, spaces associated with differing classes or pathologies. Ostensibly a line-worker assembling pulleys, Smallcreep becomes more by leaving his station (in terms of work and class). In his journey Smallcreep moves both horizontally (i.e., within his class and worker-role within the factory) and vertically (i.e., travels upwards and downwards in class/worker-role). Smallcreep's journey is a journey of existential crisis, as well. When referring to a case study of Freud's named Hans, Kristeva describes him as wanting "to know himself and to know everything" including what "could be lacking in himself" (Kristeva 1962: 34). This description could easily be applied to Smallcreep as well.

But in the novel there is another major character besides Smallcreep: the factory. As a space and economic engine the factory becomes the ultimate institutional refinement of the labour theory of value. Yet, when

value may be created without physicality (merely by logos) labour itself becomes tinged with the 'unreal' and therefore the worker as well. The factory is both a transformational engine and dream machine; by reinforcing and reifying capitalist precepts the factory inscribes them upon the consciousness of all workers to some extent. Smallcreep refers to the factory variously as church-like (Brown 1965: 29), a forest/jungle (Brown 1965: 14, 15, 41, et al.) and as a museum (Brown 1965: 13, 83, 84); the factory space interacts with workers on multiple psychological and socio-cultural levels. Humans live and work in the factory space, but the factory also lives through the workers by colonising their subjective space; a socio-economic symbiosis that favours the factory and those who own it. Capitalism is a parasite that not only feeds upon this symbiosis, but also injects its own ideological DNA into the factory/worker relationship.

In Brown's novel capitalism not only functions as an instrument for creating surplus value, but as way of atomising the individual into a cloud of competing dichotomies: mind/body, individual/family, immaterial/material, etc. There is no functional unity except in the ultimate creation of excess value. A worker is more easily manipulated when he/she has competing desires as well as being in competition with other human beings (including family and friends) and cultural/institutional forces. Competition is further encouraged by the bourgeoisie because it generally drives prices down, especially in terms of workers' wages (a significant portion of any business' costs). Competition not only becomes about survival but also the creation of surplus value; workers struggle with each other for survival while the bourgeoisie benefits economically and politically.

The bourgeoisie also use time as a way of controlling workers and distorting their perceptions; time becomes bent by the exigencies of capitalist economics. In his journey through the factory Smallcreep encounters a press operator who discourses upon time and work (Brown 1965: 47-54). The press operator feels "surrounded by enemies", with a large clock overlooking the workshop being "the number one enemy round here" which "watches us all the time" (Brown 1965: 49). The press operator shouts *at* the clock, saying "You wouldn't move at all if we didn't watch you, would you, you creeping bastard" (Brown 1965: 49). He then quietly informs Smallcreep that "Clocks can hypnotise, you know – make you lose your sense of time" (Brown 1965: 49). Another

worker later in the novel sadly observes "It's torture to look at the clock" (Brown 1965: 80). The clock has become just another entity working for the bourgeoisie, destabilising an individual's personal sense of time so that the only time is *factory* time. It is time distorted by capitalism's hand.

The elevator sequence in the novel (Brown 1965: 129-139) may be seen as a commentary upon the 'verticality' of capitalism, as opposed to the 'horizontal' nature of socialism. The factory itself seems to be a sort of westernised cultural representation of the world: the barren land of sewage and waste as 'hell' (with its own Charon and river Styx), the factory floor as a (wage/piece-work) 'purgatory', and the upper levels as a sort of 'heaven' (godly power and normally unattainable rewards). The sewage worker informs Smallcreep that "right at the top, is a place where they do nothing but shovel money about, just as I shovel shit" (Brown 1965: 129). Smallcreep is also informed that the elevator operator has told the sewage worker that "everything's solid gold" and the "carpets are mink" (Brown 1965: 129) at the top as well. The 'top' indeed sounds like a sort of (mythologised) petty bourgeoisie heaven. It is interesting to note that the elevator operator begins at the lowest level in shabby clothing and with a coffin in the lift, but as the elevator rises the coffin disappears from the narrative and the operator's uniform becomes progressively more elaborate (and militaristic). Ovine Fudge, the elevator operator, also explains to Smallcreep how human beings and machines have almost become one (Brown 1965: 132). Yet throughout his surreal journey from 'low' to 'high', Smallcreep remains unchanged.

Pinquean Smallcreep may well be viewed as a narcissistic by-product of capitalism's incessant, hedonistic drive; a self-obsessed consumer/worker whose locus is tied to socio-corporate ideology. Nothing is liberating because everything has become consumable 'product'. Constant competition for items both physical and symbolic, have created an existence where he is in an almost continuous state of anxiety. Under such conditions the communal is atomized, except as a method for gaining the power of ever greater acquisition (Brown 1965: 31). Whatever social glue, be they democratic ideals or tribal loyalties, they are weakened to the point of irrelevancy by the hegemony of capitalist and consumerist ideologies. Dissent is not suppressed but dissipates like a morning fog before the noontime sun. It is the profound power of the capitalist narrative; the linking of the survival drive to the

acquisition of money that has allowed capitalism to not only colonise public spaces but also the personal *interiority* of consciousness. By transforming the capitalist narrative into basic human need or aspect of individual/familial/ tribal survival, the narrative is no longer a matter of (conscious) choice; capitalism becomes an inevitable, life necessity. All social classes become emotionally and intellectually dominated by this narrative, but only do the elite profit by it. The proletariat is alienated and the abject individual becomes a vector for capitalism.

Indeed in such a world it is truly a state of war on an individual level; the social transmuting into the (competitive) anti-social. In this way, becoming a 'good' consumer/worker is akin to manifesting pathological behaviour. The anti-social bears a relationship to the abject. Brown's book has been referred to as 'surrealist'; its primordial irruptions are the redirected and thwarted desires of the subconscious given liberation through a dreamlike narrative. The abject and the role of factory worker/consumer create, by their proximity within the text, a third presence which is the liminally surreal dreamscape through which the character of Smallcreep moves. In a sort of dialectical relationship, these two positions bracket another space: the factory as 'dreamspace'. The 'factory dream' is a response to the physical and psychological horror of the actual capitalist workspace. The dream becomes a way of working through contradictions and enabling Smallcreep to interrogate his work environment. And if, as Marx theorizes, economic forces shape character then the currents within the factory are as much about re-directed desire as they are about the penetration of capitalism into all psycho-social levels.

What texts like *Smallcreep's Day* remind us of is that there are thousands of voices lost in the economic and narrative margins of 20th and 21st century capitalism. These are the voices of the late-night gas station workers feeding a fast-food car culture, the assemblers of consumer commodities who die ever younger and penniless, immigrants mowing and tending to green bourgeois vistas of moneyed purity, workers cleaning toxic ink residue from robotic presses, and myriad others. These voices are purposely obscured or silenced because their stories illumine inequities inherent in western capitalism and interrogate its purported 'economic inevitability'. On the other hand, to limit the novel's raison d'etre to exemplifying a 'worker's text' is horribly constraining for such a rich novel which operates in multiple genres. It is

a text that almost immediately severs any obvious connections to realism or sociological reportage. The novel additionally offers a distortion and interrogation of capitalist spatialisation as it relates to the region of the factory. It is a text which illuminates the inherent falsity of Western confidence in 'progress'. Capitalism is revealed as a trauma which violently overwrites/rewrites subconscious desires in service of economic and ideological profit, to the detriment of all. The capitalist narrative is so pervasive that alternatives cannot even be conceived, so intimately has it become conjoined with basic mammalian instincts, such as survival. Consumer capitalism becomes an expression of, or runs in parallel with, primordial drives such as seeking nourishment or shelter. Also running through the novel is a nostalgic ache expressed in discarded narratives and post-card consumerism. The future is just more of the present, but the past is malleable and warm to the touch; an escape into a womb that never was. The novel's parody, surrealism, and unreliable narrator offer evidence of an indeterminate postmodern opacity, uneasily wavering between subject and object. What the reader can take from the novel is a sense of how class, the industrial factory, and capitalism affect worker consciousness. These effects warp behaviour and values in favour of production to the point where workers, in order to survive, slowly become analogues of the machines they assemble. Workers are manipulated into being consumers where 'choice' is in all actuality no choice at all; as consumers they generate even more surplus value, in addition to their production work. For the workers in the factory of *Smallcreep's Day* the industrial process has become both the message and model for all, with the worker fashioned into just another tool ultimately benefitting the upper 'one percent'.

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Semiotic historicism, class, and sustainable politics

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M. H. Abrams has said that the great poems of the British Romantic period were written in a spirit of post-revolutionary disillusionment. This suggests a sublimation of political energy which, blocked from expressing itself in society, evidently found powerful expression in poems that constitute either a substitute for politics or a new form of the political. The question is whether this kind of poetry represents an acting out and symbolic displacement of the political, or whether it constitutes a new form of cultural politics in its own right. The answer will depend on how one regards the possibilities of revolutionary change. If one rejects the possibility of a total transformation of society by extraordinary means, then the alternative aim—the sublimation of an impossible political desire—would seem inevitable and necessary. Yet if political desire has already sought but failed to find a satisfactory revolutionary expression, the need for compensatory displacement will still make itself felt. The text that sublimates political energy will do so differently if that energy has first expressed itself, whether in political action or in discourse. The text written in the spirit of post-revolutionary disillusionment would then be a mixture of a political act and its negation, the sublimation of the political in the service of another aim.

In terms of political economy, this would represent a loss of energy. Reorientation after the moment of failure and disillusionment typically takes the form of a defensive conversion to the other extreme and the withdrawal from previous political commitment. A famous example can be found in William Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, *The Prelude, or, The Growth of a Poet's Mind*, as the poet in ironic terms recalls the heady time in the late 1780s when revolutionary hopes were high:

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
> In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways Of custom, law, and statute took at once
> The attraction of country in romance! (1850 ed., *Book Eleventh*, ll. 109-112)

Horrified by the reign of terror and the Napoleonic wars, Wordsworth turns to the project of poetic self-constitution, producing an epic-length autobiographical poem that traces the path to the discovery of his poetic vocation. *The Prelude* was published in several new editions which successively expanded and revised the narrative of the poet's personal growth. A different kind of revision is an option for later generations of writers or critics, who may analytically expose the means by which political energy is repressed in the poem. This is a difficult task, requiring the resolution of ambivalence, making a distinction between the formation of a self that is consistent with democratic ideals, and the re-inscription of this self in the political status quo.

This pattern represents one way in which literature can be political in both a positive and negative sense, and it is also an example of how a text may be the site of a lost but recoverable potential. My interest in this pattern in the present context focuses on how a certain conception of class and class agency figures in the aim of political transformation. The critique of revolutionary politics implied above, along with the retention of an essentially Marxist conception of class, will here be developed by means of a semiotic-historicist reconstruction of Marxism. I will use the Marxist economic concept of class but reject the prophecy of a revolutionary working class, in arguing, first, that there is no longer any possibility of fundamental paradigm change, no new mode of production; second, that class is complex—it can be embodied or abstract, divided against itself, and defined within different frames of reference—national, international/global, and transcultural. My chief point is that this class analysis can be the basis of a sustainable politics, avoiding the fluctuation of revolutionary politics, as well as utopian thinking, between excessive hope and either disillusionment or increasingly dogmatic faith. My second major point is that this structural analysis lends itself well to the study of literature. I will look at some literary examples that demonstrate various aspects of the argument: the negative consequences of the belief in a single class as agent of change; the dissident form of sustainable politics; examples of sustainable politics within international and transcultural frames of reference.

Class and its frames of reference

Social class has been theorized in many ways, but essentially these can be placed in two categories, one that is essentially economic, emphasizing relations to the means of production, the other functional, adding status and power as determinants of class. The first theory is Marxist, the second associated primarily with Max Weber, who argued that the failure of Marxian political predictions could be explained by the regulation of the market by an autonomous state power. I will assume in what follows that status and power can nevertheless be derived from class as determined primarily by economic relations, since status is closely related to occupational type and level of income, and state power can be explained as the function of a stabilizing class cooperation. Moreover, if revolutionary implementation of communism is a historical mirage, as I maintain, then class cooperation or compromise in the formation of the state is the only strong alternative that remains.

In an American context, to which the literary texts discussed below belong, it was a long time before sociologists and political scientists took up class analysis in a manner corresponding to their European counterparts. Evidently, they were influenced by the relative lack of cultural markers of class as well as by the American ideology of social mobility. Later, the relative failure in the 1960s of leftist political movements to have any lasting institutional impact as far as class is concerned, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union, might explain the relative absence of class in various types of discourse, including literary. One could also cite the homogenizing effect of consumer society, where nearly everyone seems to self-identify as "middle class", while the older term "bourgeoisie" is felt to be awkward or even embarrassing as it conjures up the image of its opposite, the working class. To move closer to literary discourse as such and its particular predilections, the by now common postmodern critique of agency and structure no longer regards class as a credible given, and rejects the concept of an economic base or deep structure. It must be admitted that the relative neglect of class in literary discourse at least in part reflects objective conditions—but classes do exist, albeit in such complex forms that they do not offer a consistent political base. The various social systems within which we live are different frames of reference for the determination of class, such that different class categories may apply to the same individuals or groups considered across several frames. A working-class individual

within a national frame of reference may more accurately be classified as part of the capitalist class within an international frame.[1] Countries where cheap labor is available stand in relation to importing countries as working-class to capitalist class. At the same time, this relation can be modified by the conditions and interests that workers nevertheless are aware of having in common. And the situation is even more complicated when the working-class of the importing country regards foreign labor as competition rather than the source of cheap commodities, or when the exploitation of labor abroad also has the effect of an economic stimulus.[2]

When one expands the framing of class beyond the ambivalent international relation to the maximum size of the global scene in its entirety, or, as I would like to call this frame—transculturality, since the international context is frequently named global—class becomes a reciprocal relation. In the transcultural context of a single global system, an increasing number of nations are beginning to feel the effect of an abstract capitalist class, the dominance of a form of capital which is not even personified by human beings. It is a tendency that conjures up the vision of humanity ironically gathered together as a proletariat, forever working to increase productivity, forever producing more wealth at the price of greater effort and greater discontent. The requirements of the capitalist system for constant expansion potentially places all of its economic subjects in a subordinated position, working for the sake of an abstract mechanism, a Moloch that feeds on human beings to keep its machinery running.[3] Concurrent with this process is the tendency to exploit nature more and more radically, and in that sense all of humanity comes to have exactly the opposite kind of class position as well, personifying the capitalist class in relation to a working-class without anthropomorphic form, but maximally concrete, such that nature itself

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[1] I use the term "capitalist class" not only to refer to capitalists but also to their allied managers, professionals, and small business owners (petty bourgeoisie).

[2] For a source of "world-systems theory" of class in a Marxist tradition, in which international relations are analyzed as class relations, see for example the work of Immanuel Wallerstein. For a liberal capitalist view, see Johan Norberg. Positions for and against globalization tend to coincide with the political right and left, capitalist and working class arguments, respectively, though arguably the impact on the working class in any locality is ambivalent.

[3] This alludes to a surreal episode in the silent film *Metropolis,* a striking example of German expressionist cinema directed by Fritz Lang.

becomes the embodiment of an exploited proletariat subject to progressive immiseration.

The reciprocity of the transcultural framing of class consists in the occupation by all political subjects of both class positions, but, as we have just seen, the primary content of the frame is negative. In its extreme development transculturality corresponds to the Marxian vision of capitalism as the culmination of a pre-historical nightmare. Just for this reason, however, it also contains the opposite potential, since it conceivably gives all human beings an incentive to work for radical change when their shared interest is transparent and collective survival necessary. Of course, there is also the choice of refusing the implications of reciprocal transculturality, ultimately maintaining international forms of exploitation at the price of war and terrorism. In any case, the reciprocal form of transculturality, opening the necessity of cooperation and coexistence for the sake of survival, defines a type of political practice that is already a present possibility even though it is by no means a dominant feature. One should perhaps call it an ethics, since it is a matter, not primarily of negotiating present political opposition and conflict, but of anticipating a future state, a matter of taking the long perspective. Ethics in this sense is the anticipation of a future form of political justice, the orientation of action toward a supposed future rather than toward immediate needs or demands. The visionary quality of this ethical aspect suggests why transculturality should make its chief appearance within literature.

Semiotic historicism

The three frames of reference for class are characteristic of late capitalism, a condition which I argue is non-transcendable. The future that we are constantly moving into is a limit that is constantly undergoing displacement even as it is crossed. There is no new historical paradigm available, but only the reintegration of past paradigms and the elimination of their residual elements, though there is still the possibility of egalitarian reform. I would define socialism not as a new economy or mode of production, but as a more humane and equal organization of the capitalist mode, a question of long-term policies in which the antagonism between classes or the antagonism inherent in any economic exchange is suppressed, a relation in which the cooperative aspects come to dominate

and neutralize the negative. The social welfare state is a more rational form of capitalism, though the failure of the more powerful players in the economy to take anything but short-term self-interest into account tends to restrict any rationalism of this kind.

Marx generates his analysis of capitalism by unraveling the secrets of its elementary particle—the commodity. That is my cue for a semiotic, though very schematic, rewriting of the Marxian modes of production, with the added specification, according to a linguistic theory that was not available to Marx, that the commodity is a sign. More correctly, the material sign value and the linguistic sign are inextricable. This is the claim that Jean Baudrillard makes in an early work entitled *For a Critique of the Political Economy of The Sign*, and he develops this claim further as follows:

> All efforts to autonomize this field of consumption (that is, of the systematic production of signs) as an object of analysis are mystifying: they lead directly to culturalism. But it is necessary to see that the same ideological mystification results from autonomizing the field of material production as a determining agency. Those who specify culture (sign production) in order to circumscribe it as superstructure are also culturalists without knowing it: they institute the same split as the cultural idealists, and constrict the field of political economy just as arbitrarily. (ch, 5, p. 2)

The commodity is the condition of possibility of the sign, of theorizing language in semiotic and non-referential terms. Together with Marx's observation that capitalism separates use value and exchange value this constitutes the key to a semiotic historicism. By varying the relation between signifier and signified, exchange value and use value, from unity to differentiation, one can construct a model of cultural change, a series of semiotic modes which are also modes of production.

Communism, however, is theorized as not just another mode of production; Marx calls it the beginning of human history. Skepticism with regard to a communist utopia is predicated not only on the lack of historical evidence of progress toward this state and the evidently implausible scenario of a working-class revolution, but also on a semiotic analysis of modes of production. If the relation of exchange value and use value, like the relation of signifier and signified, has three variants—unity, splitting and differentiation—one can classify modes of production in three major categories on this semiotic basis: hunting and gathering, agriculture, and capitalism. There is then no possibility of structural variation beyond the capitalist differentiation of exchange

value and use value, except the possibility of a more adequate integration and recuperation of past modes. We are at the end of the finite sequence of unity, splitting and differentiation. Since the succession of modes depends on the open-ended reintegration of previous modes, however, it does not follow that we have reached the ultimate economic and political system at present. We can assert the end of a fundamental type of paradigm change and yet also assert that history is open-ended.

For each of the three semiotic modes, class relations can be modeled structurally as a series of three subject-object relations which are also types of intersubjectivity. Even though the basic forms of bourgeois political philosophy appear in the Renaissance and Enlightenment, empirical investigation of cultural change suggests there is a correlation between mode and period, for example between mode three and period three, something which can also be explained in terms of the formal model as such. This means that the cardinal class relation of the third, capitalist mode lies in the differentiated third period which is characterized by democratic institutions. The structurally differentiated relation between subject and anti-subject enables a relation of equality and reciprocity, as opposed to the classical period in which the split, only partially differentiated, relation is distinctly hierarchical. In other words, the classical form of capitalism in the wake of the Industrial Revolution involves a reappropriation of precapitalist social relations, the semblance of feudal hierarchy. And clearly, residual elements can be found even in the third, democratic period, as long as its institutions exhibit a democratic deficit.

With the massive proletarianization and consequent exploitation of labor by mid-19th century and later the overproduction crisis that precipitated the Great Depression, it is no wonder that the ideology of revolutionary change, the revolt of an oppressed class, receives considerable support. In Western Europe and North America, however, conditions were evidently not ripe for revolution, while in Russia the successful revolution constructed a society that was destined for economic collapse as well as the failure to secure the human rights theorized in Marxian communism.

National reference

As a literary memoir aiming to represent a generation of American writers, Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return* captures this time of crisis in a remarkable way. His account of the so-called lost generation of the 1920s is a fascinating layering of historical points of view which sheds light on the formation of revolutionary ideology as well as later disillusionment. From the vantage point of the 1930s and the depression, Cowley tells the story of American writers and artists who went abroad, chiefly to Paris, in the 1920s. He paints a critical though in part sympathetic picture of the Bohemians, as he calls them, who relocate from Greenwich Village to the Left Bank. Similarly, he is skeptical of art for art's sake and the Dada movement as a turning away from social reality. Chiefly, *Exile's Return* is critical of what Cowley, using a conspicuously Latinate term, calls deracination. The exile of American writers and artists begins already on American soil, from which American writers and artists are uprooted, in the sense that their education has been one of alienation from American society and disparagement of American culture. According to Cowley, the return in a more politically aware time enables a reintegration in American society, as well as the production of important literature.

In the second edition, published in 1951, the political standpoint of the 1930s is still clearly discernible, even though Cowley has toned down its political message. He deleted or reworked several passages in the book which he felt partook too intensely of the extravagant political hopes of this time. Also, he added a prologue and epilogue in which he explained his earlier political values, and modified his narrative in accordance with a critique of his earlier judgment.

In the prologue to the 1951 edition Cowley states:

> the whole conclusion of the book was out of scale with the beginning; and there were also the political opinions that intruded into the narrative. I had to explain to myself, before explaining to the reader, that the book was written in the trough of the depression, when there seemed to be an economic or political explanation for everything that happened to human beings.… We hadn't learned—nor have most of our statesmen learned today—that human society is necessarily imperfect. (11)

One might be tempted to accuse Cowley of historical revisionism, but his explicit commentary on the revisionary process is just as much a confessional affair, offering us a rare glimpse of ideological change as it

takes place in the mind of a single individual and writer. Cowley goes on to say that

> opinions about the future of society are political opinions. There were not many of them in the book I wrote in 1934, but there were too many for a narrative that dealt with the 1920s, when writers were trying to be unconcerned with politics, and I have omitted most of them from the new edition… It seems to me now that many characters in the story, myself included, did very foolish things—but perhaps the young writers of the present aren't young and foolish enough. (12)

Yet in the epilogue, his critique has less to do with foolishness and the lack of understanding than with the palpable pressure of a profound social and economic crisis:

> Then, with the German crisis and the banking crisis in the early months of 1933, the intellectual atmosphere changed again. Thousands were convinced and hundreds of thousands were half-persuaded that no simple operation would save us; there had to be the complete restoration of society that Karl Marx had prophesied in 1848. Unemployment would be ended; war and fascism would vanish from the earth, but only after the revolution. Russia had pointed out the path that the rest of the world must follow into the future… (293-294)

That the author should initially embrace the project of social restoration and then come to reject it is understandable in light of this historical narrative. Yet Cowley complicates his explanation by a tone that retains the self-critique of foolishness; the hyperbolic expression of revolutionary hopes in the quoted passage has a satirical effect. Evidently it is difficult to look back on a period of political idealism that came to virtually nothing. But what one misses is the empathy with a former self as conditioned, after all, by powerful circumstances. I submit that the apologetic or satirical tone testifies to a certain loss, a compromising acceptance of social realities in which a certain amount of repression is required.

   In our time, much of the regulation that constrained free-market capitalism under the reform that in the US is referred to as the New Deal, the so-called compromise between labor and capital, has been either dismantled or circumvented. Remembering the depth of the crisis precipitated by the stock market crash of 1929 and noting the self-censorship imposed in the period of political compromise, we can perhaps restore something of the original urgency while yet seeking

alternative solutions. We might devise a politics free of irrational fluctuation: a sustainable politics.

This politics has something common with 18th century political philosophy, namely the orientation toward a common good. But a sustainable politics still affirms the necessity of party politics; it is a matter of representing one's political position while insisting on its coexistence and exchange with other positions, and expecting other parties, other political positions, to do the same. One's political strategy then becomes a question of how those expectations are met. This is not a question of a politics available in the mainstream, but of dissidence, the subversion of the standard political polarization that characterizes Western democracies today.

International reference

To examine a literary text in which this kind of dissidence is practiced, Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*, we move up to the 1960s, a time when a very different kind of crisis takes place in the Western world. It is a political and cultural crisis, taking place in affluent industrial societies, but also in their former colonies, in the form of liberation movements, whether in the form of decolonization and civil rights or the demand for equality of gender and sexuality. But it is also, especially in the United States, a period of intensified political polarization, as a large segment of the American public opposes government policies in Southeast Asia. It is a time of a revolt against the reactionary policy of communist recontainment that led the United States to fight a war in Vietnam.

Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*: *History as a Novel, the Novel as History* is perhaps the most profound American book to come out of the 60s. Within a broad account of political movements and the power structures they challenge, Mailer narrates his experience as a participant in the 1963 demonstration at the Pentagon against the war in Vietnam. Formulating the basis of political dissidence in the context of arguments for and against the war, Mailer states that Marx taught us to reason against him. Presumably, what Mailer has in mind is that in articulating the conditions of its own historical genesis, Marxism could be open to revision with respect to conditions which had not been anticipated—it could be self-correcting.

Assuming such a revisionary Marxism, Mailer takes a position on the war that departs from the positions of a polarized national politics. Writing about himself in the third person, he states: "Mailer was bored with such arguments. The Hawks were smug and self-righteous, the Doves were evasive of the real question. Mailer was a Left Conservative. So he had his own point of view. To himself he would suggest that he tried to think in the style of Marx in order to attain certain values suggested by Edmund Burke" (208). He criticizes government policymakers for not having read Marx closely enough: "They had not read Marx. They had studied his ideas, of course; in single-spaced extracts on a typewritten page! But because they had not read his words, but merely mouthed the extracts, they had not had experience of encountering a mind which taught one to reason, even to reason away from his own mind" (209). When Mailer refers to the innovators of communism, he implicitly refers to himself as a Left Conservative, while also referring with approval to the capacity of communism to renew itself as it spreads to new countries. Thus he departs equally from the conservative Hawks who fear communism in any form and the liberal Doves who downplay the threat that communism should spread across Southeast Asia:

> Communism seemed to create great heretics and innovators and converts (Sartre and Picasso for two) out of the irreducible majesty of Marx's mind (perhaps the greatest single tool for celebration Western man had ever produced). Or at least—and here was the kernel of Mailer's sleeping thesis—communism would continue to produce heretics and great innovators just so long as it expanded. (210)

Identifying himself—or his fictional persona named Mailer--as a Jew, Mailer positions himself as both outsider and insider, and characterizes America as a contradictory, "schizophrenic" Christian nation. Communism is the great antithesis to Christianity, that which Christianity fears most of all, and therefore a key to political dissidence for Mailer. As a *Left* Conservative, he favors the autonomy of developing countries, and their right to choose their own form of government, over the neo-colonial politics of the United States: "leave Asia to the Asians." Like Malcolm Cowley's critique, Mailer's is articulated within an international context, but unlike Cowley's, Mailer's politics itself takes an international form. That is to say, while Cowley reads the American interest in foreign culture and politics as symptomatic of a deficient

estimation of things American, Mailer is more concerned with American foreign policy as such. While Cowley's belief in socialist revolution yields to disillusionment and the resigned conclusion that the world is imperfect, Mailer maintains his political position, evidently because of its doubleness. He continued for the rest of his life to write books on explicitly political subjects which expressed his dissident position, and he did so at the expense of losing his status in the academic literary establishment as one of America's foremost writers.

Mailer's dissidence is directed against international relations and predicated on the ambivalence of class in this context, as discussed earlier in this essay. Transcultural dissidence, by contrast, addresses a frame of reference in which all political subjects occupy the positions of both labor and capital, promoting a reciprocity within the other two frames that is already implicit in the possibility of long-term aims. The relation between classes within the national frame of reference is contradictory and antagonistic at any particular moment of exchange, but acquires a reciprocal character when the ultimate necessity of a sustained relation between two interdependent parties is acknowledged. Or, to put it another way, class relations become reciprocal when the transcultural frame of reference is brought to bear on the more restricted frames.

Transcultural reference
The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia by Ursula Le Guin is an unusual kind of science fiction novel in which transculturality is embodied in the plot and in which the heuristic form of utopian thinking constitutes a powerful alternative to apocalyptic and unambiguous utopianism. Although science fiction conventions are followed in this novel through the representation of another and future world, one could say that the word "science" stands, not for futuristic technology, but for a fictional form of theoretical physics. *The Dispossessed* is built on two structures: first, a spatial structure that is geographical, planetary and political; second, a theory of time associated with narrative discourse and with the unity of "Sequence" and "Simultaneity", the central contribution to theoretical physics by the protagonist, Shevek.

The scene of the novel is a planet and its inhabitable moon: Urras and Anarres. Anarres was populated by proponents of collective anarchism whose descendants are experiencing difficulties in keeping the

original anarchist dream alive. Collectivist ideology too easily shades over into jealousy, so that professional accomplishment comes to be perceived as self-advancement and egoism. *The Dispossessed* opens with the controversial departure of the scientist Shevek for Urras, where he will meet with his counterparts in the field of theoretical physics. This journey by someone who is suspected of "egoizing" will be the means by which the novel explores the meaning of its subtitle: *An Ambiguous Utopia*. Shevek holds to the anarchist ideology of Anarres, yet because he has experienced the negative aspect of collectivism as repressive of individual creativity and achievement, he proves receptive to certain aspects of life in A Io, a nation that bears a close resemblance to the United States.

Urras is characterized by international relations that are patterned on those of the planet Earth in the 1970's. It is the moon of Anarres which is the exception, the country which does not fit the allegorical pattern. Since the collectivist anarchy of this society represents the antithesis of the values of competitive individualism and material affluence which are the rule in A Io, and since Shevek comes to understand that conversely, A Io defines itself as a negation of Anarres, the novel enacts the return of the repressed in a complex unity of reciprocal exchange that we can associate with transculturality. Urras and its planet satellite must always negate each other, but they do so reciprocally, because each latently contains the other.

This is to say that the ambiguous Utopia, as a positive collective project which discriminates against individual achievement, is in part a critique of utopian aims, in part a representation of the good society. There is neither support for the revolutionary attitude that inspired writers of the 30s, nor acceptance of the disillusioned acceptance that all societies are imperfect. It might be objected that there is a world of difference between the Marxist hopes of the 1930s generation and the effort in *The Dispossessed* to build an anarchist society patterned on the work of Peter Kropotkin, considered to be one of Le Guin's sources. Kropotkin argues that there is a human capability for mutual aid, a legacy from evolution that makes institutionalized government unnecessary. In both Cowley's and Le Guin's texts, however, there is a conflict and struggle between two classes, and, both Marx and Kropotkin

are outspoken opponents of idealist Utopias.[4] The major contrast in terms of transcultural exchange lies in the relative acceptance of both class perspectives in *The Dispossessed*, and the detachment from the partisanship that propels a narrative sequence of endless action and reaction. This detachment coexists with a commitment to a complex synchronic unity involving an exchange between two double positions. "True journey is return" is an enigmatic saying by the founder of Anarresti society. Shevek comes to realize its meaning when he returns home, accomplishing the synthesis of sequence and simultaneity, the synchronization of narrative.

Like Mailer's, this is a double position that is dissident and that looks beyond the class hierarchies of the national and international frames. It is a pattern of reciprocal affirmation and negation which is, so to say, free from birth: it is not subject to the repeated patterns of excessive and deficient political action. Transculturality is the key to a sustainable politics, whether envisioned as the double class position of humanity at the historical limit or as another concept of doubleness that articulates class positions but does not take absolute sides, except in so far as it meets one-sided opposition. While the future in which humanity must resolve class antagonism or be destroyed seems distant, its signs are nevertheless present. Considering the determination of class within different frames of reference and rejecting utopian or apocalyptic scenarios may help to restore class as an effective political category that supports a sustainable politics, offering a transcultural vision of human cooperation that can be articulated in many forms, among them the cultural forms of literature.

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[4] As Mark Tunick puts it in an essay on *The Dispossessed*: "Of course Marx was critical of utopians for ignoring the real material forces shaping society and for fancying that they could draw a blueprint of how the world ought to be that could be realized in practice by simply willing it. The activist Peter Kropotkin also distinguishes anarchy from Utopia, Utopia being a wished for ideal, anarchy being based on an analysis of existing tendencies."

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How to stop paying lip-service to class—and why it won't happen[1]

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Literary and cultural scholars now generally agree that where gender, ethnicity, and class are concerned, class for some decades has been bringing up the rear, not only in the attention it receives but also in the practical results of this attention as compared with the attention given gender and ethnicity. Many feel distressed by the imbalance and sometimes strive to correct it, and here I will argue that this is easier said than done in our intellectual situation of these recent decades. For it is not as if we have deliberately shied away from the subject of class for fear of being accused of fomenting class warfare. It is rather that our efforts have been discouraged or aborted because class continues to resist the analytical methods, categories, and vocabulary that have become hegemonic among us because they have proved so productive for gender and ethnicity while also keeping class invisible.

Gender and ethnicity, along with sexual orientation, post-coloniality, and other forms of difference, have been analyzed primarily as geographical sites of identity and oppression. But when you try to analyze class in that way, either you must resort to the conceptually problematic upper, middle, and lower, as sites whose origins, parameters, and persistence remain fundamentally inexplicable, or for all practical purposes you must come up empty. Class cannot be understood as a geographical site because, in the imperishable words of my marxist mentors, "class is an adjective, not a noun" (Resnick & Wolff 1997: 159). It is a particular form of the temporal process of human exploitation in the daily work that we do rather than our physical characteristics or political disempowerment. Class exploitation in all of its forms produces poverty, of course, and poverty can indeed be construed as a geographical site with its own problematic of identity and culture. But when we speak of the culture of poverty, we don't mean at

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all what we mean by the culture of women or of African-Americans or of postcolonial subjects, and whatever characteristics class may share coincidentally with gender and ethnicity as geographical sites, it is also a different kind of phenomenon.

My argument is then three-fold. First, the full bearing of class on our lives, literatures, and cultures can be grasped only through a marxian understanding of class, not as a fixed identity site but as a changing temporal process of producing, appropriating, and distributing surplus labor. This is the labor that every human community expends beyond what it needs minimally to reproduce itself, and throughout most of our history this surplus has been appropriated, distributed, and received by people other than those who perform the labor. Second, the only American marxists to have gained a significant voice in contemporary cultural studies are those like Fredric Jameson or Gayatri Spivak who have no analytical use for this conception of class and whose work leaves intact the methodological consensus by which class gets lip-service only. Third, gaining a voice on behalf of class as surplus labor would require us to disrupt this consensus and substantially revise the analytic categories and vocabulary that govern today's scholarship of identity and diversity. It would require us, for example, to deconstruct such terms as multiculturalism and post-colonialism, which confine our attention to the dynamics of abstract power as divorced from concrete labor. Or, to take a literary example, while canonical white male writers like Shakespeare, Dickens, and James have on occasion dramatized the cultural dynamics of class as surplus labor, whereas insurgent feminist, ethnic, and proletarian writers like Atwood, Morrison, and Olsen never have, a marxian class analysis would require us also to deconstruct the multicultural anti-canon (and curriculum) that we have concocted as an antidote to white male thinking. And in today's academy, deconstructions like these are not likely to happen.

1.

The concept of class as a labor process is not only avoided by many recent marxists but is also now unfamiliar to many non-marxists. Here I don't want to take it for granted, so let me begin by elucidating it briefly. The earliest sustainable human communities produced more than they needed minimally to survive, and two key questions throughout our

subsequent history have been how this surplus gets distributed and who gets to decide its distribution—which then lead to further questions such as what is minimally necessary to survive and who gets to decide that. But Marx's aboriginal insight is that of surplus labor, and marxian scholarship during the past 150 years has produced compelling analyses of the different human experiences, feelings, and values created historically by such different ways of appropriating surplus labor as slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. In marxian accounts of the feudal class process, for example, farmers have direct access to the land and tools by which they not only reproduce themselves but also produce a surplus which is appropriated and distributed by the lords and priests to whom they feel a measure of fealty in return for protection of their bodies and souls. The power of lords and priests to coerce this surplus is simultaneously political, economic, and cultural: the public offices they hold authorize them to tax, tithe, and gouge with the ideological consent of the governed until the system breaks down.

Then in the class process specific to capitalism, neither farmers nor anyone else who must work for a living has immediate access to the means by which to reproduce themselves. They gain this access only by selling their labor power in return for a wage that is no longer determined by lords and priests but the "invisible hand" of an allegedly autonomous, self-regulating market independent of the people who inhabit it. Their economic bondage and political fealty have been severed from one another and replaced by, respectively, the economic freedom to sell their labor where they choose, which enables them ideologically to feel they can find work that will increase their share of the surplus they produce, and the political freedom of electoral suffrage, which enables them ideologically to feel they can find collective redress for the market's systemic failure to be autonomous and self-regulating.

This account of class is of course over-simplified, especially in ignoring the temporal co-existence of multiple class processes (e.g., a family in which the husband is a capitalist wage-earner, the wife his feudal vassal, and their daughter an independent home cleaner who appropriates her own surplus), as well as the multiple overlappings of class with gender and ethnicity at their identity sites. But I hope it is sufficient to indicate a) that class is a labor process rather than an identity site, b) that it is more often than not invisible to its participants, c) that its different forms are transitory and evanescent in their capacity to

influence the formation of human identity, and d) that its present form throughout the world is overwhelmingly capitalist.

When class is viewed as a site like gender and ethnicity, African-American women factory workers at their site, for example, are said to experience differences of vocational or educational opportunity, of health care or child care, of income or self-concept, that produce different feminist agendas from those of white homemakers at their site or lesbian attorneys at theirs. Yet coextensive with such differences is a single experience common to the great majority of women at all three of these identity sites—that they perform surplus labor and that the product of this labor is appropriated and distributed, whether in the form of canned soup, the family laundry, or "billable hours," without their having any say in how that is done.

This process has been for the most part as invisible to scholarship as to its participants. Differences in gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, along with those in occupation and income, are written on the body—in physiology, physiognomy, and pigmentation, in dress, ornament, and ideolect, in body language itself—as material identities through which people become subject to domination and oppression. But capitalism's relations of expropriation in which these people are compelled to participate, although themselves material relations, are not thus directly visible. They are a dirty secret to be theoretically inferred, and inferring them requires a different analysis than is ordinarily required to recognize gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation as sites of domination or oppression.

True, these have sometimes been theorized as social processes rather than identity sites, for example in Judith Butler's, David Roediger's, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analyses of gendered, racialized, and gay identities as socially constructed. But their material embodiments exert a kind of downward pull on their theoretical status. The immediate otherness of appearance or behavior cries out to be humanly accepted even before it gets theorized and no matter how it gets theorized, whereas the otherness of class is initially more abstract and experientially mediated. Meanwhile, inasmuch as the different othernesses produced by the different class processes of slavery, feudalism, and capitalism have proven to be historically transitory, we can still credibly hope to abolish class altogether—just the opposite of what we hope for gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Slaves, vassals, and proletarians may need to be

celebrated for as long as class persists, but women, ethnics, and queers need to be celebrated not abolished always and everywhere.

When class is thus seen as an invisible process rather than a visible site, diversity and multiculturalism become a whole different story from the one in which we now take so much easy comfort. If I understand the claims of diversity, they are that every identity category, from women to African-Americans to Latin transsexuals, should enjoy the political benefit of equality before the law, the cultural benefit of equal access to (or total elimination of) the literary, musical, and artistic canons, and the economic benefit of equal pay for equal work. But this economic benefit is in a key respect incommensurate with the others. The opportunity to qualify for equal pay is only an opportunity to have your surplus labor appropriated at the same rate as everyone else's, and while this can be a big gain for you, it leaves intact capitalism's process of expropriating everyone in a way that a Voting Rights Act, or the disruption of artistic canons, do not leave intact either the polity or its culture.

2.

A second example more germane to literary study is the theoretical discourse of post-colonialism, which is conceptually a first cousin to multiculturalism, and which in most of its variants either avoids or renounces the concept of class as surplus labor. Postcolonial theory arguably provides the main impetus for the cultural studies movement that now dominates the humanities curriculum, and the epistemological basis of this new hegemony is what Aijaz Ahmad calls the post-condition—a theoretical condition common to post-structuralism, postmodernism, post-Fordism, post-nationalism, and post-marxism in their rejection of master narratives such as that of surplus labor persisting in identifiable configurations over lengths of time we can recognize as historical periods following each other in comprehensible succession.

The term "postcolonial" was evidently first used in connection with the post-WWII emergence from Western rule of independent national states in what was then called "The Third World." Not only did the geographical boundaries of these new states include diverse populations with different languages, literatures, music, and religions. The states themselves proved unable either to achieve economic independence or to sustain an authentic political independence. This twin failure is regularly

characterized by postcolonial theorists led by Homi K. Bhabha as a failure of both nationalism and marxism, which then left the deprived colonial subject to make her own way in a world now comprised primarily of discourse. Any agency she might find in trying to transcend the identity of Gayatri Spivak's subaltern, she exerted by migrating to the metropole of her former colonizer—either literally by moving to London or culturally by remaining in Mumbai or Kingston while striving to create anglophone fiction, music, or painting. Either way, her postcolonial struggle was to deploy her native resources so as to creolize the metropolitan imaginary in one or another of its signifying media— that is, to proliferate as many new cultural differences and identities as might exist among local communities in her native country or immigrant communities in the cities of the metropole. Language and culture became for her a stand-in for nation and class, and "heterogeneity" became a byword of postcolonial studies parallel to "diversity" in multicultural studies.

If I understand postcolonial theory here, it ignores two key features of pre-postmodern history. First, today's geographical and cultural migrations, in their manifold fissions and fusions, replicate those of Africans and Irish, Asians and Slavs, Latins and Middle Easterners to the United States during the last two centuries. We Americans have been there and done that, and our immigrants were inexorably incorporated into the slave, sharecropping, and proletarian class processes of the world's fastest growing and soon overpowering capitalist empire. Their political, artistic, and intellectual achievements—e.g., voting rights and *Brown vs. Board of Education*; blues and jazz; the theory of double-consciousness and the theory of Ebonics—were and are produced in conjunction with their massive immiseration by these class processes. Harriet Tubman, Zora Neale Hurston, and Thurgood Marshall appear on first-class postage stamps while the latest statistics indicate that one out of ten African-American males aged 18-26 is forming his identity in prison while immersed in the class process of slavery, and one out of four who are not in prison is forming his identity while immersed in capitalism's reserve army of the unemployed. Nor does America's 2008 election of a compassionate, sharp-minded, eloquent multicultural president show the least sign of changing that.

Second, this class immiseration is indiscriminately rampant today in London, Mumbai, and Kingston, irrespective of the movement of peoples

and proliferation of identities, because in our post-marxist era capitalism has spread across the globe in precisely the manner specified by surplus labor theory. The hand of the market is not just the figment of a master narrative written by Adam Smith or Karl Marx. It is also the material process through which postcolonial women are paid 74c for making a $125 pair of shoes while postcolonial children by the million sleep in the streets and take their meals at garbage dumps.

Or as Alex Callinicos puts it on the plane of theory in his critique of Homi K. Bhabha,

> The trouble with this line of argument is that Bhabha's analyses of colonial power are themselves so thoroughly imbricated with poststructuralist concepts…that they cannot provide any independent support for the claim there is a privileged relationship between these concepts and "colonial textuality." One rather has the feeling that some kind of card trick is going on: colonial discourse is invoked to give poststructuralism much needed political and historical content, but this discourse turns out to be itself a poststructuralist construct…This impression is reinforced when one notes the way in which Bhabha tends to rewrite the other texts…he discusses. So, for example, he concentrates on those aspects of Fanon's work which highlight "the psychoanalytic ambivalence of the Unconscious," rather than those that posit "a Hegelian-Marxist dialectic" …pointing towards "the total transformation of Man and Society"…. Again an d again, the interest of various struggles against colonial domination turns out to be the way they instantiate "aporia," "ambivalence," "indeterminacy," and all the other items of the poststructuralist repertoire. Far from the experience of subjection and resistance to Western imperialism politicizing postmodernism, that experience is reduced [sic] to yet another variation on the well-worn theme of the endless flow of signification.
>
> (1995: 106)

3.

Postcolonial theory now appears to be extending the grip of multicultural theory on the scholarship and curriculum of literature departments, and among the literary works being rendered invisible by this new hegemony are those that struggle, sometimes successfully, to represent class as surplus labor in form as well as theme. In *The Marxian Imagination* (2003) I analyze a baker's dozen of such works, and mention in passing perhaps a dozen more, whose fictional representations are formally centered on the human relations, feelings, and values produced or influenced by the experience of class as surplus labor. These works range from *King Lear* in 1606 to *The Poisonwood Bible* in 1998; their authors include Emily Bronte and Charles Dickens, Henry James and Edith

Wharton, Grace Lumpkin, William Faulkner, and Meridel Le Sueur—either canonical or putatively canonical writers stalking the same master narrative across nearly four centuries of white male curriculum. Here I limit myself to just one example, *The Poisonwood Bible*, and even then for no more than a sketch.

The mother and four daughters who narrate this novel tell how they were brought to the Congo by their Southern Baptist missionary patriarch just when that country's postcolonial hope was destroyed by the CIA assassination of its president Lumumba and installation of the puppet Mobutu; how the Reverend Nathan Price's baptizing the natives in a river habitat of crocodiles while also teaching them to plant crops alien to their soil led to the death of his youngest daughter, killed by a snake planted by an outraged shaman; and how his wife Orleanna then absconded with their remaining three daughters and returned to the US with one, while the other two, Rachel and Leah, married and remained in Africa to give this postcolonial novel its focus and coherence as also a novel of class.

Orleanna begins the narration as the guilt-ridden mother returned home, and among her first words to the reader are, "You'll say I walked across Africa with my wrists unshackled, and now I am one more soul walking free in a white skin, wearing some thread of the stolen goods: cotton or diamonds, freedom at the very least, prosperity" (1998: 9). Here at the outset this once-cowed wife holds herself personally responsible for participating, not only in her husband's religious mission of saving African souls but also her country's class mission of expropriating African labor. Her oldest daughter, Rachel, goes through three African marriages to white men variously engaged in this same mission, and she ends up in French Congo as the widowed proprietress of an elegant hotel catering to businessmen engaged in establishing the new infrastructure of expropriation

Her sister Leah marries the exquisitely tattooed village schoolteacher, Anatole Ngemba, a Lumumba activist who is in and out of Mobutu's jails for the remainder of the novel, while Leah is subject to both intermittent malaria and intermittent ostracism by the native people. They manage even so to join other families in starting an agricultural commune wherein to raise their three sons, and, precarious as that turns out to be in Mobutu's IMF economy, they return to the US in the hope of finding a new identity and future there. They enroll as graduate students

at Emory, Leah in agricultural engineering and Anatole in political science. But on their family walks in the streets of Atlanta, its citizens are horrified by Anatole's tattooed face beaming over his mongrel children, and Leah decides that "I can't drag a husband and sons into a life where their beauty will blossom and wither in darkness" (1998: 469). So they return to Zaire, where Anatole is again imprisoned and they consider moving to Angola once he is released—another postcolonial country just a step behind the Congo in having its independence destroyed by capitalism's need to immerse the entire world in its surplus labor process. Leah then assesses their Angolan prospects in the last pages given her:

> No homeland I can claim as mine would blow up a struggling, distant country's hydroelectric dams and water pipes, inventing darkness and dysentery in the service of its ideals, and bury mines in every Angolan road that connected food with a hungry child. We've watched this war with our hearts in our throats, knowing what there is to lose. Another Congo. Another wasted chance running like poisoned water through Africa….
>
> But with nothing else to hope for, we lean toward Angola, waiting, while the past grows heavy and our future narrows down to a crack in the door. (1998:503)

Her words come 490 pages after her mother's opening words to the reader, and mother and daughter together frame a narrative wherein postcolonial migration in either direction—from metropole to colony or vice versa—offers very little hope of new identities to be mediated through the hybridization of discourse. It offers instead a crack in the door for any remaining hope to escape the invisible hand of surplus labor in stultifying the formation of all identities. *The Poisonwood Bible* brings formally into focus a dynamic of class that multiculturalism and post-colonialism have found no way to identify, let alone to explain.

This feminist, multicultural, postcolonial novel of class was on the NYT bestseller list for over a year. It became a selection of Oprah Winfrey's Book Club, it led to the publication of Kingsolver's earlier books in a boxed set, and it produced a website, kingsolver.com. It created in short a large, popular, no-brow audience such as cultural radicals can only dream of for a novel that speaks to their ideals. Yet to my knowledge, *The Poisonwood Bible* made barely a ripple in English literature departments—nothing like the feminist wave once made by *Surfacing*, the postmodern wave made by *Gravity's Rainbow*, the African-American wave of *Beloved*, or the postcolonial wave of *The*

Satanic Verses. On the crest of those waves dozens of related novels became subject to study, and thousands of academic careers were spawned and sustained. But *The Poisonwood Bible* is to all appearances too traditionally humanistic, in producing a narrative of economic expropriation as well as ethnic, gender, and political oppression, to become a conference- or career-inspiring icon.

4.

This brings me finally to the most difficult and tentative part of my argument—that multiculturalism and post-colonialism have exhausted their capital without engaging class at a time when the American university is devoted as never before to commodifying their discourses and, in that process, reaffirming itself as what Louis Althusser called an ideological state apparatus.

Here before going further, let me enlarge on what I said at the outset, that during my academic lifetime the scholarship of multiculturalism has been liberating beyond what anyone now short of retirement can imagine. The methodological parochialism and ideological blindness of the old white male academy are certainly good riddance, and the justice achieved by multiculturalism has extended by leaps the life of the mind—for us who are in a position to lead that life. But for us the justice of multiculturalism lies within reach without reference to class. Not only can we attain it without having to confront the injustice of expropriation; it can also satisfy our political *amour propre* before we ever get to expropriation. Our universities, in turn, in modeling their prestige on corporations' market share, can make a mantra of diversity without risking market share—and, in so doing, interpellate us as scholar-subjects who evade class the more readily.

But people like me can also remember a time in American public life when there was serious public discussion (Keynesian and not Marxian), not only of equal opportunity and recognition, but also of full employment, universal health insurance, and a Guaranteed Annual Income (endorsed by President Nixon and passed by the US House of Representatives.) That was also a time when the discourse of class as surplus labor was widespread enough to occur sometimes in universities: Labor Studies was a recognized specialty in economics departments, political theory (including marxist theory) in political science

departments, the literature of class in English departments. These fields reflect a diversity in scholarship that has largely disappeared, along with any discussion of full employment or a guaranteed income, during just that time when multiculturalism and post-colonialism have ascended to curricular hegemony. (The University of Notre Dame's Department of Economics greeted the 21st century by successfully petitioning its administration to have its marxist members reassigned elsewhere, on the ground that surplus value theory isn't genuine economics, more or less in tandem with our literature departments' credentializing a vocabulary that for all practical purposes denies class a voice.)

Just as there used to be talk of surplus labor, full employment, and a guaranteed income even by Richard Nixon, so too the white male academy had its upside, in trying sometimes to identify the holistic relations between historical and aesthetic forms that embody master narratives—just as the multicultural academy has now found its downside by collapsing these narratives into the conjunctures at which post-isms arise without engaging class. I said at the outset that the scholarship of multiculturalism has not shied away from class by conscious choice. But what about unconscious choice? Is it too much to suggest in conclusion that the post-condition purges us of historical memory, including the memory of slavery-feudalism-capitalism as a coherent and irreversible evolutionary process, by subjecting our discourse to an epistemology that keeps class invisible? Insofar as studying class as the expropriation of surplus labor might rock the prestige boat at research universities, it must remain doubtful whether scholars at these universities can get beyond lip-service to class. For it is not just that the epistemology of the prevailing -isms has proved incapable of doing that. The alternative just might have to be a marxism whose talk of surplus labor as a historical master narrative is noxious to the metabolism of the research university as an ideological apparatus.

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"A big change": Intersectional class and gender in John Sommerfield's *May Day*

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What is the relationship between class and gender? This question has been both a perennial and problematic one within the women's movement. Also within academic criticism, the two concepts have often been repeated as part of the mantra of gender, race and class, with class being perfunctorily mentioned, but hardly explored. The link between gender and race has seemed easier to trace, since both represent biological and cultural categories within patriarchy that, while certainly in need of some serious reinventing and restructuring, retain positive qualities that will always be with us. Class, in contrast, is a condition of oppression and exploitation that sits uneasily with the other two or is left out of the gender equation altogether. Thus, as Diane Reay notes, mainstream "feminism in the 1990s appears to have abandoned social class" (Reay 2004: 141). Why is this?

In part it is due to the fact that the debate within second-wave feminism was often aimed at distancing the movement from marxism, with which it had strong ideological ties and from which it felt more and more politically estranged. The tensions between gender and class were at the heart of what became known as the "unhappy marriage" of marxism and feminism, which, as Lydia Sargent recalls, led to a critical free-for-all of mutual suspicion and reproach:

> Marxist feminists criticized radical and socialist feminists for being insufficiently materialist and therefore oblivious to class oppression and the class nature of the feminist movement. Radical feminists criticized Marxists and socialists for ignoring the importance of patriarchy as part of the formation of people's consciousness and for ignoring the importance of people's psychological need to maintain sexist behaviour. Socialist feminists criticized marxist and radical feminists – the former being overly economistic, the latter for being overly subjective and therefore ahistorical. Black feminists criticized all three for being racist and posed a theory which incorporated race as part of feminist analysis. Lesbian feminists in all three areas argued for consciousness raising around heterosexuality as an institution and for the importance of lesbianism as part of feminist analysis and strategy.
>
> (Sargent 1981: xxi)

Michèle Barrett drew similar conclusions about the shortcomings within these different approaches, to the detriment of class as a viable coefficient of gender: "We can see that none of the existing formulations of the class and gender relation is entirely satisfactory, although this situation reflects a general difficulty with the contemporary marxist theory of class as well as a particular difficulty in dealing with the class positions of women" (Barrett 1980: 136-7). As part of the same debate, R. W. Connell argued for a more comprehensive critique of both capitalism and patriarchy as being separate systems of oppression: "Understanding the contemporary world requires the simultaneous analysis of its class and gender structures. The analysis of gender requires in principle an intrinsic theory logically independent of the theory of class" (Connell 1987: 46). Cora Kaplan was also clear in her assertion of feminism's need to be independent of all other political discourses. In her view, the relationship with marxism was neither a marriage nor a separation. Feminism should remain, she asserted, completely unattached:

> In spite of the attraction of matrimonial metaphor, reports of feminist nuptials with either mild-mannered bourgeois criticism or macho mustaschioed Marxism have been greatly exaggerated. Neither liberal feminist criticism decorously draped in traditional humanism, nor her red-ragged rebellious sister, socialist feminist criticism, has yet found a place within androcentric literary criticism, which wishes to embrace feminism through a legitimate public alliance. (Kaplan 1985: 956)

Thus, a declaration of complete self reliance was deemed essential in order to extricate feminism from what was seen as the social, political, economic, ideological confusion about the combined impact of patriarchy and capitalism. Patriarchy, it was shown, was older than capitalism, and clearly remained in post-capitalist societies like the Soviet Union. It seemed therefore logical to put forward gender as the primary category of historical oppression.

In recent years, however, there has been a significant change of direction within the debate. Not least because of the influence Black feminists have had in pointing out the often white, middle-class bias of the women's movement. This corrective critique shifted the focus away from viewing the three concepts of gender, race and class as distinct, to a broader understanding of the way they in fact overlap in women's lives. The term that was coined to describe this historic re-encounter between

gender on the one hand and race and class on the other, is intersectionality:

> At the heart of the exchanges about intersectionality was the accusation made by black feminists that *white*, bourgeois feminists had only raised the issue of white middle-class women's experiences of oppression and made this the measure of feminist politics, and so had ignored the needs and the reality of the lives of all other women, including black women. (Lutz et al 2011: 2-3)

The basic conclusion is that gender, race and class are "interlocking systems of oppression" (Collins, quoted in Lutz et al 2011: 3) and that they "need to be understood in terms of their mutual interactions" (Lutz et al 2011: 3). Thus, from being experientially exclusive, these three areas of oppression are now seen to interconnect, creating critical junctures that capture in a much more complex way the reality of women's lives. As Andersen and Collins put it: "At any moment, race, class, or gender may feel more salient or meaningful in a given person's life, but they are overlapping and cumulative in their effect on people's experience" (1998: 3). In other words, intersectionality seeks to answer the more far-reaching question: what is the actual relationship between gender, race and class in terms of women's everyday experience of capitalist patriarchy? More specifically, how does being black, white, homo- or heterosexual, middle- or working-class affect the experience of being a woman? This is, moreover, not just a token recognition of the need to redress a critical imbalance. It responds to a tangible necessity to address the interrelated conditions of situated being within patriarchy and capitalism in order to understand more fully the impact of gender, race and class within these structures of male power. In the words of Kimberlé Crenshaw, the feminist critic who first launched the concept of "intersectionality":

> The metaphor upon which intersectionality is scaffolded acknowledges a wide variety of encounters as well as relationships. In this sense, intersectionality applies to everyone – no one exists outside the matrix of power, but the implications of this matrix – when certain features are activated and relevant and when they are not – are contextual. Intersectionality represents a structural and dynamic arrangement; power marks these relationships among and between categories of experience that vary in their complexity. (Crenshaw 2011: 230)

It is this nexus of class and gender experience and above all consciousness that I want to explore in more detail in John Summerfield's experimental novel *May Day*, which was first published in 1936. It is a work that has received a lot of critical acclaim, both then and since, enabling it to survive the relative obscurity of its 1930s leftwing literary origins to becoming recognized today as a modern classic. Soon after publication it was described for instance by Jack Lindsay as "the best collective novel that we have yet produced in England" (Lindsay 1937: 915). Its dramatic narrative technique, associated with that of reportage, snapshot or photographic montage, also gave it, according to Andy Croft, "the feel and force of documentary non-fiction" (Croft 1990: 260). Stuart Laing praised the broad sweep of the story in which Sommerfield uniquely sought to "*reveal* the connections and relations" between all sorts of people in London—from factory workers to millionaire bosses—showing how interdependent their fates really were (Laing 1980: 149). He also noted the novel's projection of a "positive" working-class identity, something that was defined by "collective" rather than "individual" consciousness (Laing 1980: 154). This image of a community of urban lives is something to which critics have continued to return. Andy Croft observes for example that there is "no single central character [...] but over 90 named ones whose lives are linked together by the social and economic changes, the industrial and political struggles in London in 'an average year between 1930-40'" (Croft 1990: 255-6). Earlier, in his introduction to the 1984 reprint of the novel, Croft pointed to its sensitive amalgamation of politics and art, stating that Sommerfield's "political arguments only work in so far as they are expressed through the story-lines, the actions and thoughts of persuasively-drawn characters" (Croft 1984: xvi). In a similar vein, John King celebrated the novel as a classic portrayal of London, one that reflected the myriad lives of its inhabitants: "their hopes, successes, mistakes, regrets, dreams, reality" (King 2010: 11). "No single voice dominates, no central character is in control" he concluded (King 2010: 12).

Despite this emphasis on the collective, there is nevertheless a concern with the development of individual consciousness, not least politically, in the novel. The combination of character voices is not amorphous; there is a tangible sense of conflicting personal interests, which, I would argue, is primarily associated with the female characters.

They are the ones who form a connecting narrative throughout the story, which is characterized by their experience of having to live both under patriarchy and capitalism. It is, moreover, this complex intersectional web of gender and class, of action and reaction among the women that gives the novel its particular dynamic. It is also something that critics have tended to miss, often seeing the novel mainly in terms of the relationships between the male protagonists. King is typical in this respect:

> The first of the larger characters to appear is James Seton – Communist, seaman, Civil War veteran; like Sommerfield – who is on a ship anchored off Gravesend, waiting to return to London […] Family connections are clearly important, a concentration of the larger family perhaps. John and James Seton; the powerful (and well-named) Sloane brothers; Sir Edwin and his son Peter. James is a loner in many ways, married to his politics, searching for his brother, but he doesn't find him until late in the novel, and not in the sort of circumstances either would have wanted. By chance James meets an old friend, Pat Morgan, and this other sort of brother is an interesting addition. (King 2010: 12-14)

Of course, there is a reason for this critical bias, since it is the male characters that dominate the narrative, at least in terms of space. Detailed portrayals of women are few and far between. Not only that. Since this is a novel of class struggle, it is the men that traditionally tend to represent its most conscious expression. They make up the different standpoints in this social conflict, personifying its opposing interests. Their understanding of what is at stake is already articulated in their minds and there seems little room for development or change of viewpoint. They complement one another in a masculine world of political ideas. At the top, for example, there is the group of capitalists, the male rulers of the City, who are driven by their function in the economy to defend the fundamental interests of their class:

> These gentlemen represented the power, the unresplendent glory of what is rather tactfully named the Capitalist System. Directors of banks, newspapers, mines, armaments, railways, shipping, insurance, housing trusts, employers of governments, at the moment they were acting in their capacity of being the Amalgamated Industrial Enterprises. But they were to be found where and whenever men gather together in the name of the largest financial undertakings.
>   Now they are met to plan restrictions: they are scheming to close down factories and speed up others, to consume their lesser rivals. They are making their class an ever-smaller and more exclusive society: control of production passes into the hands of an ever-shrinking group. (Sommerfield 2010: 65)

Moreover, these men know very well who their main enemy is within the working class, those who consciously and actively challenge their privilege and power: the Communists. Thus, both groups have already reached a stage where they are locked in ideological battle, fully aware of the irreconcilable antagonisms between them:

> *Take Dunbourne, Sloane, Redesdale, Gilray... the men masked with power. Now they are scattered, their masks laid aside. Lights burn for them to illuminate the bare shoulders of silken women, waiters' shirt-fronts, crystal and cutlery, singing mouths and kicking chorus legs. They move in the narrow orbits of their world of pleasure. The night is their day.*
>
> *And for others too, the night is a day. At street corners the platforms are set up, the Communists speak, the Communist voices are sounding now, in the trade-union meetings, in the night shifts of factories, in pubs and upon doorsteps. [...] These are the conscious protagonists of the struggle that extends throughout society; a struggle that is both of minds and things, both between and within classes and individuals. This struggle of men's lives controls the orbits in which they move.*
>
> (Sommerfield 2010: 93-4)

What is more significant but less obvious, however, is that this clash "both of minds and things, both between and within classes and individuals" is for the most part something that takes place among the women, at home and at the factory. It is they who are the object of the struggle to win over the sympathies and support of the workers. Moreover, it is when the women cease thinking of themselves merely as individuals, but instead as part of a collective, that the stalemate of power on the shop floor is challenged and the dynamic of revolt evolves. However, this struggle is never a simplistic one. One of the great strengths of Sommerfield's novel is the way in which it dramatises the complexity of women's lives in a continuum of sometimes very different individual and collective responses to the day-to-day challlenge of living under patriarchy.

This gendered image of contrasting levels of consciousness is established, for example, early on in the portrayal of a married working-class couple, John and Martine. John is a factory worker and Martine is a housewife who cooks, cleans, shops and looks after their baby son. It is clear, however, from the outset that there is an emotional strain between these two people, with John feeling drawn to the trade-union struggle at work and Martine acting as a break on his militancy by her dreams of domestic bliss. Thus, these social factors create very different personal

and political hopes and expectations, a theme that also recurs throughout the novel:

> John pondered on social phenomena, his mind working slowly and heavily. He was beginning vaguely to sense the direction that his conclusions were taking. But there was something else in his mind too, a feeling that always accompanied these thoughts and opposed them, a kind of inner ache of disloyalty to Martine. He knew what she wanted from life and could sympathize with her little ambitions for a nice home with bright curtains and new furniture; he knew her passion for security and how heavily the fear of poverty bore upon her. To think her husband was a 'Red' would fill her life with a perpetual sense of danger. (Sommerfield 2010: 46)

This male complaint about the conservatism of women underpins in fact the whole story. It appears to be the foremost obstacle to the development of trade-union action and ultimately that of social revolution. Its source is also located within the private sphere outside of the world of work. When Jock, John's fellow carpenter and trade unionist, takes up the question of a strike on May Day, his comments once again reflect this male dismay at the lack of militancy among the women, even those who work at the factory. Although there is the growing realisation that things are in need of change, the implication is that the women are still not a force to be reckoned with. It is, nevertheless, an early intersectional point in the novel where gender and class are shown to impact significantly upon one another:

> 'I brought up about there being a strike likely here and what we should do,' said Jock. 'Old Kitteridge said something about referring it to the District. "Damn that," says I. "If the others come out, we should too."'
> 'That's what I feel,' said John. 'But my wife's dead against it, 'specially as I've been out of work so long.'
> 'It's the wives that break many a strike.'
> 'She says my conditions are all right and what the others do is their affair.'
> 'That's the worst with women – no offence meant to your wife, mate, but they're all of a piece. You can't make them see we've all got to stand together. The girls here see it all right, 'cos it's *their* rotten condition more'n anyone's.'
>
> <div align="right">(Sommerfield 2010: 45)</div>

As Michèle Barrett reminds us in this context, the family under capitalism forms an important source of ideological support for the status quo, not least in terms of reproducing conventional class and gender roles: "The structure of the household and the ideology of the family combine to form a system that has important effects on the consciousness

of the working class and hence on the possibilities of political action"
(1980: 210). This is particularly the case in working-class families where
the husband is the sole breadwinner. Women are isolated at home and
class conflict appears alien to their world of the individual family unit.
This is certainly the case with Martine, John's wife, who remembers
what hardship John's previous period of unemployment imposed on
them. Thus, any talk of a strike on May Day is seen by her as a direct
threat to their existence, especially now that they have a baby. Her lack
of sympathy for the cause is also linked to the isolation of her daily
routine which is devoted to serving her husband and child. Clearly a case
of existence determining consciousness:

> When the stew was on, she would have some bread and cheese and a cup of tea.
> Then there was washing to do all afternoon. The time would go by so quickly until it
> came to those last moments of pleasurable suspense while she waited for John to
> come in. This was the time she loved, when the stewpot was gently bubbling out
> delicate smells and the table ready, and there was nothing for her to do but sit
> listening for the sound of John's footsteps on the stairs.
>
> After she had bought the meat she turned to go home, out of the noise of the
> market, through quiet, shabby streets, slums of houses that have come down in the
> world.
>
> In front of her, painted in white on a long blank wall, was ALL OUT ON MAY
> DAY; MARCH FROM RAG FAIR AT 12.30 in huge letters. This somehow threw a
> shadow across her light-heartedness, the shadow of a world she feared and could not
> comprehend. (Sommerfield 2010: 61-2)

The tracing of such differentiated levels of feelings, hopes and fears
that are sometimes only half formulated or understood, is what make
Sommerfield's novel such a psychologically convincing panorama of
people's lives in London in the 1930s. It is this particular aspect of the
narrative that retains its power even today: how individual perceptions of
reality are moulded by the everyday and then thrown into a flux by the
sudden and dramatic changes that occur. It is also a gendered spotlight,
since in the novel it is the will of the women that forms the main
ideological focus of the struggle that emerges. It is their participation as
members of a collective that becomes decisive. Even though this
movement forms part of the novel's overriding political message of May
Day mobilisation, the personal obstacles in the way are still not
underestimated.

However, if there is any shortcoming in the novel's collective
narrative, it lies in its predominantly masculinist point-of-view. Not least

in the somewhat voyeuristic depiction of the factory women as being almost entirely defined by their bodies as young girls. Moreover, their leap towards consciousness is seen as a tentative one, dependent on the timely intervention of "class leaders" who will have to guide this "mass" of women forward. There is therefore no irony intended in the description of these women as the physical "raw material of history":

> Blondes and brunettes, beauties and uglies, good girls and bad girls, virgins and tarts, so much flesh, so many thoughts and feelings, so many drab, cheerless destinies, so many who might have been born at some other time in some other place to live the lives of human beings. At least once the moment will come in each of these lives when they will stop and think, 'What have we been born for, why do we live as we do, toiling only to eat, eating only to toil…' This moment may come and be forgotten in an instant, or it may be a sudden revelation altering the whole course of a life.
>
> These silly girls with their synthetic Hollywood dreams, their pathetic silk stockings and lipsticks, their foolish strivings to escape from the cramped monotony of their lives, are the raw material of history. When their moment of deep discontent comes to them in a mass, taking form in their class leaders, then there are revolutions. What happens to the revolutions depends upon other facts – automatic lathes for instance. (Sommerfield 2010: 49-50)

In contrast to these working-class women who sell their labour power, another female strategy of survival is depicted in the person of Jenny, a former factory girl who has become the mistress of Dartry, a company director. In a stereotype of the traditional housewife, a role that consciously parodies that of Martine, Jenny waits on him in the luxurious flat in which she has been set up, providing a source of sexual service and relaxation away from both his real wife and work at the factory. There is without doubt a certain ironic scepticism intended in this context, however, through the conflicting expectations that are revealed about their class and gender roles. In both cases, there is a sense of play-acting on Jenny's part that subverts the escapist pleasure of their relationship:

> Now she kissed him, took his arm and led him in. 'I've got a lovely dinner for you,' she said. He sighed, sank into an armchair, and she sat on his knee without anything being said between them, yet as if he had invited her.
>
> How quiet, how peaceful am I now, thinks Dartry. Here in this domain of naked desire I am at ease, a man, instead of a figure behind a desk masked with power and feared or hated, or a husband whose home is no home, whose wife and children are strangers […]

> She pressed his hand to her left breast (he likes me to do that, she thinks) and kissed the top of his head. 'Are you glad to see me?' she said caressingly.
>
> 'Am I glad …? You're free of the factory now, but you know how you felt in the evening when you were through with your work …'
>
> 'You hate it too. It's funny. We never thought of you like that.'
>
> 'Little bitches …' he smiled. And she began to talk of the factory girls as he liked her to, of their amours, their desires and adventures, using their frank, coarse words … (Sommerfield 2010: 91-2)

Although there is an apparent merging of personal interest in this scene, where both mistress and master, worker and boss, seem to reach a point of contact in their separate lives, this moment of class harmony is questionable. Jenny is well aware that she is selling her body to the factory owner, albeit in different circumstances and at a more favourable price. Her physical capacity is still commodified and there is no deep emotional bond between them. It is an individual solution to the exploitation of the system that Jenny chooses to adopt. At the same time, she has no illusions about the commitment of her employer to her future well-being. It is merely a transaction that affords her more personal gain and comfort that she received as a factory girl:

> Jenny had not grown too old for her job, nor had she been displaced by new machinery. She was warm-hearted, sentimental, but she knew clearly what life had to offer her, and without questioning she took her chance. Now she had a flat, a bank account, a car and also a lover. Once or twice a week Dartry visited her. Gravely, unthinkingly, she submitted to his embraces, a little grateful to this stranger who had changed her life, who had taken her virginity, yet who remained a man outside her life. She drew her money from the bank and saved most of it; she never asked for gifts or jewels but was grateful when he gave them. A day would come when she would be quite free; this life would be over and forgotten. (Sommerfield 2010: 91)

There is a blurring here of class and individual consciousness between the experience of factory labour and the mercenary sexual transaction, although the individual rationalisation of it is compelling. For Jenny, it represents a form of escape from the drudgery and anonymity of factory work. As Priscilla Alexander notes in the relationship between prostitution and women's attitudes to work in general: "First person accounts by women in the sex industry often mention economics as a major factor, coupled with rebellion at the restricted and tedious jobs available to them" (Alexander 1998: 344). It is another one of those intersectional points in the novel where the connection between class and

gender is shown to be fraught with social and psychological tensions. At the cost of repressing her feelings as a woman, Jenny is able to function as the paid mistress of her boss in order to liberate herself from a life of wage slavery. Despite the fact that, as elsewhere in the story, we only get a fleeting view of these people in situations that pass before the panoramic lens of the narrative and then disappear, it remains a telling moment, full of personal and political implications: the individual fate of a lower class woman trying to negotiate the limitations imposed on her by a system of male privilege. As Kimberlé Crenshaw writes in relation to intersectionality as a critical point-of -departure, the overlapping focus that it provides helps to reveal "the sometimes hidden or marginalised dynamics of power and exclusion across the social terrain" (Crenshaw 2011: 233). Part of what I am trying to show here is that Sommerfield's novel brings such intersectional connections very much to life in these moving, microcosmic close-ups of the mundane.

Another female figure that acts as a more overtly political focalizer of the story, this time in the transition from individual to collective, is that of Ivy Cutford, a factory worker and Communist. Like her male counterparts, it is clear that Ivy is already fully class-conscious. She is a politically schooled militant who from the very beginning is depicted as a potential source of social change: "She is a communist, one among two hundred and forty. She can't do much perhaps, but circumstances do a lot for her. The girls are beginning to take a good deal of notice of what she says because they like her" (Sommerfield 2010: 50). Although Ivy provides a link between the private lives of the girls and the sense of group solidarity that is in process of emerging, her own personal life has less intrinsic correspondence. Her status as a single woman is what defines her home life, just as her communist politics characterise her role at work. It seems as though the two spheres are separate, however, and there is little contact between them. There is even the implication that political commitment always comes at a personal cost, particularly for a woman:

> Now, walking through the soft April air that stirred with amorous thoughts, going back to her lonely bus ride, to her lonely little room, the memory of those glances aroused in her an intolerable longing for a lover, a longing to be desired for once instead of liked, to be followed by amorous looks through the soft night. She was so often the confidant of the other girls' stories of their love affairs, their pick-ups, their little exciting adventures ... she laughed with them, commiserated with them. Nothing like that happened to her. It was not love she ached for now, it was not lust;

companionship she had, but she wanted to be of dear importance in some man's life, and she feared she never would. (Sommerfield 2010: 111)

This dichotomy forms another of the recurring motifs of the novel: the search for love and companionship. It is shared by almost everyone in the story—capitalist and worker alike. It is as if this condition of existential alienation affects everyone in the big city. There is little hope of closing the gap completely between the private and the public. However, it is also in the lives of the women that its lack is felt most poignantly. John King claims that in the novel there is one exception, however: "Everyone is looking for love, whatever their backgrounds, but it is John and Martine who are happiest together—making do, Martine shopping in Portobello Road market while John grafts at the factory, appreciating what they have because it has been earned" (King 2010: 14). This idealisation of the married couple ignores the fact that there are serious ideological disagreements between them, something that is never resolved in the story. It is as though the personal is always at odds with the political. James, a sailor and another Communist in the novel, admits to the same kind of lack of private fulfilment, albeit one he tries to relieve in a typically male chauvinist manner:

'I've always had an idea of a girl, a comrade, you know, someone you could talk things over with … But I never seem to meet them. And when I come ashore, like I am now, feeling randy and with money in my pocket, I seem to get hold of the first good-looking tart I meet, and she lasts me till my money's gone and I've got to get to sea again.' (Sommerfield 2010: 115)

While this particular gender issue remains, the pivotal scenes in the novel's political trajectory shift more and more towards the working conditions of the women themselves, where the speed-up of production leads to an accident involving a girl fainting over her machine. This is the moment when the general dissatisfaction of the women boils over and they are impelled into group action. It is also Ivy who is at the centre of this development in which the nexus between individual and collective takes on a transformatory momentum, not least after a decisive intervention by her. Thus, the novel's ideological premiss about the interdependence of leaders and followers is played out on the factory floor, providing the political lesson that is at the core of the novel:

> Ivy Cutford gripped the edges of her seat tightly: her moment had come, and she didn't feel prepared to take it. She was trembling with excitement and nervousness. She knew so clearly what she had to do, it wasn't anything hard. She tried to think of Lenin, of Dimitrov in the Nazi court-room, of the heroes of her class who had not flinched before anything when their moment came. What she had to do was nothing ... 'I must get up, I must get up,' she was saying to herself, and suddenly she sprang up and stood on the form. 'Girls,' she said, 'listen to me a minute.'
>
> (Sommerfield 2010: 157)

While the male role models she refers to would not have hesitated politically, there is the gendered convention of her own lack of confidence as a woman about how the other girls will react to her speech. It is nevertheless a key intersectional development when the factory women begin to see that they not only share common interests, but that they also have the power to protest. The voice of the narrator also intrudes at this critical juncture in order to bring home the ideological significance of such a moment for the instruction of the reader:

> Everywhere the accumulated bitterness of weeks and months and years, the dammed-up, painfully anaesthetized resentments of hardship and poverty, were bursting forth like this.
>   'Men make history – but not as they please.' This is what happens, a speech, an accident, an insult, a word that seems to initiate events, is like a switch releasing electric power. (Sommerfield 2010: 160)

Despite this dramatic shift in female consciousness, it is typical, however, that the militancy of the women is quickly channelled into a works committee, which is run by the men. Even though it is the women who start the action, the implication is that it is the men who will take over from now on. When Ivy asks for a joint committee, the response of the men is at first one of predictable surprise at this new-found female solidarity. There is, without doubt, a male principle working through the novel that even if the women finally get to act, it is as foot soldiers: it is the men who will ultimately lead them to victory. Nevertheless, at this stage, it is the women who act as catalysts of the struggle:

> There was an uncertain, approving murmur, and Millman jumped up quickly and said, very fast, 'Look 'ere, we've talked and talked about this works committee, and we've nearly all been for it, only lots of us've said it's no use without the girls and they'd never stand together with us. Well, they've shown us they've got more guts that wot we 'ave –'

> 'They've bloody well given us a lead and it's up to us to follow it,' Bill Ridley chipped in. (Sommerfield 2010: 159)

However, as the novel moves towards a climactic clash with the police at the very end, the thoughts and actions of the women are more and more subordinated to those of the men. When another horrendous accident occurs on the production line, this time tearing off the scalp a girl at a machine, the event finally galvanises the whole factory to come out on strike. It is once again Ivy who reacts with another crucial speech, but it is the last individual female voice we hear in the story. Moreover, it is Ivy making a case for unity between women and men as workers, where the women are appealed to because of their class and not their sex. Thus the "big change" that is projected is on a social level, not one of gender.

> 'Fellow workers,' she said, her voice rather shrill and unsteady at first but gathering strength and confidence as she went on. 'Today is May Day. It's a day when our class demonstrates against the bosses all over the world. We know about the busmen and the other strikes, in some places there's a general strike and everything's stopped for today while the workers are marching in the streets. Well, we've come out today too, against our rotten conditions and to revenge poor Mabel. And now we're out I think our place is along with the others in the demonstration. I know the papers say it's all a stunt of the Communists to stir up trouble. But I know too that the men and women who are marching to the park now are the same as us – workers, workers protesting against their bad conditions, just as we are, and marching to demand that things should be better, that there should be a change. There *is* a big change needed and it's only our class that'll make it. I'd like to say a lot more, but time's short, and I'm not used to speaking. I'm going to ask Alf Millman to put it to the vote for us to join in with the others and march to the park.'
> (Sommerfield 2010: 230-1)

Thus, in another intersectional twist, class prevails, but it is at the expense of gender. It is significant for example that Ivy asks Alf Millman to put the strike vote to the women instead of her, even though it would seem more logical for her to do it. It is another sign of the shift in power to the men, now that the women are mobilised. Moreover, on the works committee, the women representatives will be in a minority, even though the work force is made up of a majority of women. Another small but significant intersectional detail in the novel is that there are no immigrants in the factory, the working class is constructed as ethnically homogeneous in the novel. Martine, who is French, is the one exception

in the story, but she personifies a domestic resistance, not to the bosses, but to militant struggle in general. It seems that on this international workers' day in London, the revolution will be very much an English one.[1]

The climax of the novel is, as its title suggests, the May Day demonstration itself that culminates in a violent confrontation. Again, typically, it is the force and initiative of the male workers fighting with the police that define the event. Even though there is a vague reference to the way all workers are being radicalised by their participation in the march: "Men and women who have never marched in a demonstration are becoming revolutionaries in the course of a few hours" (Sommerfield 2010: 239), it is the men who provide the active leadership: Wilson, the Chief Marshal, Bill Riley, John and Jock. Even more decisively, when James is beaten over the head and killed by a mounted policeman, this ultimate sacrifice is of a man, something that immediately supersedes Mabel's horrific injury earlier in the factory. In contrast also, James's death becomes the iconic event that transforms everything, providing the novel with a heroic conclusion, a passage full of male revolutionary mobilisation and stormy maritime imagery:

> The Marble Arch is islanded in a dark sea of caps in whose midst slowly move forward the red sails of banners. For two hours the contingents have been marching in.
>
> Last of all come the East London marchers, the band playing slowly, a revolutionary song to a funeral beat. The workers seethe around the base of the Arch like an angry sea, and the noise comes up to the men at the top like the sound of a storm as James's flag-draped body is held up and saluted by a hundred thousand clenched fists raised in the air, a hundred thousand shouts of 'Red Front' […]
>
> Everyone has agreed on the need for a big change. (Sommerfield 2010: 240-1)

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[1] This aspect of the novel's ethnic homogeneity could in part be explained by the changes in policy of the Communist Party towards a broader united front with the Labour Party at this time. In order to promote the Communist Party's democratic credentials, there was the beginning of a shift in political emphasis towards a more British road to socialism, a debate in which Sommerfield himself was an active participant (see Croft 1984:xiii and Bounds 2012: 179-233.).

*

In her contribution to the ongoing intersectional debate, Beverley Skeggs discusses in an ideologically more discerning way some of the underlying reasons for the neglect of the link between gender and class and the critical imbalance that this can produce:

> [C]lass has almost disappeared from feminist analyses, even those claiming a materialist feminist position (see, for instance, Hennessy, 1993). This may be because in the past the majority of feminist debates on class have focused on very detailed Marxist analysis of the family, the labour market and the value of domestic labour (Breugal, 1979; Brenner and Ramas, 1984) or it may be that it has disappeared because class itself is so hard to define […] The retreat from class in feminist theory, McRobbie (1982) argues, has had an important function of enabling other spheres of women's lives to be investigated such as the state and the law. But it seems that the baby has been thrown out with the bath water. To abandon class as a theoretical tool does not mean that it does not exist any more; only that some theorists do not value it. It does not mean that women would experience inequality any differently; rather, it would make it more difficult for them to identify and challenge the basis of the inequality which they experience. Class inequality exists beyond its theoretical representation. (Skeggs 1997: 6)

More recently, she has returned to this same critical question to reaffirm the need for gender studies to focus more on class as a key site of both representation and resistance: "Analysis of class should therefore aim to capture the ambiguity produced through struggle and fuzzy boundaries, rather than to fix it in place in order to measure and know it. Class formation is dynamic, produced through conflict and fought out at the level of the symbolic" (Skeggs 2004: 5). In Skeggs's intersectional view, it is high time for a re-evaluation of class and gender as complementary concepts, but now on equal terms.

    One of the aims of this essay on John Sommerfield's *May Day* has been to show how such an intersectional refocusing on both gender and class can provide a point of critical departure in order to explore not only the way the novel portrays the power relations within patriarchal structures both at home and at work. It also allows for an unpicking of the fabric of these connections between the women and men affected by them. As Ann Garry writes: "Intersectionality helps to point us to fruitful and complex marginalized locations. It does not do the work for us, but tells us where to start and suggests kinds of questions to ask" (Garry 2011: 828). While previous critics of the Sommerfield's novel have

tended to ignore these aspects, it has been the adoption of an intersectional approach that has alerted my own reading to some of these deeper contradictions within the text. Previously, no one seems to have noticed the prominent thematic part the women play in the novel. Thus, when gender and class impact on one another, it is the task of the intersectional critic to try to reveal more fully the implications of this encounter: "This means that the intersectional approach challenges us to look at the different social positioning of women (and men) and to reflect on the different ways in which they participate in the reproduction of these relations" (Lutz et al. 2011: 8).

In his 1984 postscript to his novel, John Sommerfield described it as a piece of "early 30s communist romanticism" (Sommerfield 1984: xix), a reference perhaps in part to the prominent role given to members of the British Communist Party in the story. In this way, he declared, "it has become an historical novel" (Ibid). However, the story offers much more than a nostalgic glimpse back to the leftwing political commitment of the 1930s. By shifting attention to the women in the novel, I have tried to show how Sommerfield's collective portrayal manages to capture the nuances of gender and class experience by providing some rare insights into what it is like to be a working-class woman in a world of patriarchal capitalism. Since these oppressive structures remain very much alive and kicking in society today, Sommerfield's novel represents more than mere literary and social history. As an attempt to dramatise those situations when the personal becomes political, where gender and class consciousness overlap, it still has the power to illuminate the modern condition.

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'You're fuckin' amazing, by the way': Marginalisation and recovery in Roddy Doyle's *Paula Spencer*

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Introduction

When in rapid succession Roddy Doyle published the three novels *The Commitments* (1988), *The Snapper* (1990) and *The Van* (1991), in what is known as *The Barrytown Trilogy*, they were generally perceived as offering something new in Irish fiction, and in Irish literature more broadly, in that they zoomed in on north Dublin suburban working-class life, for long an ignored and marginalised segment of Irish culture. These hugely popular novels were followed by the 1993 Booker Prize-winning novel *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1996) and *A Star Called Henry* (1999), all of which in various ways also focus on the hardships and deprivation of the Irish urban working-class. In addition to these novels, Doyle wrote the four-part TV series *Family* (1994), where for the first time Irish viewers met the female protagonist Paula Spencer, a character later to re-emerge in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* and its sequel *Paula Spencer* (2006). Notably, *Family* contained violence, wife-battering, unemployment, alcoholism and a dysfunctional family, which in turn infuriated a great number of viewers, who argued that Doyle had given a false image of Ireland. In other words, having touched some very raw nerves, Doyle was accused of tampering with and disturbing revered notions of Irishness and what Ireland represented.

Within just over a decade, then, Doyle had established himself as a writer who insisted on writing previously ignored, indeed taboo, experiences into existence in a country steeped in ideals cherishing rural ideals and what could be termed traditional family values originating in a strong and rigid Catholic ethos, prepared to turn a blind eye to hidden and uncomfortable features in Irish life. As such, Doyle's texts, as Gerry Smyth contends, are involved in "an intense engagement with the social and cultural milieu from which it springs, as well as the opening up of the national narrative to a range of traditionally silenced voices from the past and the present" (1997: 66). This article will explore the ways in

which the silenced working-class voice of Paula Spencer, in the novel of that name, tries to resist, and arguably overcomes, marginalisation in a society that has wholeheartedly embraced hard-core global capitalism and where the gap between the haves and have-nots has widened. What will emerge is that Paula gradually recovers from her marginalised and vulnerable position—as a victim of an abusive husband (now dead), unemployment and alcoholism—and she does so both by relying on her own gritty inner strength and by reaching out to those in her immediate environment as well as to the world around her. Irish society, shaped as it is by the capitalist mentality of the Celtic Tiger era, does not seem offer any support to Paula; basically, in that social order, she is left to fight her own battles.

The critical perception of Roddy Doyle's writing

As I have suggested, much of Doyle's focus is on the Dublin working-class, its culture and its everyday struggles in the face of unemployment, marginalisation and poverty. However, while he has for some time been regarded as one of the most prominent and critically acclaimed Irish writers, both nationally and internationally, there are also those who argue that his portrayal of the working-class, particularly in *The Barrytown Trilogy*, is superficial and stereotypical and fails to engage with the complex social and political realities in Ireland at the time. For example, José Lanters dismisses the *Trilogy* as "consciously a-historical and a-political in [its] reflection of the ephemera of contemporary North Dublin pop-culture" (2002: 245). As Eve Patten points out, early critical assessments held that Doyle's was "a patronising portrait" of the Irish working-class and that "his narrative style in the trilogy, heavily reliant on dialogue and replete with the blasphemies and idioms of a north-side Dublin vernacular, was also seen as verging on caricature" (2006: 266).

In his recent *A History of the Irish Novel*, Derek Hand, too, picks up on this feature of Doyle criticism which, we are informed, holds that in his early work, "Doyle is merely offering another version of the stereotype of the Irish person as public jester" (2011: 266). Assessing Doyle's early work from a distance in time, Hand, while pointing to the "iconic" status (2011: 266) of the *Trilogy* and identifying what he sees as "strong evidence of a social conscience within all [his] writing, a recurring aspiration for justice and fairness" (2011: 265-66), suggests

that this latter quality "can at times work against the aesthetic merits of the work" (2011: 266). Interestingly, too, Hand makes the surprising point that the importance of Doyle's concerns should somehow have faded, arguing that "[w]hat is remarkable from the vantage point of post-Celtic Tiger Ireland is how rapid was the dating of Doyle's Dublin, which was vanishing into a world of work, jobs, success and money even as it was being written about" (2011: 266-67). In the wake of the 2009 financial crisis and its severe economic and social consequences for Ireland, this seems like a rather odd comment to make, since the hardships facing the Irish population in the 1980s, for example in the shape of mass unemployment, emigration and a huge national debt, to a large extent the implicit and explicit focus of Doyle's early texts, turned out to be equally true some 20 years later. Moreover, Hand's argument becomes even more debatable since, while touching on all of Doyle's novels to that date, he surprisingly fails to mention *Paula Spencer*, the novel by Doyle that is actually set in the Celtic Tiger era and that problematises the impact of its features on Irish society at various levels.

However, while some critics apparently perceive annoying short-comings in Doyle's novels as highlighted above, there are many who find the concerns represented in his writing of the utmost importance. As I have argued elsewhere (Persson 2005), rather than being "a-historical and a-political," as Lanters suggests, the *Trilogy* actively participates in dismantling revered notions of Irishness, in fact writing against the nationalist and rural ethos of Fianna Fáil, the dominant political party for long periods in post-independence Ireland, as well as rigidly traditional Catholic ideals as represented in, for example, the 1929 Censorship Act, which had far-reaching effects on Irish life and culture well into the 1980s. Furthermore, examining the *Trilogy* as well as *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, I have also suggested (Persson 2006) that Doyle's novels offer what I term third space, bottom-up resistance to top-down strictures imposed by hegemonic forces, thereby partaking in a transformation of Irish society. Similarly, Gerry Smyth asserts that his writing "develop[s] a subtle and complex vision of modern Ireland" (1997: 66). Assessing Doyle's writing elsewhere, Smyth contends that "it was apparent from *The Van* (1991) onwards that Doyle was engaging seriously with the complexities of the new urban order" (2000: 23) that was emerging in Ireland towards the end of the twentieth century. Dermot McCarthy, too, finds considerable qualities in Doyle's novels,

arguing that they "not only reflect a society going through rapid change but, as they circulate within the society, intervene in that change by throwing into relief or juxtaposition images of Ireland's past and present which pose questions about its future" (2003: 20).

More recently, Doyle has also received positive critical attention for his short-stories published in *Metro Eireann* which, as Maureen T. Reddy states, "bills itself as 'Ireland's Only Multicultural Newspaper' and takes an antiracist, pro-immigrant editorial position" (2005: 377). Commenting on the stories, later published as *The Deportees and Other Stories* (2007), Carmen Zamorano Llena writes that "[m]ost of the stories in the collection cast a critical eye upon various manifestations of racist or xenophobic views in contemporary Ireland, with special attention paid to Dublin" (2011: 94). It seems, then, that Doyle's "serious moral concern" (2003: 19), as McCarthy puts it, in addition to "children, adolescents, married women, the family and the community" (2003: 19), also includes the newly arrived of non-European descent and the often harsh situation they face in contemporary Ireland.

Roddy Doyle and Irish working-class literature

In addition to his novels that deal with the predicament of working-class life, Roddy Doyle has in several interviews declared his affinities with the Dublin working-class. In one interview, for instance, he states that "[his] own upbringing was lower middle class," but he asserts that "[he] feel[s] quite familiar in both these camps, the working class and the middle class" (Paschel 1998: 151). Still, in his writing, he claims to feel more at home in a working-class environment: "But if I were to write a book in a more solidly middle class setting and I needed [detailed] knowledge, I'd have to go off and find it, whereas if I'm writing about a working class context, I rarely have to research it, it seems to be in me already" (Paschel 1998: 151).

Interestingly, asked in another interview whether he views himself as a socially committed and politically engaged writer, he answers quite emphatically: "I would see myself as being […] socially committed and politically engaged–I always have done. […] I would like to think that everything I've done is political. I would like to think that the first three books celebrate working-class life. I tried to capture and celebrate crudity, loudness, linguistic flair and slang, which is the property of

working-class people" (Costello 2001: 91). Doyle makes the crucial point that official history, that is, the official narrative constructed by historians and politicians, tends to exclude grassroot voices, and he implicitly and explicitly sees it as his task in his fiction to let these voices be heard in what ultimately becomes a political project. Put in another way, he seems to wish to bring to the surface hidden narratives that have been the victims of social invisibility and that would offer a radical alternative to dominant narratives:

> We are told to think of Ireland as a nation of farmers, but in fact there were relatively few farmers and a hell of a lot of labourers working for those farmers. And yet it's as if they didn't exist when you read the history of the nineteenth century– even though you know it's admitted that a million people, perhaps, starved in the famine and a million emigrated. It's an extraordinary rewriting of history. Well, it wasn't even written–so it's an extraordinary *writing* of history that allows one class of people to give their versions. It's inevitable. But for years in Ireland the other versions of history weren't there and, in fact, still aren't. The whole countryside is dotted with labourers' cottages. We drive by them, and nobody wonders, 'Who lived in them?' (Reynolds 2004: 27; Doyle's emphasis)

The implications for Doyle's own writing of this urge to unearth hidden and silenced histories are perhaps not difficult to see, as most of his texts focus on groups and individuals who are not visible in Irish society and who have been outside the official constructions of Irish identity. Or as Doyle states:

> All [my] characters, in a way, are confronted by the reality of their isolation. They live in a society […] that has no interest in them whatsoever. They're not even statistics really. They are officially, but it never goes beyond that. Unfortunately, it hasn't changed all that much. They live on the periphery. They look for themselves on the television and they're not there, so culturally they don't exist. They're rejected really, and it's up to them to take this fact by the scruff and reject it.
>
> (Reynolds 2004: 24-25)

The refusal by official Ireland to include certain groups, not least the working-class, in the dominant version of history as well as the dominant notion of what it means to be Irish may explain the lack of of interest in working-class literature in Ireland, and despite Doyle's attempt at rectifying this situation, working-class literature has not been given much attention by the literary establishment. However, as Michael Pierse shows in his recent ground-breaking book, *Writing Ireland's Working*

Class: Dublin After O'Casey, working-class literature has not been totally absent on the Irish literary map. Neverthless, as John Brannigan holds in his "Foreword" to the book, "questions about the pervasiveness of class divisions, and the significance of class as a material and cultural category […] should be key questions within the field of Irish Studies, and within Irish society, and yet the critical record on class in Irish literature, culture and history is shockingly thin" (2011: vii). There are several reasons as to why this has been the case, and Pierse points to the notion that Ireland "is assumed by many to be a less hierarchical state than others" (2011: 9), further emphasised by what many observers have viewed as "increased opportunities for social mobility in the 'Celtic Tiger' economy" (2011: 9). Even so, sociologists claim that despite popular assumptions, "class inequality is and has been a highly significant feature of Irish social organization" (Share et. al. 2007: 171).

Historically, though, the issue of class has not been regarded as important in Irish politics and culture. Partly, this has to do with what he calls "the country's under-development in capitalist terms" (2011: 12) and Dublin's "tame industrialisation" (2011: 12) in the early twentieth century, which had the effect that a "thoroughgoing class consciousness" (2011: 12) was not developed, as it was in Britan. Moreover, although "workers played an important role in the decolonisation struggle" and the War of Independence, especially urban workers were poorly rewarded in the Free State, while other groups, such as farmers, agricultural workers and merchants "all received something in return for their nationalism" (2011: 13). This, in turn, was due to the fact that, following the War of Independence and the Civil War, "the major political parties [were] […] eager to downplay social inequalities and to cement loyalty to the fledgling state" (14). In this process, Pierse goes on, "[l]abour was subordinated to nationalism, partly because it avoided taking a clear stance on the Civil War and largely because it agreed to toe the line in forming Free State hegemony" (2011: 14).

The political and cultural atmosphere in the new state, then, was such that the matter of class was removed from the agenda, as it had seemingly no place in what was "a largely agricultural economy" (2011: 15); Pierse even argues that in contrast to the growing influence of the British working-class, both in politics and culture, at this time and between the two world wars, "the Republic's working class […] withered, in political, social and cultural terms" (2011: 15). As in many

other areas in Irish society, the Catholic ethos blocked political change as, in this case, it was not open to class politics; or as Pierse aptly phrases it, "it can be argued that the power of Catholicism, aligned with capitalism, inveigling itself strategically into every institution and power block of the new state, was the principal reason why working-class consciousness was sublimated into more moderate forms" (2011: 15). If anything, this situation became worse during and after World War II when the hegemonic power of Fianna Fáil "intensif[ied] its attacks on communism" (2011: 17) as a result of increasing acitivities among trade-unions. Thus, it seems fair to argue that Catholic values and the political power of Fianna Fáil prevented the growth of a class consciousness, and it was not until the late 1960s that a working-class similar to that of other European countries emerged in Ireland. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was mainly in urban environments, particularly Dublin, but also Cork, that the working-class began to "gr[o]w in voice and numerical strength" (2011: 19), largely due to the fact that Dublin was becoming the "economic and cultural centre in which formerly dominant, conservative cultural norms were increasingly outmoded" (2011: 20). Nevertheless, even if this change was gradually taking place, it is also true that, generally, the working-class was not able to move upwards socially, as could perhaps be expected; as Pierse states, "working-class people largely remained working class" (2011: 20). He goes on:

> Class inequality in Ireland since the middle of the twentieth century has remained gaping. Despite the considerable adjustment that 'external dependent industrialisation' entailed, it seems that the prospects of mobility for (and the economic power of) working-class Dubliners actually *diminished* during this period.
> (2011: 20; Pierse's emphasis)

Significantly, what Pierse calls the "ostracism of the working-class" (2011: 26) in independent Ireland, and the consequences of this kind of exclusion, are also reflected in the literature he has examined, for example, by Seán O'Casey, James McKenna, James Plunkett, Christy Brown, Dermot Bolger, Paula Meehan and Roddy Doyle. These realities are particularly visible in the area of education, which is frequently represented as oppressive: "Official disdain for working-class people often manifests in encounters between their children and the state apparatus, particularly in terms of repressive educational machinery in which working-class concerns have been eschewed" (2011: 26). The

consequences of the state's attitudes to and treatment of the working-class and their children are far-reaching in that they come to believe that they are actually inferior to other groups: "Working-class children, these works imply, have learned to recognise their inferiority in Irish society through the harshness and inferior quality of their education […]" (2011: 28). However, he also insists that, despite the fact that much of working-class experience and literature have not been seen as hugely important in Irish culture, or that their "identity is outside hegemony" (2011: 50), Irish working-class culture and literature "might be seen as the very basis for counter-hegemonic culture" in that "we hear the subaltern speak of an alternative conception of its own history and a radically alternative vision of Ireland from within" (2011: 50). This, I would suggest, becomes even more true regarding working-class women, as in *Paula Spencer*, given that Irish working-class women have arguably been doubly oppressed: by the fact that they are working-class in a society that turns a blind eye to class divisions; and by the fact that they are women in a rigidly patriarchal society governed by traditional definitions of women as domestic creatures and child-bearers (e.g., O'Connor 1998; Valiulis 2009).

Celtic tiger-style capitalism and social division
After decades of economic hardships, as a result of an inability to create sustainable economic policies, instead relying on protectionism and heavy borrowing, the consequences of which were, among other things, mass unemployment and mass emigration, the Irish economy in the early 1990s emerged as one to look up to by the rest of the world. For approximately a decade, 1995-2005 or so, Ireland saw an unprecedented economic boom, commonly referred to as the Celtic Tiger, which created a completely new situation in the country. Assessing the Irish economic climate in 2002, the economists Peter Clinch, Frank Convery and Brendan Walsh contend that "throughout the 1990s Ireland significantly outperformed all other EU countries" (2002: 25). In their assessment, this performance helped raise the standard of living for most groups in Ireland; the unemployment rate, for example, "fell from 17% in the 1980s to 4% in 2001" (2002: 27). As importantly, they claim that it is a fact "there was a dramatic fall in the level of absolute poverty in Ireland during the boom" (2002: 31).

From the perspective of economics, they contend that the boom that made Ireland a much-admired player on the global scene was to a great extent based on what they call "good domestic economic policies" (2002: 29), policies that are well-known and advocated in capitalist economies, such as "[a] favourable environment for FDI [Foreign Direct Investment], including low corporate tax rates […]" and "[a]n elastic supply of good-quality […] and relatively inexpensive labour" (2002: 29). In order to implement several of these policies, the government and the business sector on the market entered into a social partnership with the trade-unions and other organisations for the benefit of the nation. Basically, the argument went that if trade-unions and these organisations could agree temporarily to accept only moderate wage increases and flexible working conditions, the whole nation would benefit and they would be rewarded at a later stage.

While the general opinion seems to be that in many respects Ireland as a nation gained from the Celtic Tiger success in the 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century, which generated what Kirby calls "a widespread mood of self-congratulation" (2002a: 3), there are also dissenting voices. In fact, even quite early in the boom, there were critics who argued that large groups were left out as they did not benefit from the new affluence, but if these groups objected they were told that they were lacking in solidarity. Kieran Allen, for example, argued as early as 2000 that "[t]he Celtic Tiger has quite simply one of the worst records on earnings dispersion in the developed industrial world" (2000: 76). Moreover, while the unemployment rate fell in this period, behind that reality is the fact that "part-time, temporary and short-term contract employment has risen by 164.5 percent between 1988 and 1997" (2000: 76), and Allen sums up by holding that "[t]he rich are getting richer, the poor are still confined to poverty and the bulk of workers are losing out" (2000: 77). It is not only, Allen contends, that the workers got a bad deal on the labour market; it is also true that they lost out in other ways, too, especially regarding public services, which were severely underfunded during the Celtic Tiger, due to the fact that the wealthy got extensive tax cuts. Thus, Allen points out that in the areas of education, housing, transport and health, underprivileged groups, such as manual workers, the poor and the elderly, faced marginalisation and exclusion, while Irish society at large faced vast problems related to the infrastructure, like roads and sewerage, in what Allen refers to as "the decade of social

vandalism" (2000: 100). Similarly, Peadar Kirby examines the impact of the Celtic Tiger on Irish society and on people's lives, suggesting that "relative poverty […] increased" during this period (2002a: 56), generating a "growth in social inequality" (2002a: 47). Summarising the consequences of the era, Kirby argues that Irish society saw

> growing social polarization between those who [were] benefiting from it and those marginalised by it. Furthermore, across a range of issues relating to social provision and quality of life–housing and homelessness, public transport and traffic gridlock, declining quality of care and growing inequality of access to health services, a crisis in services for young people in need, entrenched inequality in access to education, environmental pollution–there is growing evidence that the Irish case involves a 'complex mixture of successes and failures' […], reflecting a stark contrast between economic success and social failure […]; the ratio of social security spending to GDP, for instance, fell markedly in Ireland while it was maintained or increased in most European countries. (2002a: 5)

Kirby is highly critical of the impact of the Celtic Tiger on large segments of the population, and discussing the era elsewhere, he firmly holds that "Ireland's embrace of globalisation has resulted in a more divided society" (2002b: 31). Ronaldo Munck agrees and sees in the period what he terms "class polarisation, namely that the gap between the top and the bottom of the social scale in terms of earnings is getting greater" (2007: 306).

Perhaps the most damning assessment, however, is voiced by the outspoken and highly respected sociocultural commentator Fintan O'Toole, who offers hard-hitting criticism of both the system and its raw cynicism as well as of corrupt and greedy individual politicians and businessmen. In his book *After the Ball*, for example, O'Toole dismisses the Celtic Tiger in no uncertain terms. If the alleged success of the Celtic Tiger were true, he argues, "Ireland would indeed be a very forceful argument for right-wing ideology. Most of it, however, is nonsense" (2003: 15). According to O'Toole, the financial and political élite played a ruthless game, at the expense of those less well off, asserting that "the people best able to bear the burden of reducing a catastrophic national debt were in fact able to opt out of the pain. The weight fell to a disproportionate extent on the shoulders of the weak, the vulnerable, the sick and the poor" (2003: 16).

O'Toole gives one example after another of greed, corruption and injustice. He suggests that this mentality and behaviour was part and

parcel of the system, and the consequences were devastating for very many people. For example, O'Toole draws attention to the fact that the large majority of tenants in Dublin City Council housing had "trouble keeping up with their rent," and just a third of rents was "fully paid up," meaning that "for many families, even at the height of the boom, the wolf was at the door". (2003: 67). In another example, O'Toole goes on to show that in the area of health services, a similar inequality can be found, as "Ireland operates a two-tier health system, in which those who can afford to pay generally get immediate or quick access to hospital treatment, while those who can't often face very long waiting lists" (2003: 76), and he concludes: "The reality is clear: wealth and poverty in Ireland are matters of life and death. And the lives of the poor are worth less than those of their betters" (2003: 81).

In many significant ways, then, due to a system where the rich were given vast tax-cuts and other advantages, accumulating often enormous private wealth, while those less well-off were not given the facilities they needed, since not enough was spent on public services, the Celtic Tiger was not as successful at the grassroot level as the élite was eager to claim; to a great extent it certainly did not benefit those at the lower end of the social ladder. As O'Toole holds: "The Irish experience shows with striking clarity that success in the globalised marketplace is not at all incompatible with social squalor" (2003: 166). Such squalor was the reality of mainly, although not exclusively, many working-class areas in the cities, particularly Dublin (O'Toole 2003: 67-68).

Paula Spencer: Marginalised and down, but not out
As mentioned above, Paula Spencer first appeared in the four-part TV series *Family*. The last episode in the series was from Paula's point of view and seemingly inspired the author to continue her story and develop it into a novel, and two years later *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* appeared. As *Paula Spencer* is the sequel to *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, showing her life situation almost a decade later, it seems fruitful briefly to examine the main concerns in the first novel, since it arguably deepens the reader's understanding of Paula's predicament and struggle in the sequel. Hailed by Gerry Smyth as "his most ambitious novel to date" (1997: 84), *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* focuses on Paula's attempts at making sense of her life by writing her own story

in her own words two years after she threw her abusive husband out and after finding out that he has been shot dead by the police at a burglary gone wrong. In that act, she is writing herself into existence in what can be read as an act of empowerment. What gradually emerges in her first-person narrative is a story of physical and psychological abuse and victimisation. As I have shown elsewhere (Persson 2006), from very early on in her life, both in her family and in the state institution of the school, she is formed into believing that her only worth as a human being is as a sexual creature existing solely for men's needs and whims. As Stephanie Lehner suggests, Paula's background constitutes an entrapment that leaves her and her sisters with very few alternatives; "[f]rom a working-class background," Lehner writes, "and thus in a position of neither social nor economic power, for Paula and her sisters the only means of escape from paternal abuse is through marriage" (2011: 126). However, Charlo gradually turns her life into a living hell by regularly beating her and abusing her psychologically; therefore, in Lehner's words, "home is marked by the constant threat of violence, poverty and devastation" (2011: 126).

What makes Paula's situation even worse, though, is that when she seeks hospital treatment for her injuries caused by Charlo's physical assaults, the doctors and nurses instead seem to blame Paula herself, and her alcoholism, for what happens to her, implicitly forcing her to use the phrase in the title, a phrase used for hiding the reality of wife-battering, indicating, in turn, society's reluctance to acknowledge and reveal the true stories. Significantly, the novel suggests that this kind of abuse is deeply embedded in the very fabric of a patriarchal Irish culture, as state institutions indirectly endorse abusive behaviour, and it seems to accuse Irish society of systematic injustice in that it shows how "it is through the official silence and denial of those crimes that society at large is not only complicit, but actively contributes to their re-enactment" (Lehner 2011: 145).

Consequently, Paula is doubly trapped. Jennifer M. Jeffers argues that "Paula is trapped by her working-class upbringing" (2002: 57) as well as by rigidly patriarchal structures as "Charlo's behavior is sanctioned by the authorities and by Irish culture" (2002: 60). The consequence is that "Paula is trapped in this subaltern position of utter powerlessness that robs her of all agency" (Lehner 2011: 135). Still, Paula does manage to break free from her tormentor. When he looks at

their eldest daughter, Nicola, in a way that suggests that she may very well be his next victim of sexual and physical abuse, Paula has had enough and forcefully throws him out by hitting him with a frying-pan, which becomes an act of resistance to the forces that entrap her; or in Jeffers' words: "Paula does wipe out the heterosexual regulatory law that had been abusing her: in her action and resolve to fight back, she pushes back the border that was established to contain her" (2002: 56). Thus, the novel ends, opening up to the sequel.

Nine years later, at the height of the Celtic Tiger, we find that Paula has somehow survived and we find her in the same working-class environment. The two youngest of her children, Jack and Leanne, 16 and 22 years old respectively, are still living with her, while the two eldest, the steady Nicola and the ex-heroin addict, John Paul, have moved out and started their own families. Of course, one could read this novel without having prior knowledge of the first one; however, the sequel frequently establishes links between the two, indicating that it is important to know where Paula is coming from and what social and psychological baggage she has. This becomes particularly true regarding the long-term physical and psychological effect her husband's beatings have had on her. For example, quite early on in the novel, when she brushes her teeth, we find out that some of them are missing because of his brutal treatment of her: "She brushes for lost time. And teeth. Kicked out of her, some of them. Nights and mornings, when brushing wasn't a priority" (Doyle 2007: 10). It seems that no part of her body was spared when Charlo hit her, and her injuries will be with her forever, constantly reminding her of what she has gone through; indeed, the damage done to her makes her feel that "[h]er body is a map of his abuse" (Doyle 2007: 135), further suggesting that in order to know who Paula Spencer is, her past is of the essence. Her body, the text implies, is a site where a ruthless battle of patriarchal control has taken place, a battle that has nearly killed her.

If Charlo's abuse of her caused severe physical injuries, living in constant fear also gave her psychological scars. One consequence of the daily threat she was living under is that her self-esteem is extremely low. For example, her fear has cut her off from ordinary social intercourse with men and she feels deeply uncomfortable just going to a coffee-shop for a coffee: "She's getting nervous. It's ridiculous. She's only going for a cup of coffee. She used to be good at looking at men. She could look

straight back at any age, height, shoe size. Charlo knocked it out of her. That must be it. The confidence, the guts–gone" (Doyle 2007: 32). The text suggests that the psychological damage done to Paula by Charlo is as severe as is the physical damage. In fact, the psychological impact is arguably even greater, as it reaches into and affects her everyday behaviour. When Leanne and Paula are having an argument, Leanne raises her hand in a gesture not intended to strike Paula, and Paula does, too, but in order to protect her face (Doyle 2007: 69); and when John Paul comes to visit her, he does not ring the doorbell, since in her life with Charlo, it meant trouble: "She used to hate the sound of the doorbell. It lifted her off the floor, every time it rang. It was always the Guards or some butty of Charlo's–bad news. It was reality, the end, trying to get in at her, taking away her children" (Doyle 2007: 128).

While being victimised by her husband's abusive behaviour and by a culture that refuses to acknowledge such behaviour is part of who and what Paula is, she is also the victim of alcohol. Her constant fight against alcoholism is established on the very first page of the novel, when we are informed that she has not had a drink for "four months and five days" (Doyle 2007: 1). It is an hour-to-hour fight that governs her life and that is always present, as the novel begins: "She copes. A lot of the time. Most of the time. She copes. And sometimes she doesn't. Cope. At all. This is one of the bad days" (Doyle 2007: 1). Her alcoholism frequently rears its ugly head in different ways. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the novel regularly returns to Paula's own desperate struggle to stay away from the drink. Taking responsibility to free herself from her addiction takes considerable courage. For example, when Leanne brings home a bottle of vodka, suggesting that Leanne, too, is becoming an alcoholic, Paula resists the temptation and pours it into the sink in an act of enormous will power: "She went to the sink. She turned on the taps. She ran the hot and cold water, full blast, so the smell and the taste wouldn't lift up and grab her. She got the tap off the bottle. She poured" (Doyle 2007: 105). However, on other occasions, the novel hits home to the reader that even if Paula has been off the drink for several months, a recovering alcoholic can never relax, as if to show that several months' resilience can be gone and worth nothing in a brief moment of giving in to her need (Doyle 2007: 176-77).

What arguably makes Paula's struggle even more moving, though, is that she is also forced to face her own guilt, especially in relation to her

children, whom she neglected when alcohol was her main priority. In fact, regaining her children's trust becomes one of her principal aims in the novel. Her strong feelings of guilt appear in moments of brutal clarity, when she assesses herself as a mother:

> Leanne often went to school with no breakfast or kiss goodbye.
> It's in the past.
> She knows that's shite. More than anyone, she knows. You can't leave things behind. They come with you. (Doyle 2007: 11)

Her heartbreaking neglect as a mother appeared in many ways; on one of her birthdays, for instance, she was drinking in the nearby pub, Finnegan's Wake, while her son Jack, then a small boy, was standing outside in the rain: "He stood outside that pub when he was a little fella, waiting for her to come out. He stood in the rain. He often did it. She brought crisps out to him, and Coke with a straw. Like it was a treat. There you are, love. More guilt. On her birthday" (Doyle 2007: 16). Therefore, by representing Paula as a victim of physical and psychological abuse as well as alcoholism, the novel carefully establishes the notion that Paula has lived her life on the margins, cut off, disconnected both from the world around her and from her children. Several years, indeed decades, have passed her by, as if she has lived in a bubble, while life outside has moved on. Contemplating the success of U2, she thinks: "She knows nothing about them. U2–she's never liked the name. They come from her part of the city, but she missed them. She was being hammered, battered to the floor, while they were becoming famous" (Doyle 2007: 192).

However, her marginalisation is caused not only by her husband's abuse and her alcoholism, but also by poverty and long-term unemployment. The labour market has been closed to her, and as she realises at one point, the chances of getting an official job are slim, to say the least: "There's other work. There's real work, with stamps and pensions. But how does she get one of those jobs; how does she explain? She hasn't worked since 1975? What does she say? She doesn't know" (Doyle 2007: 247). It could perhaps be expected in the new economic climate that she and Ireland find themselves in, that her marginalisation would be reduced and that the poverty restricting her life would be alleviated, thereby improving her standard of living. Frequent references are made to the Celtic Tiger and the change it has brought. Paula's sister,

Carmel, we read, is buying a holiday flat in Bulgaria as an investment (Doyle 2007: 28), and both Carmel and Paula's other sister, Denise, have bought mobile homes, also as investments (Doyle 2007: 25), indicating that the Celtic Tiger means that people of previously humble income can now spend more money on leisure. Paula's friend, Rita, herself an eager consumer and seemingly embracing the new Ireland, is aware of the change in a way that Paula is not:

> –It's the first thing I noticed, Rita said that day. –The first sign that the country was changing.
> –What was that? said Paula.
> –The clothes shops for kids, said Rita.
> Paula nodded.
> –They were the proof, said Rita. –People had more money than they needed. It's great.
> Paula nodded. She agreed.
> –I noticed them before all the new cars, said Rita. –And the talk about house prices. Even all the cranes.
> –Jesus, Rita, said Paula. –All I noticed was the price of vodka going up.
> (Doyle 2007: 166)

Thus, there is an affluence visible in the fact that people have become part of capitalist consumerism not seen to such an extent in Ireland before. The novel addresses the ways in which affluence and a new kind of wealth seem to have improved the Irish economy and the standard of living for some segments of the population, but it also suggests that the Celtic Tiger has had negative effects, which implies that increased social division affecting people's everyday lives is also part of the era. Since there are now fewer children in Paula's area, Jack's school runs the risk of being closed down (Doyle 2007: 28), and when Leanne has to be treated in hospital, Paula witnesses a seemingly inadequate health care not worthy a thriving state:

> It was a long time since Paula had been one of the women alone or John Paul had been one of the unconscious young lads. But the place was still the same. A war zone–worse now, when she was sober. She'd been hearing people on the radio, on Joe Duffy['s radio show], giving out about people having to lie on trolleys for days because there were no beds. Now she saw it when she went to the toilet. All along the corridor, women, old men, people who might have been injured at work earlier that day, the day before, on trolleys. In rows, like a weird queue for the bus. There was a smell of smoke in the jacks, dirty toilet paper on the floor.
> (Doyle 2007: 83-84)

In addition, John Paul and his family are told by their landlord to leave their home, since its closeness to the new tram-line, the Luas, has dramatically increased the value of the houses in the area (Doyle 2007: 113).

The Celtic Tiger economy, then, has not benefited under-privileged groups, mostly in deprived areas, and the supposed improvements have not, it would seem, trickled down to them in any significant ways. When Paula thinks to herself that "[s]he's one of the tigers now" (Doyle 2007: 40), it is meant, I would argue, as deeply ironic, since we are told that her 'tiger-hood' simply means being "in charge of two floors" (Doyle 2007: 40) in the block of offices she is cleaning, earning her an extra 30 euro a week. In other words, her own weak financial situation is juxtaposed to the affluence of the Celtic Tiger. True, as a cleaning-lady she can clean a few more homes of the middle-class, who can now afford that kind of domestic help; however, as mentioned above, she is outside the official system, hence vulnerable and marginalised. Similar to Doyle's earlier novel, *The Van*, in which the unemployed Jimmy Rabbitte Sr is excluded from the wealth in late 1980s South Dublin (Persson 2005), Paula does not have access to the success of the new economy.

Indeed, it could be argued that much of the novel revolves around Paula's fear of being short of money and her struggle to obtain enough of it through work to get by; it is made clear that this fear colours her everyday existence as much as her alcoholism does: "She'll never get over the terror of having no money, the prison of having nothing. Putting things back up on the supermarket shelves because the tenner in her pocket turned out to be a fiver. Stopping at the front door because the fiver she'd felt in her pocket was gone" (Doyle 2007: 52). As a further consequence of her frequent shortage of money, where every euro counts, she is vulnerable to the whims of her middle-class employers whose homes and offices she cleans. This vulnerable financial situation becomes evident when one of the houses she has cleaned for three years is suddenly empty; the owners have moved out without having the decency to inform her:

> They didn't owe her anything. It's not that. The money had been on the kitchen table for her last week. She hardly knew them. She hardly ever saw them. She was American, the wife; that bouncy type of way about her. She'd never seen the husband. But she'd ironed his shirts and sorted his socks.
> Three years. Near enough. […]

> She feels like she's been sacked. It's not fair. […]
> She needs the money. Sixty euro a week, always on the table.
> There's no table there now.
> For fuck sake. (Doyle 2007: 173-74)

That the couple is apparently American is not insignificant, as they could be read as a metaphor for American influence in Ireland. American multinational companies have been criticised for not having a genuine interest in the welfare of Ireland and its citizens, instead only looking after its own economic interests and moving its business, or closing down, if the capitalist owners find it more profitable to do so, which in turn might have devastating consequences for those left without work.

Establishing Paula as vulnerable and dependent on this kind of work that is both highly insecure and outside the system, the novel places her in the category of low working-class, indeed underclass, the lowest of the low, exploited and far removed from the basic security and comfort that is necessary for decent living. Yet another consequence of her being under severe economic pressure is that she is forced to go to work even if her body is in pain and even if her work exhausts her. There are no margins in Paula's life, as it were, that would allow her to stay at home if she has to. On several occasions, Paula has work-related physical problems. In the very beginning, she is going home from work, and the reader immediately understands that her work situation is heavy: "She's on her way home from work. She's walking from the station. There's no energy in her. Nothing in her legs. Just pain. Ache. […]" (Doyle 2007: 1). Throughout the novel, Paula's aching body makes itself known, implying that she is marked by her work, which becomes an integral part of her life, so much so that it literally takes over her body, gradually wearing her down:

> She feels it when she picks up the bucket. Her back. She's already walking crooked, to give it room, avoid admitting it. […]
> It's happened before. It goes away. Like a threat, something that'll come back when it wants to. A nerve, just gently tapped. It's horrible. It's playing with her.
> She feels like a cripple already. The last time, it hurt every time she put her foot on the stairs. She can feel herself now, shifting all her weight away from the twinge.
> (Doyle 2007: 245)

However, despite the fact that Paula is on the very margins of the labour market, or technically outside it, and despite the fact that her work

seems to wear her down physically, I would argue that work, and the idea of work, also operates as a positive force in Paula's life. Parallel to her fight against alcoholism, marginalisation and struggle for survival, work is part of an opening up to the possibility of a new Paula, that is, part of a recovery and a reclaiming of her life. Viewed in this light, work has what could be termed a therapeutic value, in addition to that of empowerment, and becomes part of a transformative process in that it helps Paula to re-shape the negative image she has of herself and to re-connect to the world around her. That work is indeed central in her life is emphasised by the fact that there are at least 29 references to Paula thinking about work, having to go to work, going to work, being at work, or going home from work. Paula herself seems to be aware that work has this important function for her:

> She'd be in trouble if she didn't work. It isn't just about the money. She doesn't hate her work. She doesn't like it either. It keeps her going. The buses and trains, the hours.
> The panic attacks, whatever they are, don't come if she's busy.
> They do come. But not as often, not as badly. She can't go too mad if she has to go to work. She measures it out in steps. One day at a time, sweet Jesus. Whoever wrote that one hadn't a clue. A day is a fuckin' eternity. (Doyle 2007: 200)

While functioning as a stabilising element in her everyday life, work can also be said to function as normalising, if normalising is defined as having a job as a means to lead a life as a social human being, that is, to participate in life and the society in which one lives. It is not unimportant that by working she has an income that not only opens up some possibilities for her but also gives her a sense of pride: "Tomorrow is payday. Always a good day. Excitement, a bit. Pride, a bit. New clothes, maybe. Food. A good dinner. A half-full fridge. A video" (Doyle 2007: 5). She regularly comes back to this aspect of work and she is thrilled that she is able to save some money to buy everyday things to improve her life. For instance, she is able to buy domestic items that are often taken for granted in a household, such as soup spoons (Doyle 2007: 101), a stereo (Doyle 2007: 191) and a new corkscrew (Doyle 2007: 237). Equally importantly, perhaps, with her money she will also open her own bank account, her first:

> Another thing she wants, a bank account. […] She'd like that. A bank account. She's never had one. It's always been cash, or none of it. She's always clung to money.

> [...] The weight of it, the reassurance. She needs to know how much she has, exactly
> how much, now. [...] She'll always want cash, but she wants to hold a laser card and
> join the queue at the Pass machine. I earned the money I'm getting from this wall.
>
> (Doyle 2007: 52-53)

With a bank account, she becomes someone, suggesting the new dictum 'I have a bank account, therefore I exist'; to put it in another way, Paula setting up a bank account is crucial in the (re-)construction of the new Paula and her new identity.

Significantly, her plans of setting up a bank account is part of her seemingly new discovery that work and an income may not only help her in the here-and-now by allowing her to buy basic things for the household, so that her family can actually have something like a household, but also help her in making plans for the future, something that has been absolutely impossible before. Therefore, through her plans, she expresses a stronger sense of agency, where she has previously been passive. That she is slowly opening up to life and reclaiming it in this manner can be seen at different levels, and one crucial aspect, it seems to me, lies in an improved perception of herself as a human being. An indication that she is gradually reclaiming her life, indeed her identity, is the fact that she plans to "get herself a passport" (Doyle 2007: 44), a passport arguably being the evidence that you are a citizen in a particular country with certain rights. One such right is the right to vote in democratic elections, and Paula showing an interest in voting in the upcoming European elections suggests that she wishes her vote to be taken into account; interestingly, she would vote for the Labour candidate, indicating where her political affinities lie (Doyle 2007: 13-14).

It is noteworthy, then, that by intending to obtain a passport and to vote, Paula wishes to view herself in a new light as an individual and a human being. As mentioned above, at another level, this also includes planning for future purchases of things she needs and wants. Throughout the text, she makes a list of things to buy and do when she has saved enough, for example: "[s]he'd like duvets for the beds. They're on the list" (Doyle 2007: 10); "[s]he's thinking of getting a plunger–real coffee. Another thing on the list" (Doyle 2007: 14); "[...] she wanted to make a list of the things she'd need for Christmas. Different lists. The food she'd need, presents, things to be done" (Doyle 2007: 75); "[s]he'll get a handbag, too, when she's buying the coat" (Doyle 2007: 77); "[s]he'll

finish her list, then get going on the bedrooms. Butter, plain flour, eggs. She's making pancakes for tomorrow's tea. Tomorrow's tea. She's thinking ahead" (Doyle 2007: 167); "[s]he doesn't have a light beside the bed–that's something else for her list" (Doyle 2007: 234). While it could be argued that she is desperate to become a middle-class consumer, Paula's list, I would instead argue, constitutes an attempt at reconnecting to life. Separately, the various items on her list may not seem significant; taken together, however, and through the very act of writing such a list, it strongly suggests that she is eager to take control of her life. Just as she is literally regaining her sense of taste, which was lost in her years of severe alcoholism (Doyle 2007: 4), she is regaining her appetitie for new experiences and for a widening of her horizon; put differently, "[t]he new Paula," as she thinks of herself (Doyle 2007: 27), this "new-old woman [is] learning how to live" (Doyle 2007: 136).

Taking control of life and learning how to live involve an opening up to life as well as an ability to locate oneself in the world. In that project, Paula is not all that different from the ten-year-old Paddy Clarke in Doyle's 1993 novel, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, in which Paddy tries to make sense of, or read, his environment by engaging in a linguistic and geographical mapping (Persson 2003). The difference, of course, is that while Paddy's perception of the world is that of a child, hence limited by inexperience, Paula's is that of an adult who has gone through considerable hardships; nevertheless, in many ways, she shows a curiosity similar to Paddy's to learn the world around her. For example, with Jack she is keen to learn how the Internet works (Doyle 2007: 122-25), a phenomenon that has previously been out of reach for her. Similarly, when Carmel is diagnosed with breast cancer, Paula goes to some considerable length to find out more about this disease and its consequences, looking up the term "Mastectomy" both in Jack's dictionary and on the Internet, demonstrating an urge to broaden her knowledge and to get a deeper understanding in what could be read as acts of mapping (Doyle 2007: 231-34): "She's learning nothing, but meaning is breaking through. She's fighting with the words, with the fuckin' snobs who wrote them" (Doyle 2007: 233). Also similar to Paddy, Paula, in her attempts at reading the world she occupies, engages in a geographical mapping. For a very long time, her environment has largely been that of her immediate, local surroundings: her home, her street, her neighbourhood, that is, the area of her own suburb.

Increasingly, though, she is expanding her geographical awareness of the city, as she goes to places she has never gone to before. Visiting the city centre, "[s]he went into Trinity [College]. She hadn't been there in years. She wasn't sure she'd ever been there" (Doyle 2007: 102). She is beginning to view the world differently and her place in it; she is part of a larger whole, learning how to navigate in it:

> South-facing, it said on the packet of seeds.
> –Jesus, Jack, where's the south?
> And he knew. He pointed.
> –How do you know?
> –Well, he said. –The sea's that way and-
> –How do you *know*?
> –It just is. So that means the south is behind us.
> He pointed his thumb over his shoulder.
> –But how do you know? she said.
> She didn't doubt him. She knew he was right.
> –Geography, he said. –It's easy.
> She thought it was great. She watched Jack go to the back door, heading north. She could hear the Dart–and that was west. If she wanted a drink she'd have to head south. She couldn't remember the last time she'd learnt something. Carmel's house was that way, west. America was over the wall, a good long way past Carmel's. It all made sense. She was in the world, surrounded by it. (Doyle 2007: 61)

Paula's recovery involves a discovery at various levels, not least geographically, but it also involves a reaching out to those close to her from whom for a long time she has been alienated, a distance to a great extent created by her alcoholism; this reaching out, in turn, may open up the possibility of forming new and lasting social relationships. Possibly one of the most moving aspects of the novel is Paula's desperate attempts at (re-)establishing bonds with her four children, and she does so by trying to understand them, to read them, in ways that she has never done before. Due to the fact that she has been off the drink for several months, she is able to see them and appreciate them. Still, it is not an easy task, as she has to earn their trust. Nevertheless, she does her utmost as a mother to reconnect, for example, by trying to create a homely atmosphere, or, more often, by chatting to Jack and Leanne in front of the TV in an attempt at communicating with them (e. g., Doyle 2007: 46-47; 66-67). Her attempts with Jack and Leanne are fumbling, implying that it will take some time to reconnect to them. Her attempts with John Paul and Nicola are also fumbling, but it seems that she manages to get further in

her relations with them. Because of his former heroin addiction, John Paul is honest in a way that Paula also tries to be; John Paul even becomes a kind of support for Paula, who needs confirmation that she is on the right track (227-28). Her ties with Nicola seem stronger than with the others, as Nicola has always been the one looking out for Paula, checking to make sure she is still alive. Towards the end, Paula allows her daughter to rub her shoulders, while Nicola allows Paula to touch her, in what I read as life-changing gestures of closeness and healing that would previously have been impossible and that signal a new direction in their lives:

> She puts her hand on Nicola's shoulder. She feels a jab as she lifts her hand. She doesn't let it stop her. She doesn't let it run across her face.
> She feels Nicola tighten, under her fingers. She sees Nicola staring at her arm–as if they're getting into a fight. She feels her bones relax. She sees her look at Paula now, and smile. They're both trying. They're trying to meet. And they know it.
> (Doyle 2007: 254-55)

In addition to trying to repair her strained, or dysfunctional, relationship with her children, Paula's reclaiming of life includes moving closer to her two sisters, and gradually the three of them seem to be able to communicate at a deeper sisterly level than in the past. However, it is when Carmel's breast cancer is made known that Paula allows herself to show sympathy for, or empathy with, her sister. Carmel visits Paula, and again they end up having a personal talk, where Carmel pays tribute to Paula's stamina and new sense of purpose, summed up in Carmel's moving celebratory phrase "You're fuckin' amazing, by the way" (Doyle 2007: 243). Similar to Paula's reconnection with Nicola discussed above, it suggests a new direction in their relationship, as Paula thinks: "She doesn't think they've talked like this before. They're like two people getting to know each other–their first date. Or two old friends who haven't seen each other in years" (Doyle 2007: 239). Paula struggles, then, at a variety of levels, to open up to a life that has been closed to her in so many ways, and the text suggests that it is a battle she is slowly but surely about to win. Moving from a sense of marginalisation and victimisation in a culture blind to her suffering, she is taking the fight, planning ahead and beginning to reclaim her life by reconnecting to the world around her. It is fitting, therefore, that the novel, perhaps too much in the vein of Hollywood endings which Paula seeks but which she is

also suspicious of, ends by opening up to the possibility for her to dare to start a relationship with a new man, who can give her the sense of security and comfort that she has been deprived of. Significantly, the two meet at the humble, everyday place of the recycling station, a metaphor for their own situation which suggests that something new can be created and re-shaped from the old (Doyle 2007: 258-62). Indeed, the novel ends by hinting at a kind of rebirth for Paula, a new life with new opportunities and a sense of togetherness, signalling that she is on her way to recovery: "It's her birthday. She's forty-nine. She bought a cake earlier. It's in the fridge. They'll have it when she gets home" (Doyle 2007: 277).

Conclusion
Most of Roddy Doyle's novels and plays deal with the Irish, particularly Dublin, working-class and the often harsh conditions under which it has lived and under which it continues to live, in a country that has not been willing to acknowledge its existence. The experiences of this segment of the Irish population have until quite recently been silenced and suppressed by official Ireland, as they have not conformed to the official, dominant image of Irishness. As Michael Pierse holds in his exploration of urban Irish working-class literature, deprivation and social injustice, most notably in the shape of marginalisation, unemployment and poverty, so central to urban Irish working-class experience, have not been at the top of the political and cultural agenda, which instead has constructed Ireland as a rural Eden where social division does not exist. Furthermore, taboo issues like alcoholism and spousal abuse have also been avoided, indeed omitted, in the public arena, where instead they have been viewed as private rather than systemic problems, a situation which, it seems safe to argue, has made women particularly vulnerable in that they are most likely to become victims of violence in the home.

People of the urban Irish working-class, then, are victims of what Pierse terms "social invisibility" (2011: 248), and they are what Lehner calls "silenced subaltern voices" (2011: 186). Doyle's novels, I would argue, insist on uncovering this invisibility and unearthing these silenced voices, and in that process create what Lehner refers to as "counter-histor[ies]" (2011: 185), disruptive narratives that become alternatives to the dominant ones. As Linden Peach contends, much recent Irish fiction

brings "what has been silenced out of silence, and what has been marginalized out of the margins" (2004: 221), and Doyle has for some time been at the forefront of that cultural transformative process. *Paula Spencer*, the sequel to *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, is no exception. Focusing on a working-class woman, a victim of marginalisation, poverty, unemployment, alcoholism and spousal abuse, the novel brings to the surface a reality that is in stark contrast to the alleged success of the Celtic Tiger era. Interestingly, when asked in an interview about the success of his and Bisi Adigun's 2007 rewriting of J. M. Synge's play *The Playboy of the Western World*, Doyle states that "[i]ronically a play that's steeped in deprivation and the parochial seemed to have more relevance in a time of plenty and globalism" (Allen Randolph 2010: 149). *Paula Spencer*, as I read it, also addresses deprivation at various levels at a time when, according to economists and politicians, capitalist globalism is hailed as the key to a better world. As Paula herself realises, the wealth of the Celtic Tiger has not trickled down to her in any significant manner; instead, there are signs that those groups on the margins of this social order are worse off, in that they have to rely on badly paid jobs outside the system. Moreover, they are at a greater risk at losing out, as social services, such as schools and public health service, may either be closed down or be of highly inadequate standard.

As I have shown, Paula manages to recover from her marginalisation, including her alcoholism and the effects of Charlo's beatings, and to take control of her life, which, to echo Susan Cahill, opens up "the possibilities of radically new futures" (2011: 188). However, she does so despite a culture that has turned a blind eye to, and neglected, working-class experience such as Paula's and despite the fact that she is a woman in a rigidly gendered, patriarchal society that refuses to see the abuse of which she has been a victim. Lehner holds that one of the aims of many recent Irish texts is to "articulate and negotiate experiences of disempowerment, marginalisation and oppression" (2011: 186). By insisting on bringing Paula's hidden existence into the centre, Doyle's novel *Paula Spencer*, I would argue, participates in such a negotiation, and by doing so, it is, as Pierse phrases it, "a literary disruption, contestation and subversion of the established order" (2011: 257).

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"I'm sick of my own country": Ethics and aesthetics in James Joyce's "The Dead"

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In the last two decades James Joyce's art has been increasingly re-investigated in terms of its cultural content. Of central interest to many of these studies are the partially constrained cultural boundaries, and just as importantly, the partial ineffectiveness of cultural constraints, in late-colonial Ireland. What is argued is that an Anglo-Irish / Gaelic-Irish dichotomy, or two competing stories, is represented in Joyce's art in a way that invites a closer investigation of Irish cultural relations, being that the studies in question suggest cultural configurations that are not fully constrained by a colonial dichotomy. As this suggests, the representations of cultural boundaries in Joyce's art are of particular interest in a contemporary context.

Subsequently, there are three windows in James Joyce's "The Dead" that organise important boundaries in the short story. Firstly, there is the window in the Morkan's drawing-room at 15 Usher's Island which offers a view of the 'north' of the city of Dublin. This is a window from which Gabriel Conroy's view is undisclosed, while his imaginary gaze is drawn towards Phoenix Park to the 'west' of the Morkan's rented residence, and specifically, to a symbol of Anglo-Irish importance, the Wellington Monument (Joyce 1994: 34). Secondly, there is the 'west' facing window of the Gresham Hotel from which Gabriel both looks "down into the street" (53), again his view is undisclosed, and from the bed, where he ponders his journey 'westwards' (59).This time, the imaginary view is enriched with universal symbols of Ireland which are foreshadowed, earlier in the short story, with Gaelic-Irish significance.[1]

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[1] A useful starting point regarding this discussion is Ahmet Sűner's "Ireland, Literature, and Truth: Heideggerian Themes in 'The Dead'" (2009).

These conjoined but, antagonising[2] alternate views that Gabriel embodies in the short story are poignantly captured by Declan Kiberd when he writes: "in a land where there were two contested versions of reality, neither side enjoyed complete dominance" (2006: 19). As there is no reference in "The Dead" to anything other than Gabriel's abhorrence of the west of Ireland, his journey westwards in the final epitaph comes as something of a surprise; a partial submittal perhaps, to the part of his wife's biography that he would rather forget.

On the other hand, Gretta Conroy also looks out of the Gresham Hotel window with her view also being undisclosed (Joyce 1994: 54), and subsequently, declares a third window (57), that of her grandmother's house which bears no particular orientation, and her view is blocked by the rain, and just as likely, condensation. Importantly, unlike Gabriel, who hears nothing other than snow falling (59), (inferring that he hears nothing at all in what was a busy city environment; "they were standing on the crowded platform" [51]), Gretta remembers hearing stones hitting the glass, and "ran [...] out the back [...] and there was the poor fellow at the end of the garden, shivering (57). This strongly suggests that the busy street scene of which she overlooks from the window of the Gresham Hotel is within the scope of her consciousness, while being at the same time, beyond Gabriel's consciousness. While they both look out of the west facing window of the Gresham Hotel, albeit separately, the range of memories that the street scene is capable of evoking for them is aesthetically distanced, even though they are looking through the same frame.

Of importance, is that while Gabriel and Gretta are conjoined through the name Conroy, a name of great Irish historical and mythological significance, (a point I will return to later), their combined biographies suggests a view from the Gresham Hotel that is partly reducible to the two contested versions of reality discussed by Kiberd. Additionally though, Gretta introduces an 'outside' that is internal to, but is in excess of, these two competing stories. Consequently, of importance is that these three windows offer no actual views in the short story at all, even if they do capture the concepts of imagined and experienced

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[2] Gabriel experiences the 'outside' primarily through contemporary symbols of antagonism, for example: the Wellington Monument (Joyce 1994: 34), "the palace of the Four Courts" (51), the "white man" on O'Connell Bridge (52).

realities exceptionally well. But of interest is that through the conjoining of Gabriel and Gretta's differing biographies from the west facing window of the Gresham Hotel, their marriage from that point on is going to depend on them being able to negate the parts of themselves, and the parts of each other, that are illegitimate within their marriage. The dualisms that they individually represent collapse, leaving, in turn, a lack that is represented by the evoked and inerasable presence of Michael Furey.

This contraction of possibilities is not without interest in a wider social context, and, while the windows of the short story offer no other views than imaginary ones, of interest to this study is that those same imaginary views displace the views made possible by the material structures in the short story. For Gabriel, the northern view available to him from the Misses Morkans is displaced towards the west with a conflated Anglo-Irish symbolism, and for Gretta, her affiliation with the poorer classes is displaced as she reluctantly succumbs to a modern lifestyle on the east-coast of Ireland, with the west of Ireland becoming, at this time, a trope of nationalist sentiments.[3] In this respect, aesthetics and ethics are central themes in the short story that, rather than cancel each other out, are intractably embedded in each other.

"The Dead", if approached in this way, offers both an established view of Irish cultural institutions that extends beyond the time of Joyce's writing, and also, an opportunity to develop alternate perceptions that are internal to, but in excess of, such established views. It will be the task of this essay, therefore, to present evidence that an alternate view may be unpacked that functions in adjacent to, rather than to dislodge, the relevant and important work of experienced colleagues. To facilitate this task, I will draw on the theorising of Jacques Rancière who constructs a radical theory of perception that is useful to this study.

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[3] The west of Ireland, being primarily the only area where the Gaelic language had survived, became a symbol of Gaelic-Irish authenticity, or a displacement of Anglo-Irish / Gaelic-Irish cultural hybridity at this time. Declan Kiberd, in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, offers some excellent insights into this construction. This concept is a central theme in "The Dead" with the suggested trip to the Aran Islands by Miss Ivors, who bears a symbol of the Gaelic League (1995: 32-33).

Windows and perception

In his essay, "The Aesthetic Dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge", Jacques Rancière constructs a radical theory of perception through an alternate *political* configuration of the relations of *the people* (demos) and *power* (kratos), through a radical investigation of the *relations of domination* (aesthesis contra ethos). Furthermore, to concretise his point, Rancière applies a fascinating and useful metaphor, (borrowing from a socialist newspaper in France in 1848), of the artisan, or joiner, rather than the artist, to challenge the relations between the vision of the architect and the power of the sovereign gaze through which the toil of the artisan is displaced by ownership:

> Believing himself at home, [the joiner] loves the arrangement of a room so long as he has not finished laying the floor. If the window opens out onto a garden or commands a view of a picturesque horizon, he stops his arms a moment and glides in imagination towards the spacious view to enjoy it better than the possessors of the neighbouring residences [...] This as if is no illusion. It is a redistribution of [a certain configuration of the] sensible, a redistribution of the parts supposedly played by the higher and the lower faculties, the higher and the lower classes. As such it is the answer to another as if: the ethical order of the city. (2009: 7-8)

There is much that could be said of Rancière's essay. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this essay, it is suffice to draw on the notion that the artisan's view is not wholly determined by the material relations of the (Platonic) ethical city. While the joiner looks through the frame of the window of the unfinished great house, and imagines another set of relations in the world, the way that he is represented on the canvas is disturbed opening up the relations of domination. This aesthetic disturbance introduces a certain instability that is not reducible to any particular social order. Of importance though, in the case of an Irish social order, is that this concept implies a doubling of instability, with an Irish frame enveloping, as Declan Kiberd forcefully puts it, and Gabriel and Gretta symbolise, two competing, but conjoined, stories. For Rancière, this is the aesthetic dimension that is not fully constrained by material relations. Importantly though, the conjoining of two such frames in "The Dead" creates a third option that is foreshadowed by the window in Gretta's grandmother's house, a view that is internal to, but is not wholly constrained by, a northerly or westerly orientation. To realise this potential, I suggest, both window frames must be approached at the same time.

Alternating frames of perception

All approaches to James Joyce's "The Dead" start on a shaky ground with the short story opening with one of the most precarious and over-coded symbols of all, a Lily, leaving even the most confident reader a little unsettled. Additionally, when this symbolic fundament is capped with a sheet of snow in the epitaph, again, the snowflakes being almost uncannily elusive through their lack of coding, any attempt to conclusively contain the Morkan's annual dance possibly reveals more about the reader than the short story itself. Commencing, therefore, from a position where I consider that "The Dead" is configured as open ended, we find ourselves at the Morkan's supper, (as witnesses), passing through the Morkan's party where competing systems of cultural capital are woven together. At the same time, Gabriel Conroy's nervous disposition indicates that his inclusion at the party is dependent on his adjusting to a consensus under a threat of being socially ostracised (Joyce 1994: 32), a situation that Gretta has no doubt also experienced with Gabriel's mother accusing her of being "country cute" (30), (this being a term that bears no element of fondness in a Dublin social context).

Unsurprisingly, therefore, a critical reading of "The Dead" is dependent on both a body of existing literature, or established scholarly views, and a context in which creative adjustments to those views may become manifest. It is necessary, therefore, to outline what I consider may be an agreed stencil regarding the structure and texture of the short story, so that an alternate view may be unpacked. Subsequently, I will begin by drawing on what could be considered to be some banal Joycean truisms. Joyce's solid classical education at Clongowes Wood College needs no explication as it is captured in his semi-autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Furthermore, Joyce's classical education was furthered at University College Dublin where he studied English, French and Italian, and where he extended his already extensive literary knowledge. Consequently, a conclusion may be drawn that any allusions to established classical texts in "The Dead" were more than likely meditated irrespective if those texts can be found in his library or not. This conclusion, I consider, can be extended to ecclesiastical texts without causing too much concern, with such allusions being central to Joyce's oeuvre.

Furthermore, Joyce's encyclopaedic knowledge of Irish historical and mythological texts is equally represented in the literature, and is demonstrated in his lecture in Trieste (Joyce 1959). Additionally, Joyce's in-depth knowledge of contemporary texts, together with his close readings and genial vigour strongly suggests that intertextual allusions are part and parcel of Joyce's stylistic form. Richard Ellmann goes as far as saying that by 1906 "it is clear that the whole idiom of twentieth-century fiction was established in Joyce's mind" (1959: 242). The conclusion that can be drawn, therefore, is that any intertextual traces present in "The Dead" are, without much doubt, the raw material from which Joyce configured the texture of the short story.[4]

Of more interest though, is that Richard Ellmann, without reflecting on the issue, mentions that Joyce, during his the writing of "The Dead", was consuming any textual reference, (newspapers, magazines, and so on), relating to Ireland that he could acquire (1959: 244). John V. Kelleher not only confirms this assertion, but extends it, (having access to Ellmann's library), by adding "clippings, tram tickets, tram schedules, anything at all" (2002: 431). While it is beyond the scope of this essay to examine the extent to which such contemporary sources were utilised in the weaving process of the short story, nevertheless, one example may prove useful to demonstrate my point; a letter to the editor of The New York Times on the 15th of November 1903, signed Alumnus Trinity College, Dublin:

> I am willing to admit that the college boys are more likely to paint the town red than to paint "King Billy" green. But when it is said that Trinity College, Dublin, is notoriously an Orange institution, I beg [...] to dissent from this [...] slanderous [...] statement [....] Instead of being notoriously Orange, it is a notorious fact that Irish people for over 160 years have turned to it for leaders of great national movements, and the great literary men, jurists, and orators have been Trinity College men [....] O'Connell, the greatest of the modern Irish, escaped [...] by the accident of a family connection [....] but those of us who would be willing to stand by the green flag, even unto death, [...] never thought any less of the Gaelic blood in our veins from the fact that we were graduates of [Trinity College]. [There] is a statue of George II in Stephen's Green which your editor might, in an unguarded moment, have naturally confused with that of "King Billy" in College Green, but St. Stephens Green is beyond the range of college raids or enterprise, except when a band of our

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[4] Adrienne Auslander Munich presents a useful example of how subtexts are woven into the fabric of "The Dead".

> boys may escort some prima donna, after a performance at the Opera, to the Shelburne Hotel.

In "The Dead" we read "how the gallery boys would sometimes in their enthusiasm unyoke the horses from the carriage of some great *prima donna* and pull her themselves through the streets to her hotel" (40 emphasis in original). While this quotation is not an exact duplication of the original letter published in The New York Times, it does demonstrate that, either through memory or research, Joyce was employing a contemporary array of sources in the construction of the short story that were woven into the fabric of classical, literary and ecclesiastical allusions. But one point that needs to be considered, drawing from the lessons derived from the symbolic referents of 'Lily' and 'snowflakes', is that some allusions are filled with a certain richness, or ambiguous density, while others, for example, King Billy's statue, introduce a certain complex surface contingency that subverts straightforward readings, such as is exemplified in the above letter.

Together, an ambiguous density and a surface contingency produce an alternating or, 'trembling', fabric on which the story is narrated. This 'trembling' is also partially embodied by Gabriel whose emotions are continually alternating: "trembling with desire" (Joyce 1994: 53), trembling now with annoyance" (54), "a fever of rage" (54), "trembling with delight" (54), "brimming over with happiness" (55), "fires of lust began to grow angrily" (55). Gabriel exhibits an emotional contingency that translates into a nervous disposition throughout the short story. Of importance though, is that the intertextual template discussed, that constructs the underlying fabric on which the short story is grafted, is aesthetically portrayed through the marriage of Gabriel and Gretta. In this respect, the way that their marriage is configured, as discussed at the beginning of this essay, is of much interest.

Furthermore, Gabriel's nervous disposition and reluctance in the short story is also derived from his social position at the party, and demonstrates a partial consensus that is held in place by firstly, his unwillingness to challenge the existing social order, secondly, the frame of "a system of thought" (Haugaard 2003: 89), and thirdly, is re-enforced by the threat of a reconfiguration of knowledge: "[Miss Ivors] whispered into his ear: - West Briton!" (Joyce 1994: 33). Here, what has previously been a legitimate identity threatens to become illegitimate, and Gabriel adheres to a social consensus (both through self-discipline, and by

adapting to the expectations of a changing social order), while his personal biography threatens his inclusion within that same order. What becomes evident is that, for Gabriel, there is no escape from the weave of power and knowledge in the short story. This scene foreshadows Gabriel's unexpected trip to the west of Ireland as, standing with "people [...] in the snow outside" (42) carries some very serious consequences, (a point I will return to later). Either way, intertextual allusions in "The Dead", whether exhibiting a dense or surface texture, provide an opportunity for the text to be opened out and read in a multitude of ways.

With this in mind, one useful example of such a configuration can be found in John V. Kelleher's "Irish History and Mythology in James Joyce's 'The Dead'" where he makes two very useful, and two very different points. The first point draws attention to the notion that an allusion need not be complete for it to be present in the short story (2002: 421). To exemplify this point Kelleher presents a very compelling argument for the extensive, but incomplete, allusion, of the pseudo-historical and mythological legend of *The Destruction of Dá Derga's Hostel*.[5] In this respect, historical and literary texts, often drawing their

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[5] The pseudo historical / mythological version of this story is represented in the "Annals" in 14 A.D. Following a massacre of the house of Conaire Mór, a disillusioned people offered the sovereignty to Morann, a respected scholar. Morann refused the offer, however, arguing that the three legitimate heirs of the massacred nobles of the house of Conaire Mór must be returned to their thrones (O'Donovan 1990: 95). The three Kingdoms to be reformed were the provinces of Ulster, Munster and Leinster, with Connacht being incorporated into Ulster, and thereby temporarily losing its importance (O'Donovan 1990: 94-5; O'Curry 1873: xxv). After the return of the heirs and their installation as monarchs of three regions, Morann was made chief judge of Ireland. Being the bearer of the chain of Idh (which strangled the accused if they lied, or expanded if they told the truth), he was awarded power over truth and therefore the power to arrest illegitimate knowledge (O'Donovan 1990: 96). Of interest is that Conroy is a derivative of Conaire (Woulfe 2010: 479), and Morkan is a derivative of Morann (Woulfe 2010: 623). According to the bards, the lack of rightful heirs created a void that sent Ireland into a spiral of decay, and the massacre of the nobles is described as a time when an established social order lost control to subaltern groups. Furthermore, the appointment of Morann as chief judge ensured that scholars gained a privileged position within the social order as they were invested with the power to suppress illegitimate elements of discourse (O'Donovan 1990: 97).

origins from John O'Donovan's translation of the *Annals of The Kingdom of Ireland*, (and echoed extensively by educators and Irish Literary Revivalists at that time), conflate with other important literary texts forming an intertextual template onto which other textual traces are woven. The extent of the weaving of mythology, history and literature in Irish society at that time should not be underestimated as is demonstrated below by the table of contents in the Christian Brothers *Irish History Reader*, being a book that was utilised in many Catholic primary schools throughout Ireland in 1905.

CONTENTS.

[The titles of poetical pieces are in *italics*.]

Figure 1 (Irish History Reader iii)

Christian Brother education, as clearly demonstrated by Dáire Keogh (2008), was the ideological fodder of the lower-classes, and as pointed out by Richard Ellmann, Joyce was empirically well acquainted with this

sphere of Irish society, even though Ellmann states, "Joyce chose never to remember this interlude [...] in his writings" (1959: 35). When considering the examples of intertextual weaving discussed by Kelleher, and comparing them with the history syllabus as presented above, this would be a point that I would have to dispute.

Of importance though, in a wider social context, is the process of organising elements of history, mythology, literature and genealogy into a relational field that:

> [Furthers] the sacred cause of nationhood. After religious instruction, there is no more effective instrument in the education of youth than that which the reading lessons present; and the efficient and cultured teacher will never fail to utilise to the full the advantages which they afford him for cultivating the intelligence and directing the will of his pupils. (*Irish History Reader* 2011: vii)

While this is not the type of education afforded to Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (with the experiences of Stephen being semi-autobiographical), and more than likely neither, therefore, afforded Gabriel, as like Joyce, who was educated in a Catholic university, Gabriel "had taken his degree in the Royal University" (Joyce 1994: 30). Michael Furey on the other hand, if having received an education at all, would have received an education similar to that portrayed in the *Irish History Reader*, and through him, if in no other way, so did Gretta Conroy.

The point being, differing educations are not reducible to an Anglo-Irish / Gaelic-Irish dualism in the short story, but are internal to that same dualism. Gabriel's rebuke, ""I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" (Joyce 1994: 32), only exemplifies the sense of cultural affinity afforded to Gabriel, (a cultural affinity that is juxtaposed by the writer of the letter to The New York Times earlier), in turn, demonstrating a binding, as well as an antagonising boundary shared by the more advantaged members of Dublin society as represented in the short story. Of more importance though, is that this 'antagonistic bond' functions to dispel the bond expected of Gabriel towards, what Miss Ivors claims is, his "own people" (32). This complex 'ethical' relationship is, as demonstrated earlier, aesthetically portrayed through the marriage of Gabriel and Gretta Conroy. While this analysis does not claim to extend beyond the boundaries of "The Dead", it does open up some thought provoking and

useful angles from which 'aesthetics' and 'ethics' can be viewed in the context of the short story.

Subsequently, as Gabriel states that the other guests' "grade of culture differed from his" (Joyce 1994: 24), and as Joyce utilises, with great sophistication, historical, mythological and contemporary sources in "The Dead", it is of interest to identify the range of cultural inclusiveness that the Morkan's invitation only annual dance entertains, that is, with Gabriel and Gretta representing the cultural margins of the event. As the view afforded by the union of Gabriel and Gretta is drawn towards a 'westerly' view, with Gabriel glancing "left and right nervously [...] under the ordeal" (32), I will present a genealogical analysis of the guests from the archives of the Gaelic League.

The guests include a Mr Bartell D'Arcy who is a descendant of the first Chief Justice of Ireland, a John D'Arcy (Woulfe 2010: 241), while Mr. Clancy is a descendant of a family of Chief Judges (Woulfe 2010: 363). Additionally, Mr Bergin is descended from the chiefs of the Barony of Geashill in county Offaly (Woulfe 2010: 550). Mr Kerrigan, Mr Kilkelly and Mr Clancy, for their part, are all descendants of ancient Gaelic families from Connacht (Woulfe 2010: 363, 369, 462), connecting them with Miss Ivors' trip to the Aran Islands.[6] Equally significant is the appearance of Miss Daly, who descends from a bardic family (Woulfe 2010: 493), together with a Miss Power who is a descendant of the first Normans to arrive with Strongbow and were awarded county Waterford for their services (Woulfe 2010: 271-72). Furthermore, Mrs Cassidy is a descendant of an ancient and established medical family (Woulfe 2010: 448), while Miss Higgins derives from one of the most distinguished literary families in Ireland (Woulfe 2010: 576). Georgina Burns is a descendant of the kings of Leinster, a powerful family that became refuged in county Wicklow and carried out attacks on the British establishment in Dublin for 300 years (Woulfe 2010: 444). Miss O'Callaghan is a descendant of a king of Munster (Woulfe 457) and Miss Furlong is descendant of an old and respected Anglo-Irish family from county Wexford (Woulfe 2010: 289).

Kathleen Kearney, who will be following Miss Ivors to "the Aran Isles" (Joyce 1994: 31-2), is a descendant of a noble ecclesiastical family who once had a high position at Cashel Castle (Woulfe 2010: 460).

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[6] Ivors has two origins, one Norse and one Gaelic (Woulfe 2010: 570).

Furthermore, Malins derives from an ecclesiastical family who were the hereditary keepers of the bell of St. Patrick known as the bell of the testament (Woulfe 2010: 615). His adversary and partner, Mr Browne, being a "man for the ladies" (Joyce 1994: 27), is an old Norman surname (Woulfe 2010: 249). Not coincidentally, one of the most famous and successful Irish military leaders of the Wild Geese was a Field Marshall Maximilian Ulysses Browne[7] (McLaughlin 1980: 29), who was related to a number of ex-patriot military leaders of the same name with careers spreading from Austria to Russia (Stone 2006: 64). Importantly, the elevated social status of the group is extended through an elevated historical cultural status, and this is not without interest when considering both the way in which the short story is textured, and the historical context in which it was written, as a combined social and cultural status carries material, as well as cultural consequences.

The second point of relevance made by Kelleher is that one is left with a certain nagging doubt when configuring a reading of "The Dead", as if one is missing something that is almost visible, but never really manages to manifest itself in the scholarly study at hand (2002: 416). Kelleher's view, I would draw attention to, is directed through the bedroom window of the Gresham Hotel where Gabriel Conroy ponders his "journey westward" (Joyce 1994: 59). Kelleher is not alone at pondering this view with interpretations ranging from, among others, Galway, to further afield such as to trade routes on the Atlantic seaboard.[8]

My assertion of Kelleher's view being 'westerly' is additionally supported by his research into Lily's pronunciation of Gabriel's surname, Conroy, which, in the short story, consists of three syllables (Joyce 1994: 23). Kelleher relies on the genealogical archive of the Gaelic league, which, in turn, differs to that of scholars in Ulster at that time, such as

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[7] Field Marshall Maximilian Ulysses Browne was a trope utilised by the Irish poets of the 18th century, where Browne is likened to the mythological figure of Fionn Mac Cumhaill (O'Ciardha 2002: 338-39).

[8] Luke Gibbons presents a very thought provoking case for reconsidering how this westerly view should be interpreted in "The Dead", stating "Miss Ivors' enthusiasm for an excursion to the Aran Islands can be seen as reclaiming the west of Ireland from romanticism for a modernising project in keeping with the resurgent energies of Joyce's own generation" (2007: 369).

John O'Hart.[9] Kelleher maintains that the three syllables is a result of Lily using the working class variant "Mr. Connery" (44). This, I maintain, is derived from a 'westerly' view which, in turn, creates, to begin with, at least one blind spot. I refer to the 'northerly' view offered to Gabriel from the window in the drawing-room of the Morkan's drawing-room.[10]

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[9] Rev. Patrick Woulfe and John O'Hart's projects re-assemble differing genealogical histories from the void that existed at that time. Even though Woulfe's final work was not published until 1923, he was involved in the Gaelic leagues project since 1898, and published his first work, without notes, in 1906. The biography used in his work is extensive though, and leans almost entirely on sources available prior to 1907, and therefore would have been available to Joyce. Interestingly though, John O'Hart's comprehensive study is not present among his references, and being a work completed at Queen's University in Belfast, it might offer evidence of the hostile climate of that time. Of importance though is the genealogical variant of Furey, or Fury, (names had received different spellings in different documents and genealogists at that time attempted to conflate different variants into standardised forms), which does not exist within the Gaelic league's project. Patrick Woulfe had been unable to identify the origins of the name, even though he made some openly unsubstantiated guesses as to its Gaelic-Irish origins (2010: 526-27). However, John O'Hart, relying on court records, more convincingly claims that the name is of Huguenot origin (1892: 487). Dublin was host to a large and established Huguenot community (Lee 2008: 215). Furthermore, the Huguenot's were utilised by Anglo-Irish sources at that time to deconstruct the Gaelic Leagues project (Smith 1905: 220). Subsequently, the Huguenot's were not written into a national imaginary until 1936 with the award winning Trinity College dissertation by Lawless Grace Lee.

[10] To the North of the house on Ushers Island is Stoneybatter, or the place where the Morkans "after the death of their brother Pat, had left the house in Stoney Batter" (Joyce 1994: 21); this being "the great thoroughfare to Dublin from the districts lying west and north-west" (Collins 1913: 70). What is striking is the hiatus that Joyce inserts into the spelling of Stoneybatter, a hiatus that is contrary to most literature at that time, (but is repeated in Cyclops [Joyce 2002: 240]). For examples of this see Patrick Weston Joyce's *The Origin and History of Irish Names and Places* (1871: 45), and James Collins *Life in Old Dublin: Historical Associations of Cook Street* (1913: 70-2). An example of Joyce's spelling can be found in John Thomas Gilbert's *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin, in the Possession of the Municipal Corporation of that City* (1905: 12, 223, 227). The hiatus may infer the ellipsis created by the Morkans' absence

As an example, one 'northerly' inquiry into the pronunciation of the name Conroy, (which, in turn, would displace Kelleher's 'westerly' inquiry), would begin by stating that Gabriel's name is, in fact, Conroy, and not Connery. Phonetic research has shown that the linguistic feature mentioned by the narrator is a predominant feature of Ulster intonation where there is a rise at the end of words.[11] Lily's pronunciation can therefore be read as a dialect rather than a sociolect, (or possibly even more provocatively, a dialect and sociolect intersection), and the Morkan's household, while maintaining the class stratification often referred to in the literature, could be interpreted as a regional class stratification centring on Dublin. This is one example of what Kiberd refers to as being two competing stories, where the enforcing of one story, by default, displaces the other.

One is left pondering the critical reception of John Huston's film adaptation of "The Dead" if the opening scene had presented Lily greeting the guests in a broad Ulster dialect. More interestingly though, I would consider, is that such views in "The Dead" are represented as being born by material structures. Here, the high stakes become apparent, and Gabriel and Gretta's conjoined, but alternative, views construct the aesthetic co-ordinates that were heavily relied upon by competing ideological groups at that time, such as The Irish Literary Revival, The Gaelic League, and so on. In this respect, the discomfort experienced by Kelleher may be that of a dissent that is carefully woven into the fabric of the narrative, a dissent that makes demands of the reader to look beyond Gabriel's imaginative westwards pull, and also, beyond the 'northerly' view as exemplified above.

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from the thoroughfare, or their cultural distance from the lower-classes that inhabited the area at the time, as Stoney Batter is a British spelling. Either way, however the ellipsis is to be interpreted, it is persuasively present by its insertion into the short story by Joyce.

[11] A distinctive feature of Ulster intonation is a rise at the end of words (McElholm 1986: 35), which, if coming after a vowel, typically creates an unexpected hiatus when a "vowel or a diphthong is cut into two sections, separated by some sort of a glottal stop and giving the impression of a disyllabic pronunciation" (Wagner 1969: ix).

Gaining a third perspective

If this is the case, how is one to approach the Morkans' household and Gabriel Conroy, their "favourite nephew" (Joyce 1994: 25), while flushing out this dissent that arguably eludes Kelleher, a dissent that is to be internal to, but in excess of, a northerly or westerly view? Furthermore, and possibly even more importantly, how are we to view the Morkan's house that frames the cosmology of the "annual dance" (21), or flush out the uninvited presence that is evoked by Gretta, Michael Furey, without becoming trapped by the alternating views that Gabriel is enslaved to? Firstly, an analysis of the configuration of the house on Ushers Island may prove useful.

The house on Ushers Island is predictably divided into two floors, with the Misses Morkans and their housemaid Lily residing on the top floor, and a British merchant, a Mr Fulham, residing on the bottom floor. The Morkans' floor is divided into two rooms with the meal eaten in "the back room" (Joyce 1994: 27). In the centre of the back room there are "two square tables placed end to end, and on these Aunt Julia and the caretaker were straightening and smoothing a large cloth" (27). "Everybody who knew" the Misses Morkans were invited to the dance and the group includes "members of the family, old friends [...] the members of Julia's choir, any of Kate's pupils [...] and even some of Mary Jane's pupils" (21).

This ensemble includes members of the Gaelic league, such as Miss Ivors who carried on her collar "an Irish device" (Joyce 1994: 30), and who used a standardised Gaelic phrase "*Beannacht libh*" (37), as well as members of both the Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish communities such as Mr Browne who is "of the other persuasion" (36). Also many of Mary Jane's "pupils belonged to better-class families on the Kingstown and Dalkey line" (22).[12] The two tables in the back room, in this context, are assembled to ensure the seating of these two cultural groups around a single table with the tablecloth covering the division that exists between them. Importantly though, the merchant, a Mr Fulham, the landlord, is excluded (22), and already, in the opening paragraphs of "The Dead", a presence is lurking in the building by proxy, an outside that does not

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[12] Kingstown and Dalkey were affluent suburbs with a strong Anglo-Irish presence, which positions a number of the guests culturally closer to Gabriel than Gretta.

succumb to the Morkans' "orders" (39), or yield to the patrons who do not tolerate "back answers" (22).

Such a presence is not reducible to mythology or allusion, but functions as an invitation to examine the configuration of mythology and allusions, or the *established relations* of the Morkan's annual gathering and the template that underpins it. The template, in this case, as Mr Fulham usefully portrays, is organised by the frame of material relations of the city itself. In the short story, there are four geographical coordinates that construct this material frame. These are firstly, the house on Ushers Island where the party is held, secondly, to the east of the house is O'Connell Bridge where Gabriel and Gretta turn north up Sackville Street (now O'Connell street),[13] thirdly there is the Gresham Hotel at the north end of Sackville Street, and fourthly, there is Stoneybatter to the north of Ushers Island, and to the west of the Gresham Hotel. Of particular interest though, is that while the geographical coordinates organised by the windows of The Morkan's house and the Gresham Hotel intersect in Stoneybatter, a place that the Morkan's had left, they do not intersect in a place of inconsequence; that is, they intersect in the south-eastern corner of the grounds at of the Richmond District Lunatic Asylum.[14]

In both an Irish and a literary sense, the asylum accords Gretta's, almost insignificant, declaration, "he was in decline, she said, or something like that" (Joyce 1994: 57), a tintinnabulous density that reverberates the entire texture of short story.[15] In 1909, R. Barry O'Brien

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[13] Luke Gibbons makes the very interesting point that the "white man" (Joyce 1994: 52) that Gabriel refers to when crossing O'Connell bridge is an allusion to the rebellious Whiteboys of the 18th century, as is the white horse referred to by Miss O'Callaghan as a symbol of King William's charger (1996: 145).

[14] Maps at this time were not completely accurate, with a modern satellite cross-reference showing that the grounds of the Richmond District Lunatic Asylum are actually some meters to the north of the intersection point, which would, just as interestingly, make the intersection point Saint Mary's Industrial Training School for neglected, abandoned or orphaned children. But a cross reference between many maps from, and prior to, the period, all demonstrate a similar margin of error indicating that the point of intersection, is with all probability, within the grounds of the Asylum.

[15] By employing this single phrase, reference is made to the steady decline in the Irish population starting with the Great Famine (Whelan 2002: 70), also to a widespread discussion on racial decline marked by the rapidly growing levels of

referred to this density as "the three scourges that afflict Ireland, Emigration, Tuberculosis and Lunacy" (315), which captures, rather bluntly, the immense importance of Gretta's comment, and of Gabriel's sad but simple question "Consumption, was it?" (Joyce 1994: 56), to the weaving of the short story as a whole.

Furthermore, this entire area of Stoneybatter was not, as is sometimes suggested, just an area populated by the lower-classes, but the most expansive and condensed area of its sort in Ireland combining all of the technologies facilitated by imperial modernity; that is, prisons, workhouses, lunatic asylums, orphanages and poor hospitals (Kelly 2007: 109; Malcolm 2003: 315-16). This area is displayed in Figure 2, and for clarity, also in a map of protected structures within the site in Figure 3. Of interest is that the point of intersection is in the north-west corner of Figure 2, being the area shared by the Church of Ireland Chapel, and the Roman Catholic Church, that served the internees at that time, (with separate male and female infirmaries being placed on either side of the Roman Catholic Church).[16]

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what was considered to be insanity (Malcolm 2003: 327, 333). These two examples are foreshadowed by Jonathan Swift who relates the decline of mental and physical health to relations of domination (1768: 9), and who is a central figure regarding asylums, literature, and ethics, in Dublin.

[16] The boundaries of management between the asylum, the work house and the prison were very diffuse, with all these institutions incorporating each other's functions up to a given point. But of interest is that by 1907 it is reported that the conditions in Richmond District Lunatic Asylum were chronically overcrowded with "constant outbreaks of zymotic disease [and] dysentery [being] almost endemic in this institution" (Kelly 2007: 109). It is also reported that in the North Dublin Workhouse "the provision for the inmates of the lunatic departments is truly deplorable. The overcrowding is very marked [...] The female ward for 'healthy lunatics' is 'little more than a dungeon, ventilation is inadequate, and the beds are laid upon wooden trestles. The patients are obliged to take their meals in this repelling place" (Kelly 2007: 112). Consequently conditions were reported as being far harsher than similar institutions in other parts of the country (Kelly 2007: 112), and being compounded by a "large floating population" (Kelly 2007: 113). Elizabeth Malcolm interestingly points out that there was a widespread social awareness of the institutions, with farmers and shopkeepers having vested interests because of the pressures of funding, and states "despite the creation of a more representative form of asylum

Figure 2: (Permission to reprint this map was kindly granted by www.workhouses.org.uk)

administration after 1898, buildings continued to deteriorate, facilities were not improved and overcrowding increased" (2003: 323).
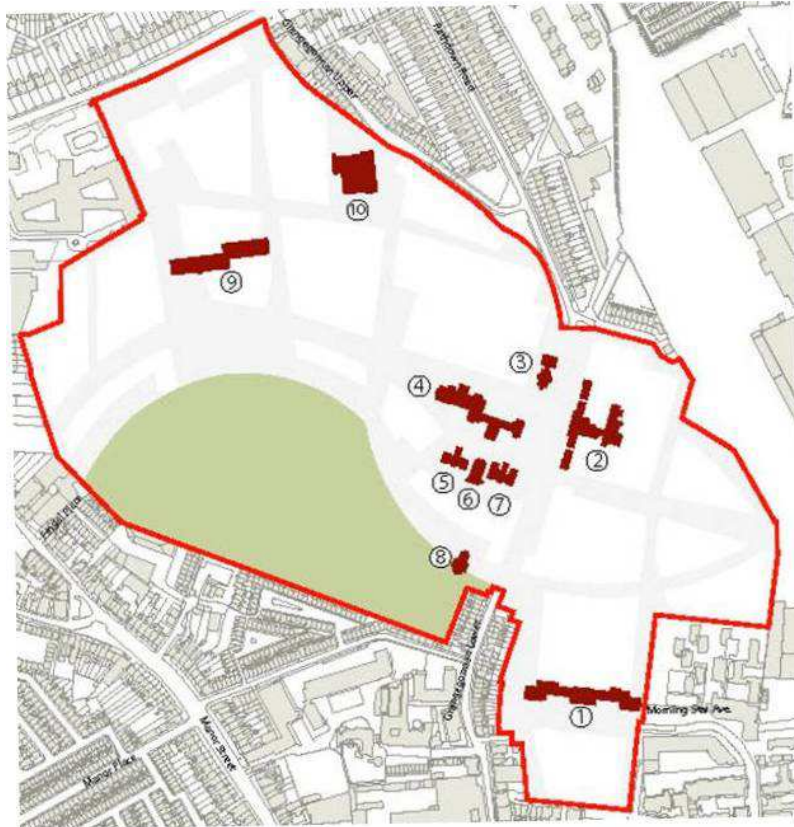
Figure 3: 1 Lower House, 2 Clock Tower, 3 Mortuary, 4 Female House, 5 Male Infirmary, 6 RC Church, 7 Female Infirmary, 8 Church of Ireland Chapel, 9 Top House, 10 Laundry Building. ("Grangegorman")

Importantly, as Gabriel and Gretta portray the aesthetic boundaries of the short story, these four co-ordinates mark the boundary of material relations of the short story. As such, these boundaries are not collapsible within the frame of their marriage, being inasmuch the ethical frame that makes their marriage possible to begin with.

Subsequently, these 'ethical relations' are displaced as they are aesthetically represented by the inerasable presence of Michael Furey, a "reminder of shameful consciousness of [Gabriel's] own person" (Joyce 1994: 56) evoked through a "veiled voice" (56). Neither is it just a

question of going 'outside' as another window in the short story suggests:

> He was standing with her in the cold, looking in through a grated window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace. Her face, quite fragrant in the cold air, was quite close to his; and suddenly she called out [....] –Is the fire hot, sir? But the man could not hear her [....] it was just as well. He might have answered rudely. (52)

The juxtaposing of a freezing 'outside' and an alternating 'inside' depicted in the above example is not reducible to a geographical distance, but of a distance far more elusive, as it represents the ethical relations of the short story itself. Mr Browne demonstrates the reverse side of this coin when he "assumed a very low Dublin accent so that the young ladies, with one instinct, received his speech in silence" (Joyce 1994: 27). Subsequently, as the above example suggests, anger is the emotion that may fill the space from 'low Dublin', which is in turn, returned by the young ladies performance of silence from 'high Dublin'. Importantly, Gretta's invigorated complexion offers no means of consolation to anyone other than Gabriel.

Furthermore, this is also a useful indicator regarding the hiatus that Joyce inserts into the spelling of Stoney Batter, as such a gap confers strongly with the actual experiences imposed on the inmates of these institutions, being displaced from their families, and in many cases, from the city itself. Therefore, as aesthetically conveyed by the marriage of Gabriel and Gretta whose relationship is a failed aesthetic reducible to the two contested stories as discussed by Kiberd, ("he had never felt [love] towards any woman" [Joyce 1994: 59], which is, incidentally, also the condition for Gretta's union with Gabriel), this hiatus is also an ethical failure between the parts of the city that is displaced by an Irish cosmology, being internal to it.

Consequently, there is no doubt of the suffering of those individuals that Gabriel imagines "perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows" (Joyce 1994: 42). There is also no doubt that for Gabriel to stand in the street with them, "in the pure air" (42), would result in a completely different relationship with his family and friends. But of *real* importance is that there is no doubt that people *are* shivering in the streets outside when Gabriel and Gretta look out of their 'northerly' and 'westerly' facing windows, as, actually, they have always been there, inasmuch as they have never left. As such, if

Rancière's radical investigation of the relationship between aesthetics and ethics is to be usefully employed in an Irish context, it will not be by juxtaposing the two, but rather by making visible their relational dependency, in turn, keeping Michael Furey firmly within the frame of our minds.

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Culture, alienation and social classes

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The book published in English as *Search for a Method* was included as part of the French edition of *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*. *Search for a Method* could serve as a preface to either *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* or Sartre's several volume study of Flaubert entitled *The Family Idiot*. This book provides an introduction to a dialectical version of psychoanalysis, sociology and what Sartre refers to as the "ideology" of Existentialism. *Search for a Method* takes on the appearance of being a Marxist work, but it is really a debate with Marxism. Sartre later claimed that he had never been a Marxist. His primary task in *Search for a Method* was a defense of Existentialism. This point is made clear in his highly critical remarks about Georg Lukacs's. Sartre was also responding to criticisms of Existentialism by French Marxists like Henri Lefebvre. Sartre suggests that Marxism is a philosophy that expresses the basic philosophical conception of capitalism while Existentialism is an ideology which exists within the framework of the philosophy of Marxism and articulates the reality of the individual as a mode of Being in the world.

In his debate with Marxism, Sartre attempts to formulate the grounds for the intelligibility of culture in relation to historical totalization. In his attempt to formulate the dialectics of individual praxis and history, he elaborates a theory of social class and human agency. From the point of view of this analysis, two particular aspects of his theory are of interest: his conceptions of praxis and the practico-inert.

Sartre does not reify the concept of culture; his is a theory of mediation, in which he attempts to establish the singular unity of individual praxis and history:

> The dialectical totalization must include acts, passions, work, and need as well as economic categories; it must at once place the agent or the event back into the historical setting, define him in relation to the orientation of becoming, and determine exactly the meaning of the present as such. (Sartre 1962: 133)

The ordinariness of culture is defined by its negation, by forces and structures limiting freedom.

In opposition to culture as the "field of the given," Sartre posits human freedom as the need to go beyond the historical facticity of reified institutions and the social relations of scarcity. In this context, need is understood as lack, and freedom (in the form of praxis) attempts to surpass the condition of scarcity.

In this formulation of the problem, culture is presented as contradiction and struggle. In terms of Sartre's notion of the project, the subjectivity of human experience and practice violates and struggles against objective restraints upon freedom and becoming. At the same time, Sartre posits history as the product of the objectification of praxis. Men and women both produce and are produced by their own practices. Historical totalization is the struggle between freedom and the reified world of the practico-inert. In other words, men and women both exteriorize interiority and interiorize exteriority.

As I will argue, this particular formulation of the problem involves the positing of an ontological conception of freedom. For Sartre, freedom takes the form of a universal in relation to particular fields of institutional restraint. Freedom is understood on the level of a universal precondition in relation to a particular historical condition of the possibility of individual and collective praxis.

Before pursuing this criticism, I will first examine the more concrete analysis contained in Sartre's formulation. This analysis concerns the relationship between the individual and history. In this formulation, Sartre attempts to integrate the approaches of psychoanalysis, sociology, and existentialism within the theoretical and political perspective of Marxism. He attempts to incorporate these disciplines within Marxism and, in doing so, he extends the perspective of Marxism. This enterprise is both polemical and theoretical in scope. His polemic is written in opposition to the positivist and mechanistic versions of Marxism which had become popular within the French Communist Party in the 1950s.

Sartre's appropriation of psychoanalysis to Marxism is not another version of the synthesis of Freud and Marx, similar to those developed by the Frankfurt School. Instead, he attempts to appropriate psychoanalysis into a Marxist analysis. In doing so, he intends the domains of investigation to include the family and childhood. In opposition to mechanistic Marxism, Sartre remarks:

> As we read them, everything seems to happen as if men experienced their alienation and their reification first in their own work, whereas in actuality each one lives it first, as a child, in his parents' work. (Sartre 1963: 62)

His attempt here is to grasp the significance of childhood.

His analysis avoids the scientist dogma often associated with psychoanalysis. His interest is in disclosing the relationship between childhood and the social totalization each child enters into through his/her experiences within the family:

> The family in fact is constituted by and in the general movement of History.
>
> (Sartre 1963: 62)

According to this formulation, the opaqueness of working class life (in all of its alienation) does not begin at the moment that the worker enters the factory, but is rather mediated through the family he/she is born into. The objective conditions of working class life are lived first on the level of childhood.

The Marxist appropriation of psychoanalysis enables Sartre to formulate the relationship between biography and history. It provides grounds for the formulation of the relationship between concrete social practice and historical totalization:

> Psychoanalysis, working within a dialectical totalization, refers on the one side to objective structures, to material conditions, and on the other to the action upon our adult life of the childhood we never wholly surpass. (Sartre 1963: 63-64)

The version of psychoanalysis expressed here has been reconstituted in relation to the Marxist problematic. It is not the psychoanalysis practiced by analysts in either treatment or research. This version of psychoanalysis discovers only particular facts in isolation. It never grasps history.

The reconstituted version of psychoanalysis formulated by Sartre is not confined to the study of sexuality or neurosis. In fact, this formulation of psychoanalysis does not have a distinctive domain of its own. It rather constitutes a moment within the dialectical understanding of society. If such an understanding is to be adequate, objects of study (such as the family and childhood) must be reciprocally connected with other domains of social practice:

> The child experiences more than just his family. He lives also—in part through the family—the collective landscape which surrounds him. (Sartre 1962: 79)

Sartre moves from the appropriation of psychoanalysis to the appropriation of the domain of sociology.

In a similar fashion, Sartre does not incorporate either the positivist findings or theoretical framework of bourgeois sociology. Instead, he appropriates its object of study:

> At the level of the relations of production and at that of political-social structures, the unique person is found conditioned by his human relations… The person lives and knows his condition more or less clearly through the groups he belongs to. The majority of these groups are local, definite, immediately given. It is clear, in fact, that the factory worker is subject to the pressure of his "production group", but if, as is the case at Paris, he lives rather far from his place of work, he is equally subject to the pressure of his "residential group". (Sartre 1963: 66)

Sartre's interest here is not with particular findings. Instead, he is interested in social and institutional relations as objective conditions influencing social and political practice. These collectives exist both as objective structures and as the subjective conditions of life.

He argues that thus far the practice of sociology has served the interests of the capitalist class against the working class and that it is an instrument made use of in the control of the working class. According to this argument, sociology is not merely the scientific practice of collecting social facts, nor the formulation of general theories of society. Such practices express particular and not universal interests. Sociology serves the interests of capital's need for control and does not express the universality of science. This is particularly evident to Sartre in the fields of urban and industrial sociology, although he concludes that it also applies to the entire practice of bourgeois sociology in less obvious ways.

After attacking the ideologically embedded practices of sociology, he suggests that a Marxist appropriation of its object domain would serve the interests of the working class against the interests of capital. He argues that a Marxist sociology could be used by the working class in their struggle against capital. Sartre does not spell out the concrete details of how the working class might use sociology as an instrument in its struggle for working class power. One conceivable level of this appropriation is the formulation of counter-ideology through the intellectual apparatuses of working class parties and trade unions.

Concerning the ideological struggle, a Marxist sociology could also engage the predominant bourgeois ideology within the universities and political journalism.

The Marxist version of sociology which Sartre outlines would represent the particular interests of the working class in opposition to the particular interests of capital. According to this argument, a Marxist appropriation of sociology would not express universal interests, since capitalist society is divided into antagonistic classes. According to Sartre's conception, the proletariat is a particular class on the way to becoming a universal class. The notion of universal interest is not conceivable within capitalist society. For Sartre, socialism represents the possibility of attaining a condition of social existence where universal interests might find expression. The achievement of socialism is in no sense inevitable; it expresses an historical possibility.

In a similar fashion to the Marxist appropriation of psychoanalysis, Sartre argues for the appropriation of sociology to the Marxist problematic. As in the case of psychoanalysis, sociology can not merely be absorbed into Marxism. Nor can sociology exist as an autonomous discipline within Marxism. According to his formulation, sociology would be transformed and reconstituted as a moment of the dialectical understanding of historical totalization. Its positivist, theoretical perspectives and methodology would have to be discarded. As in the case of psychoanalysis, the Marxist appropriation of sociology would be in terms of the inclusion of its object of study within the working class political struggle against capitalism.

In Sartre's formulation, the appropriation of psychoanalysis and sociology is intelligible as a movement toward the dialectical formulation of the relationship between individual praxis and historical totalization. This theoretical enterprise involves both the specificity of the concrete social practices of culture and the larger historical process. The aim of Sartre's analysis is to make the connection between culture and history intelligible. It is to surpass the apparent separation between culture and history. Individual praxis is understood as a moment of dialectical intelligibility.

According to Sartre, orthodox Marxism has dissolved the concrete praxis of individuals into a metaphysical conception of social classes and history. For Sartre, this transformation within Marxism represents the re-emergence of idealism within Marxism. According to his reading of the

predominant contemporary Marxist analysis, this analysis begins with a series of dogmatic assumptions as to the nature of historical change. Contemporary Marxists have transformed social class into a metaphysical Being which acts in accordance with scientific laws of history. The concrete praxis of individuals is excluded from the version of Marxism which Sartre polemicizes against.

The central point of his analysis is to reintroduce individual and collective praxis into Marxist political analysis. In order to do this, he relies upon his own existential conception of individual consciousness and freedom. He asserts the irreducible primacy of these conceptions:

> A product of his product, fashioned by his work and by the social conditions of production, man at the same time exists in the milieu of his products and furnishes the substance of the "Collectives" which consume him. (Sartre 1963: 79)

By means of the ideology of Existentialism, Sartre reintroduces the praxis of the individual into history.

In this formulation of Existential Marxism, history is analyzed in terms of the praxis of individuals and collectives. The insertion of Existentialism into Marxism insists upon the conclusion that men and women are both the subjects and objects of history. However, they do not make history as isolated individuals, but in relation to a collective struggle within given conditions:

> Now it is in terms of his relation with collectives—that is, in his "social field" considered in its most immediate aspect—that man learns to know his condition. Here again the particular connections are one mode of realizing and of living the universal in its materiality. (Sartre 1963: 78-79)

According to this formulation of the problem, the social Being of a class does not dissolve the existential reality of individual praxis or consciousness. Instead, the individual is transformed by his/her situated praxis. For Sartre, class is always a multiplicity of agents and never a singular unity.

According to this formulation, individual praxis embodies the subjectivity of a trans-individual freedom. Freedom by means of the praxis of individuals goes beyond the given materiality of the world. This materiality is understood as including both the domains of nature and social institutions. On the level of universals, freedom opposes material

scarcity. This condition of scarcity presents itself as both a given fact and as an historical product.

In Sartre's analysis, the concepts of freedom and scarcity are presented on two levels. They are presented as both the universal prior conditions determining human praxis and the specific historical conditions in which concrete praxis takes place. On the level of the universal, they provide ontological grounds for the meaning of human existence. They constitute the dialectic of freedom and necessity. This dialectic is the formulation of a political problem in philosophic terms.

These universal conceptions form a frame of reference for the analysis of individual and group praxis. In this analysis, Sartre continually moves back and forth between the domains of concrete social praxis and the universal preconditions of this activity. The universal categories of freedom and scarcity are posited as the underlying explanation for human praxis. As categories, they form the prior condition for the understanding of events and actions.

Within his analysis, individual subjects are formulated as the agents of historical change. Within historically defined circumstances, human actors produce and reproduce the social world. They act in combination and in relation to other subjects:

> For us man is characterized above all by his going beyond a situation, and by what he succeeds in making of what he has been made – even if he never recognizes himself in his objectification. (Sartre 1963: 91)

Human subjects do not merely adapt to given circumstances; they go beyond these circumstances.

Individual subjects are analyzed by Sartre in relation to objective conditions limiting the range of choices immediately available. These constraints are referred to as "the practico-inert." However, this domain of limitation or restraint is never absolute. Instead, this field constitutes an historical condition to be surpassed through human praxis:

> It is by transcending the given toward the field of possible and by realizing one possibility from among all the others that the individual objectifies himself and contributes to making History. (Sartre 1963: 93)

The history made results from the objectified surpassing of this given field.

The objective conditions of social life exist as alterity. Although these conditions result from prior objectifications of human praxis, they are often experienced as forces external to human design or control. Sartre's analysis attempts to go beyond these appearances by restoring the relationships and activities which constituted them:

> Thus man makes History; this means that he objectifies himself in it and is alienated in it. In this sense History, which is the proper work of all activity and of all men, appears to men as a foreign force exactly insofar as they do not recognize the meaning of their enterprise (even when locally successful) in the total, objective result. (Sartre 1963: 89)

According to this conception, alienation does not result from the isolated praxis of an individual. It results from a particular organization of society, which in turn determines the ability of subjects to comprehend the underlying social relations and forces.

The particular organization of capitalist society forms a field of denied possibilities for individual workers. These denied possibilities are formulated by Sartre as the negation of freedom:

> Every man is defined negatively by the sum total of possibles which are impossible for him; that is by a future more or less blocked off. (Sartre 1963: 95)

Racism, sexism, and class relations are concrete examples of such restraints upon the realization of freedom through praxis. However, such restraints never constitute absolute barriers. The future is always "more or less" limited by these institutional practices.

Sartre's theory of history presupposes a structure of intentionality governing the practices of social life. This intentionality projects individual praxis toward surpassing, toward the realization of freedom. This presupposition as to the nature of intentionality is apparent in the way in which Sartre defines the object of his analysis:

> The most rudimentary behavior must be determined both in relation to the real and present factors which condition it and in relation to a certain object, still to come, which it is trying to bring into being. This is what we call the project.
>
> (Sartre 1963: 91)

The goal of surpassing given conditions is defined as an attribute of the activity analyzed. The aim of human praxis is the realization of freedom by going beyond the given field of the possible.

Sartre attempts to analyze concrete human praxis in relation to historical totalization. He attempts to demonstrate the relationship between the ordinary practices of everyday life and the larger historical process. He attempts to demonstrate the relationship between the individual moments of this process and that history is only intelligible as a relationship between praxis and the objective results of praxis interiorized and re-exteriorized. This relationship is formulated as the dialectical relationship between subject and object.

The relationship between subject and object is formulated on two levels; on the level of the universal and the particular. On the level of the universal, this relationship takes the form of the relationship between freedom and materiality. This is an abstract, trans-historical formulation of the problem. The particular formulation expresses the relationship between concrete individuals and the social-historical situations in which they live.

Sartre attempts to analyze concrete social praxis in terms of his conceptions of freedom and materiality. These concepts form the grounds for his analysis of the concrete. The particular consciousness and intentionality of human social existence in relation to a field of possible action expresses the more general relationship between freedom and materiality. In this formulation, individual praxis expresses both individual subjectivity and human freedom in general. Such praxis is both historical and ontological. Sartre's philosophical conception of freedom expresses the trans-historical essence of men and women.

Even in socialist society, the fundamental nature of this relationship would not be altered. The field of the possible will have been extended by collective human praxis. Scarcity will no longer be produced in terms of the capitalist need for profit. The bourgeois individual will have been replaced by the socialist individual. However, the relationship between subject and object will not have changed.

Although my discussion thus far has primarily made reference to Sartre's theoretical formulations contained in *Search for a Method*, his basic conception of freedom is also present in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*. In this latter work, a more complex historical analysis is set forth. Additional concepts are developed in his attempt to make history

intelligible. However, his basic conception of freedom as an eternal category is not altered. It remains the fundamental conception underlying his analysis.

In *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre continues to posit freedom as a trans-historical category of human existence. This freedom projects human beings toward a future not yet realized:

> From this point of view, it must be pointed out that the practico-inert field exists, that it is real, and that free human activities are not thereby eliminated, that they are not even altered in their translucidity as projects in the process of being realized.
>
> (Sartre 1976: 323)

The practico-inert (in the form of social, political, and economic institutions) conditions the praxis of concrete individuals, but can not alter or transform the essence of human freedom. Freedom itself remains unchanged and eternal.

For Sartre, the field of possibility (referred to as the practico-inert) is both the result of human praxis and a real constraint upon men and women as they lead their everyday lives: "The field exists: in short, it is what surrounds and conditions us" (Sartre 1976: 323). This field of existing institutions conditions and shapes the praxis of individuals and groups, but does not, and can not, alter the existence of human freedom. Alienation is central to his analysis of class relations. Two forms of alienation that Sartre discusses are the series and counter-finality. In the series, people as the Other are to be found in a Queue, listening or viewing a radio or TV broadcast or participating in the market. Each of these forms of alienation is defined by impotence and the anti-human. In the anti-human violence results from the competition between people over scarcity. For Sartre, scarcity is the fundamental cause of violence, the transformation of human beings into the anti-human. The Other is perceived as constituting a threat or danger. The alternative to the series is the formation of the fused group. Social classes can take the form of either series or fused groups. Classes as fused groups require the perception of the bourgeois class as the enemy of the working class, who is the source of danger. Fused groups by their very nature are an unstable form of group. There is always the danger of returning to the alienation of the series and alterity.

Counter-finality refers to a negative unintended consequence of praxis. Sartre offers three main examples of counter-finality:

deforestation in China for hundreds of years, the importation of plundered gold from South America into Spain during the sixteenth century and pollution resulting from industrialization in England during the industrial revolution. Deforestation led to soil erosion and flooding; the importing of gold led to the deflation of the value of money, and industrialization led to air and water pollution. Other examples of counter-finality could be cited. The product of man's product becomes his enemy and a non-human force that opposes human freedom. It also limits the intelligibility of the natural and social worlds.

Sartre's analysis of class relations traces the history of the French working class from the 1830s, to 1848, to the role of syndicalism in the 1890s to the class conflicts of the Popular Front government of the 1930s. He also formulates a theory of the fused group as it moves through the pledged group, organization, institution and bureaucracy. The danger of any fused group is its domination by a bureaucracy and the return to a form of series. Why this takes place requires a historical analysis. It is clear from what Sartre has to say about the series and the fused group that there is no historical law determining the process of change. Sartre identifies processes like fraternity-terror. The fused group itself makes use of terror against its own members to prevent the return to a series. For Sartre, scarcity is the root cause of violence and the creation of the anti-human of colonial domination, war and class struggle.

The existence of scarcity provides the grounds for conflict. Social classes confront each other within a field of scarcity. Social classes take the form of series until they have a common enemy that represents a danger to confront. At that point, they form fused groups engaged in class struggle. This conception of social class is analogous to Marx's class in-itself and class for-itself.

For Sartre, there is no such thing as the dialectics of nature since for him dialectics presupposes human beings who possess the capacity to understand the process of history that they are making. Nature possesses no capacity to understand anything. It is understood by human beings by means of analytic reason. Sartre's argument here is with Engels rather than Marx. He states clearly that he accepts Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production and the theory of surplus value presented by Marx in *Capital*. Sartre was also engaging in a debate with the intellectuals of the French Communist Party who defended the notion of

a dialectics of nature. For Sartre, only human history is capable of dialectical reason, the self-understanding of the history made by human beings. He was engaging in an attempt to influence the intellectuals of the French Communist Party. The primary result of his efforts was that he was viewed as an enemy of the PFC. It was not until May of 1968 that his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* was read and taken seriously.

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